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Project "Combined Efforts in Support to Disadvantaged People on the Labour Market in the Cross-Border Area", project code 16.4.2.056, e-MS code ROBG - 163.

SURVEY AND STUDY OF THE OBSTACLES AND PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH DISCOURAGING OF DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE FROM ENTERING THE LABOR MARKET

SECTION I. PEOPLE OF ROMA ETHNIC ORIGIN

INTRODUCTION

The labor market in Bulgaria is bound by the main tendencies and processes in the development of the country's economy - restructuring, privatization, liquidation of inefficient industries, opening of new activities. The transition from a planned to a market economy in the early 1990s, a decline in public sector employment and the closure of a number of large enterprises have led to a sharp decline in labor demand. The rapidly emerging new technologies and the increasing requirements for qualification and educational qualifications have formed a large group of persons of working age who have low competitiveness and opportunities for realization.

This study aims to identify and analyze the existing structural problems and opportunities in the labor market in order to create sustainable employment conditions and reduce unemployment.

EXHIBITION

The labor market is an economic space in which persons seeking paid or better paid employment and persons and organizations seeking work are located and negotiated.



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The labor market can also be defined as a system of real economic relations, regulated by the state/society. The object of purchase is the commodity workforce.

In a market economy, labor is commodity and subject to sale. Unlike other goods, the creation of a commodity labor requires many years of investment in education, vocational training and preparation.

The labor market is seen as one of the factors that influence production, the condition and development of the workforce, as well as the economic activity of the able-bodied and the general population.

The formation of the labor market requires:

- Individuals who are inclined to substitute part of their free time for paid employment;
- Natural or legal persons seeking to hire workers with specific training and qualifications;
- A certain institutional structure (laws and regulations) that will enable effective interaction between those seeking paid employment and jobseekers;
- A specific infrastructure (institutions and organizations at national, regional or local level) to help job seekers or workforce pursue their intentions.

The labor market is not uniform and homogeneous. In each labor market, certain competing groups can be distinguished - segments. Above all, the labor market is divided into primary and secondary.

The primary labor market has two main forms of manifestation - the internal labor market and the professional labor market.

Internal labor market - covers the movement (redirection, promotion, dismissal, reduction) of the workforce in the company/organization.

A professional labor market is a labor market with a specific profession or with a specific professional qualification.

The labor force located on the secondary labor market has different characteristics depending on its source. The main sources of this labor market are:

- persons who have forcibly lost their jobs;
- young people who have completed their education;



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- persons of working age;
- students, retirees and housewives who currently have no paid employment;
- dismissed from military service or the army;
- newcomers to the region;
- settled immigrants;
- People from ethnic minorities who have no paid employment.

In recent years, Bulgaria has maintained macroeconomic and financial stability, which has proven to be a prerequisite for successfully countering the negative effects of the 2008 global financial and economic crisis. The economic crisis and its duration have had a negative impact on the country's labor market.

According to the Employment Agency, the average monthly number of unemployed registered at the labor offices in 2012 in the country is 364 573, or 31 937 more than in 2011. Of all registered at the labor offices, 54.6% are women. The number of long-term unemployed persons for a period of more than one year, in 2012 was 118 832, and their share of the total number of unemployed registered at the labor offices was 32.6%. Unemployed young people up to 29 years of age increase by just over 11 thousand, reaching 74 779 persons compared to 2011, and their share of all unemployed is 20.5%. In 2012 compared to 2011 a decrease was registered in the number of registered unemployed persons over 50 and unemployed without qualification and specialty.

The state of the labor market is a function of the demographic situation in the country. On the basis of the collected statistics in the preparation of the Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2013 - 2020, several important points are identified:

1. The age structure of the population in Bulgaria is characterized by a strong aging and a decrease in the absolute and relative share of the population under 15 and an increase in the share of the population over 65 and over. At the end of 2012, persons over 65 and over made up 19.2 per cent of the country's population.

2. The reproduction of the working-age population also has negative trends, the coefficient of demographic replacement, which shows the ratio between the number of people entering working age (15-19 years) and the number of people leaving working age (60-64 years), for the country is 70.



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3. The number of people who have never attended school is 1.2 percent of the population. Illiterates are 1.7 percent.

These baselines form the basis for identifying the main target groups targeted by the current labor market policy in Bulgaria. In particular, these are:

- Unemployed youths up to 29 years old with a subgroup up to 25 years old;
- Unemployed over 50;
- Unemployed persons with low or no job market vocational qualifications and a lack of key competences, including unemployed persons with low education (including Roma)
- People with disabilities
- Inactive persons willing to work, incl. discouraged persons.

The successful realization of the labor market is largely determined by the level of education and qualification. There is a direct correlation between education and employment, as a result of which the employment rate of persons with tertiary education is more than four times higher than that of persons with primary and lower education. In 2012, the employment rate of persons with tertiary education (25 - 64 years) in Bulgaria was 81.8%, of persons with secondary education was 69.1%, of those with primary education was 41.6% and of those with primary and lower education is 18.3%.

The elaborated *Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2013-2020* is in line with the European documents in the field of employment and human resources development. Its main priorities are:

1. Developing a skilled workforce that meets labor market needs and promoting lifelong learning;
2. Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems at all levels and increasing the number of trainees in tertiary education or equivalent;
3. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.

The main problems in the labor market and in the field of human resources that need to be addressed through active labor market policy are:

- ❖ Lack of job vacancies and limited job creation, which focuses on the demand for workforce in highly qualified employment in certain sectors, while the demand for the low skilled remains narrow or mainly seasonal;



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- ❖ High number of unemployed persons, which increases with significant differentiation by regions, low competitiveness on the labor market of young people, long-term unemployed, unemployed over 50 years, Roma, unemployed with disabilities, with the risk of social exclusion in these disadvantaged groups and substantial impoverishment.
- ❖ Segmented labor market with low mobility with strong influence of seasonal factor.
- ❖ High reserve of inactive persons with low or no qualifications.
- ❖ The situation on the labor market in some European countries, where many Bulgarians work, including Greece, Spain and others, has worsened.
- ❖ Employment without employment contracts, non-payment of wages and violation of labor law.

The Employment Agency, in its role as a public mediator in the labor market, balances the labor market in the country through systematic, focused and adequate impact. The aim of an active employment policy is to accelerate the recovery of the labor market, increase employment and curb unemployment.

As a result of the overall activity of the Employment Agency in 2013, 249 720 unemployed (more than 25 thousand more than in 2012) started work, of which more than 167 thousand were employed in the primary market.

The main priorities of the Employment Agency are implemented through the development of labor mediation and improvement of the quality of services, through active programs and measures on the labor market and the implementation of the schemes under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development". The Agency prioritises its activities to the slowest-recovering regions and to disadvantaged groups in the labor market, reducing their risk of poverty and social exclusion. The practice of social partnership at all levels continues.

The National Employment Action Plan (NAEP) includes actions in the following main areas:

- Restoring the dynamics of the labor market by: activating the unemployed, activating the inactive, including discouraged persons, investing in skills, improving social inclusion and social security, promoting the free movement of workers;



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- Supporting job creation by improving the business environment, promoting investment and growth, providing job opportunities to disadvantaged unemployed people, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Strengthening the management of employment policies by improving social dialogue with social partners to secure employment; improving coordination between state institutions to take into account the employment criterion when launching new projects.

The Employment Agency implements a policy to improve the quality of the workforce by improving access to and training opportunities for unemployed and employed persons. The aim is to better match the needs of the labor market.

On the basis of the problems and priorities identified above, there are several *basic guidelines* that could contribute to the development of the labor market and the more efficient use of the existing workforce.

Guideline 1 In order to activate the unemployed, the state must implement such programs and measures that provide fair and attractive remuneration to employees, giving them an incentive to work. Many unemployed people are reluctant to start a job because, in most cases, the remuneration they receive is equal to or slightly higher than what they receive as unemployment benefits.

Guideline 2 Programs that invest in the skills of unemployed people must be up-to-date, meeting the ever-changing needs of the labor market. Persons who have acquired new skills should feel socially secure and be able to continue working and lead a decent life after the end of the program (training) and not to return to the unemployed.

Guideline 3 The state should create conditions for the stimulation of small businesses, family businesses and craft workshops, in which many people who could have recruited, upgraded or obtained new qualifications through the programs offered. The levers that can stimulate small business are to reduce the tax burden, provide investment funds for its development, simplify the procedures for reporting projects for hiring unemployed people to work.

Guideline 4 Continuous dialogue between employers, jobseekers and public authorities in order to improve the effectiveness of employment and training programs implemented. The National Employment Strategy and the National



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Employment Action Plan must be flexible, able to change the light of changes in economic conditions and in particular the state of the labor market.

The decrease in the number of able-bodied persons, the increase in their age, the insufficient share of people with tertiary education and the number of illiterates and persons with low education lead to problems in the labor market. On the one hand, there is a relatively large percentage of unemployed people, on the other, there is a shortage of staff in areas requiring higher education and training.

Achieving sustainable economic growth and the rapidly changing labor market as a result of emerging technologies and industries require a skilled and motivated workforce. It is in this direction that the actions of the state institutions formulated in the Updated Employment Strategy and the National Employment Action Plan are directed. Through the active labor market policy and the inclusion in a number of programs at the Employment Agency under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" for raising the qualification and education, the persons from the risk groups come out of the category of the long-term unemployed, receive the opportunity for realization and contribute to the building a stable knowledge and innovation market economy.

The Roma represent the largest ethnic minority in Europe and have been an integral part of European society for centuries. However, despite efforts at national, European and international level to improve the protection of their fundamental rights and despite advances in social inclusion, many Roma continue to face extreme poverty, deep social exclusion, discrimination and obstacles to the exercise of their fundamental rights.

Equal and full access to employment is an important factor in enhancing social inclusion and combating poverty. Employment is not only a source of income that determines material well-being, it also builds human capital and forms survival strategies, relationships between groups and different communities. Just as poverty is not just about money, employment is not just about jobs. That is why the Europe 2020 strategy has paid special attention to both poverty and employment.

About 90% of Roma in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region have incomes below the national poverty line; about 40% of children live in households suffering from malnutrition or hunger. More than half of the Roma in the region live in segregated areas, in housing that is far below the minimum standards. Hard-



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rooted prejudice and discrimination undermine Roma employment prospects. Only about one-third of Roma have paid work, which is often precarious and informal.

Despite widespread discrimination, most Roma are actively seeking work. However, concerted efforts are needed to break the vicious circle of inequality, improving employment opportunities and reducing poverty and hardship. In times of economic crisis, vulnerable groups are the first to be affected, which risks jeopardizing the modest progress made in implementing the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Currently, 58% of young Roma in the survey conducted by the FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 11 countries are unemployed, uneducated and uneducated, compared to 13% on average in the EU. There seems to be a slight reduction in the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma young people, but this is not due to greater employment opportunities for Roma, but rather to a deterioration in the employment prospects of young people of non-Roma origin. The real inclusion of Roma is to bring Roma opportunities to the level of non-Roma people, not the other way around.

The problems facing the Roma are complex and therefore require an integrated approach - low levels of education, barriers to the labor market, segregation and poor living conditions must be addressed through coordinated, mutually reinforcing measures. The EU has an important role to play in bringing about such a change by improving anti-discrimination legislation, coordinating policies, setting common goals for integration and providing funding. National, regional and especially local government bodies have the primary responsibility for Roma community involvement and change.

Achieving tangible improvements in the lives of the Roma population and providing equal opportunities for their children requires political will - courage and determination to act. However, political will alone is not enough. It must be coupled with the ability to find successful solutions and with reliable monitoring tools capable of recording results and determinants. Otherwise, the resources made available to improve employment opportunities and reduce discrimination in the labor market may be wasted.

By collecting data, helping to identify progress indicators and trying out new approaches to involve Roma communities at the local level, the project makes efforts to integrate Roma more targeted and inclusive. This document is one element of this comprehensive endeavor.



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The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in the European Union (EU) and are among the most needy - they face social exclusion, discrimination and unequal access to employment, education, housing and healthcare. Equal and full access to employment is an important factor in enhancing social inclusion and combating poverty. The analysis of the labor market and the financial situation of the Roma presented in this report is based on a pilot survey of Roma conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The aim of the study is to reflect on the situation and to support the development of more targeted policies at national and regional level.

The EU is obliged by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to combat social exclusion and discrimination (Article 3 TFEU) and to promote social rights, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Social Charter, adopted by the Community and the Council of Europe. A large proportion of the estimated 10-12 million Roma in Europe are exposed to prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion in their daily lives. They are marginalized and live in very poor socio-economic conditions. This is incompatible with the values on which it is based. The EU undermines social cohesion, impedes competitiveness and generates costs for society as a whole. The EU has adopted a strategy aimed at addressing these issues while ensuring full respect for fundamental rights. The Europe 2020 strategy, which aims at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and is explicitly targeted, though not only at the Roma, underlines this fact. The Europe 2020 Strategy also provided guidance for the development of an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020, which in turn aims to support the implementation of the Strategy by 2020.

On 9 December 2013, the Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation to the Council to provide guidance to Member States on improving the effectiveness of their measures to achieve Roma integration. It focuses on stepping up the implementation of their national Roma integration strategies or on integrated sets of policy measures with broader social inclusion policies, with a view to improving the situation of the Roma and closing the gap between the Roma and the whole population. The Recommendation proposes in particular that Member States take effective measures to ensure equal treatment of Roma in terms of access to the labor market and employment opportunities. It is also recommended that Member States take measures to combat poverty and social exclusion affecting disadvantaged people, including the Roma, through



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policies for investing in human capital and social cohesion. Member States are encouraged, depending on the number and social and economic situation of their Roma communities, to consider mainstreaming Roma integration as an important issue in their national reform programs or in national social reports in the context of the “Europe 2020” strategy.

Roma inclusion efforts are targeted at the Roma, but they are also important for all those living in the EU, as improving Roma employment opportunities will help deliver the “Europe 2020” growth strategy for the benefit of all, including of the marginalized groups. The “Europe 2020” strategy focuses on five ambitious targets in the fields of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy. Two of these are of immediate interest in this report: employment and poverty reduction. The strategy aims at an employment rate of 75% for people of working age (20-64 years); for poverty, the target is to protect at least 20 million people from the risk of poverty and social exclusion. These two targets are interrelated, but higher incomes cannot by themselves reduce poverty. Above all, employment, as a major driver of social inclusion, can improve living conditions and enable people to cope with the difficulties of poverty. Furthermore, improving Roma employment contributes to social cohesion, enhancing diversity and enhancing democratic stability - a prerequisite for effective protection of human rights.

In order to overcome the continuing economic and social marginalization and to achieve full respect for fundamental rights, the EU framework identifies and sets a set of minimum standards to be achieved in four main areas: access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. to help Member States reach the overall “Europe 2020” targets. The monitoring of these minimum standards should be based on common, comparable and reliable indicators and reported on an annual basis. In response, recognizing the effects of the financial crisis and fragile social stability, the European Commission added to its macroeconomic monitoring mechanism a table of indicators of employment, inequality and social exclusion.

Employment in the form of paid work requires that there be, first, job opportunities; second, a sufficiently skilled workforce; and third, appropriate conditions that enable the workforce to do its day-to-day work. In this respect, the lack of public or private investment limits job opportunities; lack of qualification limits the skills required of employers. In addition, factors such as living in segregated areas with limited or no access to public transportation and



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poor infrastructure, obligations to care for children, as well as discrimination and racism reduce employment opportunities.

Roma face many employment challenges: very low employment rates, especially for young Roma. Lack of educational qualifications combined with housing segregation and discrimination reinforce the processes of exclusion from the formal labor market. In addition, many Roma continue to suffer from poor housing and extreme poverty, which puts a heavy burden on women and children, as they spend a disproportionate amount of time at home. There are also significant differences between countries that should be taken into account when developing programs for Roma inclusion, employment and poverty reduction.

According to the FRA survey, the employment rate is particularly low for Roma in all Member States covered by the survey. Only 28% of Roma and 45% of non-Roma people living in the immediate vicinity who are 16 years of age or older indicate paid work as their main activity. A significant proportion of Roma in paid employment are placed in precarious employment conditions: 23% are on call, 21% are self-employed and 9% are part-time workers. The employment of paid labor for non-Roma people in all Member States covered by the survey is below the national average, indicating that the target areas of the study - with a high concentration of Roma - lack employment opportunities at all and that these areas are characterized by persistently high levels of poverty in general. Despite the higher level, non-Roma respondents have similar patterns to the general population - which is not the case with the Roma. This may mean that their employment patterns are different and that, therefore, national-level measures targeting areas of relative economic decline may not reach the Roma population. Young Roma between the ages of 16 and 24 have the lowest employment rate among Roma (24%), but the smallest difference in employment compared to non-Roma people living in close proximity (27%).

The "Europe 2020" strategy aims to capture 75% of the population between the ages of 20 and 64 in 2020. In order to reach this level for the Roma, national employment strategies must take into account the specific situation of the Roma population and increase their efforts in support of national income-generating efforts. In some Member States, this may include support for different forms of employment and self-employment, e.g. business activities. Public authorities should ensure that vocational training schemes targeting the Roma reflect their specific situation as well as labor market demand.



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Public employment schemes can be a temporary solution to unemployment, but they should also be used as an opportunity for retraining and further training. Local investment in infrastructure and public services, such as childcare and health care, can be used to promote local employment, which can be beneficial to Roma through skills development and employment.

The European Commission's strategy on gender equality has identified five priority areas, with particular emphasis on equal economic independence. In view of this, if employment and income generation strategies focus specifically on Roma women, this may help them to achieve this goal.

Roma participation in the labor market has been low throughout Europe in the last 20 years. Since the transition from socialism to Eastern Europe, the employment rate of the Roma has fallen dramatically. The Roma were often the first to be dismissed from low-skilled jobs and often remained unemployed without being able to return to their traditional occupations, such as the trade, production and sale of handicraft and processed metal products.

A UNDP survey of Central and Southeast European Roma shows that, compared to 2004, the decrease in the employment rate for Roma in 2011 is proportionally greater than for non-Roma people. Although Roma between the ages of 15 and 24 have significantly improved their educational attainment, this has not yet been reflected in better employment prospects. Policies have narrowed the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma, but this has not been followed by employment programs that may eventually affect overall income. The UNDP study concludes that Roma participation in education needs to be reflected in the labor market. The most disadvantaged in terms of employment are the youngest Roma groups, or Roma between the ages of 16 and 24. Education is crucial for gaining more opportunities in the labor market. Although the proportion of Roma who have not been to school at all is sharply declining for the younger age groups, the overall educational level remains low for anyone over 16. Most young Roma do not complete secondary education. The share of early school leavers among young Roma aged between 18 and 24 is 82-85% in Bulgaria. In Romania, over 93% of Roma between the ages of 18 and 24 have not completed secondary education. By comparison, the proportion of early school leavers, defined by the Europe 2020 indicator as young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who do not work, study or study, was 13.5% in 2011 for the whole EU-28 population. Policy makers in Europe are increasingly using the NEET indicator - unemployed, uneducated and



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uneducated young people: characteristics, costs and policy responses to better represent the situation of young people within the "Europe 2020". According to Eurostat's NEET indicator, 13% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were not on the labor market or studied in the EU-28 in 2011 and 58% of Roma between the ages of 16 and 24 are not working, not working they study and do not study.

Employment is considered to be the best protection against poverty, but this does not necessarily seem to be true for the Roma households surveyed. The "poverty rate of workers" is related to the number of paid people whose household income remains below the national poverty risk threshold. Worker poverty occurs when the total household labor income does not meet the needs of that household, either because the dependents' wages are too low or because the household is too large.

There is no financial incentive for Roma to start a job if this job cannot even guarantee the livelihood of their families.

The analysis shows that despite national and regional differences, Roma are exposed to numerous socio-economic inequalities, often caused by lack of adequate employment and/or lack of access to the labor market. The factors affecting this situation are a combination of hard-to-root discrimination and exclusion, as well as a lack of education and training that can facilitate access to the labor market. EU legislation on discrimination, in particular in employment and training, should be applied and closely monitored in close cooperation with social partners, equality bodies and other human rights safeguards.

It is also possible that national labor market policies have a very limited impact on the situation of the Roma. Therefore, in order to be effective, employment strategies must adopt a regional development approach targeting disadvantaged places and areas with a high proportion of Roma.

Equal and full access to employment is a major driver of social inclusion, which can improve living conditions and enable people like the Roma - the largest ethnic minority in the European Union - to tackle the difficulties posed by poverty. This report uses the results of a 2011 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on Roma poverty and employment, showing, for example, that although most Roma are actively seeking work, only about one-third have paid work which is often uncertain and informal. The report highlights



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many challenges: very low employment rates have been identified, especially for young Roma.

In the last 4 years in Bulgaria there are two main instruments aimed at overcoming the limited opportunities of the Roma in the labor market. The first set of instruments includes programs funded mainly from the state budget under the annual National Employment Action Plan. The second set of measures to tackle unemployment includes active measures funded by the EU mainly under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development".

The statistics on the implementation of the National Action Plan on the "Decade of Roma Inclusion: 2005-2015" show that for the last four years the National Program "From Social Assistance to Employment" is among the main instruments for creating employment for the Roma. . In 2011, the program is still a leading source of jobs for the Roma, and since 2008, Roma covered by the program have decreased almost 2.5 times (from 13 117 to 5 475). In 2010, almost 2/3 of all Roma jobs were generated through the National "From Social Assistance to Employment" Programme, and in 2011 the share of these jobs decreased by 14 percentage points to 50.3. %.

Another major generator of jobs for the Roma is the Human Resources Development Operational Programme. In 2011, under the operational program, funds were provided for the realization of almost 2,300 Roma on the labor market, which represents more than 21% of all newly created Roma jobs during this period. Since 2008, the importance of EU funding (through the Human Resources Development Operational Programme) has steadily increased and the impact on Roma employment has been characterized by a double increase in the relative share of jobs funded under the HRD OP in 2011. It should be noted that the funds for generating employment among Roma under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme are still too dispersed between different programmatic instruments ("New Beginning - From Education to Employment" project, "Development" scheme, "Adaptability" scheme, etc.) No specific data on individual projects/schemes under Human Resources Development Operational Programme, which provided employment, but expert estimates suggest that the largest contribution to the number of Roma who have been provided employment under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme has the scheme "Development".



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It should be borne in mind that the Development Scheme (like most of the programs mentioned above) does not focus on the Roma as a specific target group. Most programs are general purpose oriented - they are oriented towards solving common problems and their goals include achieving results in the field of Roma inclusion in the labor market.

Traditionally, at the national level, the labor market is characterized by a small number of Roma with their own businesses or entrepreneurship, which may eventually generate higher employment among the Roma community. The lack of sustainable and purposeful support for Roma entrepreneurs is only part of the challenges in this area.

It should be noted that the inclusion of the primary Roma market as a share of all jobs created for the Roma reaches its lowest point in 2011. In absolute terms, the reduction of the Roma jobs in the primary labor market is more of 50%. This can be explained by the two economic crises that have curtailed demand and increased the number of cases where employers rely on government and EU employment programs as a means of providing subsidized workforce that can help reduce costs and increase costs. productivity. According to some of the Roma leaders, the measures to curb unemployment are mostly used by employers who seek to use the means to develop their businesses. It should be noted that in the last years of the economic crisis there has been a significant change in the active labor market measures. The general tendencies for providing employment for the Roma are too negative. Compared to 2008, in 2011 for the Roma, the labor market has shrunk in terms of both the services provided and the results achieved. In all key dimensions of employment development, the reduction is more than 2-fold, including in terms of inclusion in Roma programs and employment of Roma in the primary labor market. The lack of workplace support programs can be seen as one of the weaknesses of national Roma employment policy, as investment in job creation and employment of Roma should be combined with continuous support measures that to guarantee the sustainability of the results for the employed Roma and in the period after expiry of the agreed employment conditions for the subsidized programs.

This is one of the main issues highlighted by Roma labor mediators and experts from the Labor Offices: *"Employers are calculating and come to us only when they can raise money. There are almost no cases of workers left behind after the program - Roma are only hired while there is money for Roma."*



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Continued support for employed Roma is needed both in terms of adaptation in the workplace by providing additional professional qualifications, if necessary, and in addressing the possible risks of discriminatory attitudes and barriers among employers and their business partners in the workplace environment and among customers.

With the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union, there has been significant dynamics in terms of sources of funding for employment measures. In previous years, national programs were not financed directly by the Structural Funds, but through the national budget. In recent years, there has been a significant reduction in funding from national employment programs and an increase in European Union funding for active labor market policy.

One of the main characteristics of the labor market and an obstacle to job creation is the uncertainty in the employment promotion system. The system does not provide sufficient incentives to encourage employers to hire employees. Job opportunities are determined entirely by market forces, and the system does not create strong corrective mechanisms that will significantly affect the labor market.

Uncertainty is also expressed in the development and implementation of partially unsynchronized and in most cases short-term (up to one year) employment projects. As all labor market stakeholders - employers, beneficiaries, labor intermediaries - are living in uncertainty, they are reluctant to make long-term commitments. Often, this leads to unwillingness and avoidance of participation in public employment and training programs; accordingly, often the preferences are aimed at creating and maintaining so-called "informal relations" in the labor market.

National programme "Activation of inactive persons" and improvement of the quality of the services provided by the structures of the Employment Agency for citizens and business, with a focus on vulnerable labor market groups under HRD OP, Priority Axis 6 "Increasing the efficiency of market institutions labor, social and health services", a major area of intervention 6.1. "Development and improvement of the labor market system"

In 2008, the process of implementation of the National Programme "Activation of Inactive Persons" was launched, which aims to activate and return to the labor market inactive and discouraged persons. To achieve this goal, 125 unemployed



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Roma were mediated and recruited as mediators in the labor market in 2008 and 2009.

Their main activity is to motivate inactive and discouraged persons registered with the Labor Offices to use mediation services for employment and training. To fulfill the goals of the program, mediators organize information campaigns, individual and group meetings with inactive persons. In addition, they hold meetings with social partners, NGOs and employers' organizations, where applicants for the program beneficiaries are invited to apply. Roma labor mediators perceive their professional tasks mainly as representatives of the local Roma community in the institutions. Most importantly, according to them, labor mediators are a guarantee that the Roma can count on the support of people from the community working in institutions.

"Development" Scheme, Operational Programme "Human Resources Development", Priority Axis 1 "Encouraging economic activity and development of an inclusive labor market"

The "Development" Programme is very similar to the flagship program "From Social Assistance to Employment", although the initial expectations and plans were to implement a new type of program aimed at ensuring greater sustainability and unsubsidized employment as a result from longer and better training and a more strategic choice of employment areas. The training offered is mainly for low-skilled jobs by public employers such as municipalities or public administration structures or in sectors of the economy without good long-term prospects. These types of programs undoubtedly fill an important social and economic gap, but they may not be able to provide the expected sustainable change in the situation of Roma in the labor market.

Significant barriers to the Roma raise the criteria for inclusion in the program. Although the rationale for the program states that low-educated young people (with basic and lower than primary education) are the predominant group among the unemployed, enrollment in the program requires at least a seventh-grade certificate. The language barrier is also a challenge in terms of equal access to programs.

An additional challenge is that no feedback system has been put in place by the unemployed. The impact of the program has not been sufficiently assessed on the basis of feedback from the beneficiaries themselves. When registering with the employment offices after the end of the program, the employment offices do not



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require feedback on the reasons for the negative net effect of the training and the lack of employment after the end of the program. In this way, an important opportunity was missed to make proposals for improvements to the system and mechanisms for securing employment and for providing appropriate services and programs that meet the needs of the beneficiaries. Overall, the formal attitude towards the programs is stimulated by the lack of strategic local employment policies. The main beneficiary of the scheme is the municipalities, which provide over 98% of the jobs within the program. The objectives of the municipalities are through the scheme to provide short-term employment rather than to improve the quality of the workforce so that it develops with a view to meeting the main priorities of the municipality. This leads to "overproduction" of landscaping and cleanliness personnel, construction workers and security guards.

Entrepreneurship opportunities for Roma young people in Montana District, Bulgaria

This study should answer to what extent adequate solutions can be found in Montana County for the successful and long-term social inclusion of young people who do not go to school, are not educated or work (15-24 years). In order to provide these answers, it is necessary to analyze the context in the region in terms of:

- general socio-economic profile of the area;
- Available or missing social policies and tools to work with target groups;
- Available resources - public policies to support social entrepreneurship, opportunities and profile of the civic sector, other important factors.

Demographic and economic profile

The Montana District consists of 11 municipalities, mainly in rural areas (Berkovitsa, Boychinovtsi, Brusartsi, Vulchedrum, Varshets, Georgi Damyanovo, Lom, Medkovets, Montana, Chiprovtsi, Yakimovo). Number of settlements - 130, out of which 8 cities (mostly small and very small towns) and 122 villages (medium and small villages). The largest is the territory of the municipality of Montana (18.6% of the area of the district), and the smallest is the territory of the municipality of Medkovets (5.3% of the area of the district).



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Population Profile - As of December 31, 2015, the population of the Montana District was 141 596 people (according to National Statistic Institute data), which is 2.0% of the population of the country. In Montana municipality, nearly 1/3 of the district's population is concentrated. In all municipalities there is a process of aging of the population, which is deeper in the villages. Relative share of the population under working age (as of 2011) - 13,8%. Ethnic characteristics (2011 data): Bulgarians: 86,31%, Roma: 12,71%, Turks: 0,87%, Other: 0.6%. The unemployment rate in the Montana District is one of the highest in the Northwest. In 2014, it was 20.8%, compared to the regional average of 11.4%. Unemployed youths up to the age of 29 represent 21.4% of all unemployed. People under 29 are one of the disadvantaged groups, as most employers prefer to lay off mostly employees with no experience and work experience for the job. Also unfavorable is the fact that the majority of registered unemployed young people have low levels of educational attainment and qualification. Higher youth unemployment (over 20% of the total number of unemployed persons) are the same municipalities that have high unemployment rates - Varshets (27.0%), Vulchedrum (22.4%), Yakimovo (22.1%) and others.

The net enrollment rate of the population in grades 5 to VIII is the same as the national average (81%), but the dropout rate from primary and secondary education (3.0%) is higher than the national average (2 , 4%). Nearly 27.9% have completed primary education and 14.6% have completed primary and lower education.

The data show that many young Roma tend to be left without proper education, leave school early or not go to school, which puts a number of barriers on them before they enter the labor market.

The factors that cause this are: a large number of unreasonable absences from school activities, low academic achievement, insufficient command of the Bulgarian language and, above all, the lack of commitment of parents who do not provide the necessary support and encouragement to adolescents and their guidance to a better education as a necessary prerequisite for a better future - social, employment and so on.

Economics and entrepreneurship



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According to the IME Regional Development Index, Montana is in the "very poor socio-economic status" category. The sectoral plan for the period 2010-2015 is increasing the number of companies in agriculture and trade. The Montana district continues to be unattractive to foreign investors. In 2015, 22.2% of the residents in the district were part of low-intensity households, which was more than twice the average for Bulgaria. Against the background of the overall negative socio-economic situation in 2015, only 28.5% of the population were living with material deprivation, at more than 43% on average in the country.

There are 2127 enterprises in the territory of Montana municipality, nearly 95% of which are private. The main sector is trade and services. Also important are companies operating in the light industry, construction industry and processing industry. Larger companies include "Monbat", "Monolith", "Balkan", "Cross" and more. According to the statistics on the structure of enterprises in the district, by the number of employees in 2016, out of a total of 4551 enterprises, those in the micro category, with a staff of up to 9 employees, predominate. For the year, they are 4 192 in number and form a structural share of approximately 92.1% of the total. Enterprises in the "small" category with a staff of 10 to 49 employees account for 289 in number or 6.4% of the total structure. With 62 enterprises, the category "medium" - with a staff of 50 to 249 employed, formed a structural share of 1.4% in the district's economy in 2016, while the "large" whose staff exceeds 250 employed is only 8 in number. and reach a structural share of 0.2%. Micro-enterprises are about 92% of the total number of enterprises and 6% are small enterprises.

Important: Data for social enterprises from the national database of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for Montana District in 2015: there are 44 social enterprises declared - 4 in agriculture and fisheries; 1 - in the mining industry; 5 - in the manufacturing industry; 13 - in the field of trade; repair of cars and motorcycles; 8 - hotel and restaurant business; 3 in the field of professional activities and research; 4 in the field of administrative and support activities; 1 in the field of education; 5 - in other activities, and they are all in the sub-activity "activities of non-profit organizations". 5 of the self-identified social enterprises are registered as NGOs, but it is not clear what their economic activity is and what are the target groups that support.

Social services



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The most important for the Montana district at the district level is the development strategy. There are also strategies for social services, Roma integration and youth adopted. All three strategies are detailed documents that have more analysis of the groups, with a number of measures to achieve the respective goals and priorities. It is positive that progress has been assessed on the implementation of the strategy. As can be seen from the monitoring report, the plan for the implementation of the strategy is not implemented in part with the envisaged new social services in the community, because it relies mainly on funding from the national budget, and the provision of local resources is difficult.

There are two key factors in the area that are related to the development of a social service network - a) on the one hand, the availability of very small settlements impedes access to and conditions for the development of services, and b) the predominantly social residential services network (in Berkovitsa). There are many small settlements that naturally cannot support their own social services, and mobility of services from larger settlements can hardly be guaranteed at all.

Another good practice is the social commission established at the regional level, which has the task of monitoring the implementation of social policy and coordinating its implementation. NGOs are included in its composition, which is a successful way of involving.

Civil Sector Development

The total number of registered in the Central Register - 166 NGOs, and on the NGO Information Portal in Bulgaria - 77 organizations. The most active categories - ethical issues (5), culture (8, of which 1 community centers), youth policies (9), promoting economic development - (9), education (19), social services (7). In this area, as a whole, there are far fewer NGOs, and it is also specific that organizations in the social sphere are less likely to share.

Although, according to the data, the civic sector is not particularly developed, the role of civic organizations in involving young people has been recognized. The Berkovitsa Municipal Youth Plan explicitly states that young people prefer to be involved in various informal initiatives and civic structures in order to participate and be involved in specific goals or processes.



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There is an open desire to work with the civil sector, but no specific measures for the awarding or financing of activities relevant to the municipality are foreseen.

Concept for the development of social enterprises as an opportunity to solve the problems of uneducated, uneducated and unemployed young people in Montana district

In order to create sustainable models of social entrepreneurship in the area, it is necessary to pay attention to the preconditions for the creation of which should be worked at national level. That is why we have paid particular attention to them in section A below.

Specific suggestions for how social entrepreneurship can be used to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable groups, and what specific actions should be taken are presented in Section B, C and D. Specificities for each category are explicitly mentioned where necessary in view of the information gathered from the meetings held. Proposals for incentives for social entrepreneurship are grouped into three categories:

- Support for a supportive environment;
- Capacity and productivity investments;
- Partnership development.

A. Prerequisites:

1. Relationship with social policy

One of the most important conditions is to continue to invest in the development of social policies and services that can address the serious risk factors (which are the reason for the exclusion of young people from the Roma ethnic group), as well as to enable social enterprises. be able to build on social impact. Various and sufficient social services need to be developed to ensure that all kinds of support are available (services for people with disabilities are currently prioritized). In addition, there is a need to further stimulate the development of partnership in these areas through the mechanism of contracting these services.

Example: The connection between the social support for the target group and the opportunity for real employment in the social enterprise is clearly evident from the example of the Phoenix Inspire Association, which runs a coffee shop and a



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tea shop in Vidin. Young people from vulnerable groups have the opportunity to study in the field of cooking and thus have a chance to enter the labor market, and ultimately to ensure a better life. By itself, Phoenix Inspire does not provide specialized social services to young people employed by the company. In most cases, the social training and skills that young people should acquire in parallel with the qualifications are provided through partnerships of the organization with other NGOs that provide this type of social services to a relevant vulnerable group.

Example: An example that clearly confirms the need to develop social entrepreneurship in parallel with providing social support to a group of young people exiting the social services system is the Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion Foundation activities and programs. The Hope Soap Workshop provides training for young people leaving home for their children (they are mostly minority in origin, in particular Roma, with low educational status, lack of key social and psychological skills, lack of a supportive post-institutional network). The Bethel Foundation, which works for the social reintegration of drug addicts and other vulnerable groups, has taken a similar approach. The foundation manages a social enterprise - a shop for the restoration and sale of used furniture, which also includes representatives of the target group. Currently there are 5 people employed in social enterprise activity who have received training in restoration and woodworking. This helps to create a job CV and subsequent hiring is easier.

Given the difficulties in the development of the study area of economic nature, on the one hand, and the serious social context of the scope and depth of the problem, finding a solution solely through the launch of new social services is not a sustainable solution. It relies primarily on government delegated activities (which are expensive and almost always require additional co-financing by municipalities). For its part, the national budget shrinks and relies on local decisions, especially in view of financial decentralization. Having social services in the community alone will not be enough to solve the problem. Very often, they support the vulnerable group at the primary level, but they do not help it get out of the circle of social exclusion and dependence and find its lasting solution in employment, education, and access to healthcare. In this sense, the development of an entrepreneurial culture among social service providers will further help to deal with social problems more effectively, especially in the presence of 'problem generators' - many specialized institutions for children and a possible perspective



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on - what happens to children, when they are 18 years old). Social entrepreneurship in this case can be complementary and stabilizing to the effect of these forms of social support.

Important: Representatives of the area recognize social entrepreneurship as a tool that can achieve greater results for the target group. But the overall conclusion is that this social intervention will require additional incentives.

In order to develop the forms of social entrepreneurship in the district, the general factors for the economic development of the district will be important. Either way, the profile of most businesses in the Montana District is Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, which most often include Social Enterprises.

2. An interdisciplinary approach

- Developing measures specifically aimed at returning to school and creating skills

As this is one of the most serious problems identified, it is advisable to set up a stand-alone program aimed at developing such skills in Roma young people to return to education and/or development of skills that compensate and / or help them cope.

Another important measure is the introduction of a co-ordination mechanism at school level, involving CPD and local social services, so that early school leaving risks and manifestations that could be a serious threat to the normal development of the child can be identified.

These programs should also involve local organizations in order to gain experience and expertise in this field. Emphasis should be placed on partnering with municipalities to encourage schools to work with NGOs in their efforts to return children to school.

Example: Varna Municipality has for several years implemented its own Program for the educational integration of children and students from different ethnic groups and disadvantaged social status. The Competitiveness Program finances small projects for kindergartens, schools or NGOs aimed at achieving the objectives of the program. In parallel with this mechanism, the municipality has been allocating funds from its own budget for supporting projects and youth activities of NGOs for 11 years. Both initiatives are implemented by the same



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directorate of the municipality - "Education, Youth Activities and Sports", and the rules for conducting the competitive procedure for project selection are regulated in an ordinance adopted by the municipal council.

- **Urgent addressing of housing that can be successfully combined with forms of social entrepreneurship.**

In this way, a comprehensive approach will be proposed in solving a serious social problem, which leads to serious social exclusion of the family, and hence of the child.

Example: The "Shelter for Humanity" Foundation, Sofia, is implementing a program aimed at improving the living conditions of vulnerable people. The Interruption of the Poverty Cycle: A Holistic Community Development Approach recognizes adequate housing as an important element of everything needed to break the cycle of poverty. In the village of Pamukchii, Shoumen district, given the specifics of the community they work with (permanently poor Roma), the Foundation builds basic houses for the Roma and allocates funds for the renovation of the existing building stock in the village. In order to achieve sustainability, they work with partner organizations to develop opportunities for the economic development of the area and job creation. Although there is no classic entrepreneurial component, this initiative and the results of its implementation are appropriate to be upgraded with social entrepreneurship.

- **Provision of expert experience - health and education mediators**

Mediators are in themselves a social innovation through which representatives of the target group can be employed, on the one hand, and on the other - providing good and fast access to the group. According to Montana County, these practices are working, necessitating their further strengthening with funding where available and creation where they are lacking.

Example: Since 2012, a new "Expert of Expertise" has been introduced in the Classifier of Occupations and Posts, thanks to the efforts of the Global Initiative in Psychiatry Foundation - Sofia and the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law within the project "Pilot implementation in the Bulgarian context of the concept of experts who have experienced social exclusion", implemented with the financial support of the European Social Fund and the Republic of Bulgaria through OP HRD, scheme "No Borders - Component 1". Global Initiative in Psychiatry - Sofia has successfully used this model of integrating representatives



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of the vulnerable group they work with (people with mental health problems) into the labor market and social inclusion. The Foundation currently employs three full-time and two part-time experts.

- **Linking employment, social policy and education programs - general planning at least at the municipal / district level.**

It is not necessary to integrate all this into one program, but in their planning it is necessary to draw a horizontal link so that, apart from duplicating without coordination the target groups, a clear social result can be achieved..

B. Strengthening the partnership

In order to be able to use the concept of social entrepreneurship and be accepted, partnerships need to be further developed and stimulated in the Montana District.

Potential partners in the development of social entrepreneurship initiatives and support measures can be grouped in several directions:

- Regional/ district administration

This state structure must be involved in order to be able to achieve the following results: (a) modification of regional strategy documents, which are key to the development of the whole area and would be grounds for allocating national resources; b) they can be a successful focal point between the different municipalities and an opportunity for cooperation; (c) can ensure involvement of national institutions (Social Assistance Agency, Employment Agency, Regional Office of Education).

- Communities

Municipalities are a key partner because they have different resources - besides the financial resource (which is very limited in smaller settlements), they have buildings, but they also have the opportunity to support social enterprises by buying their products, using them. services and more.

Example: A social enterprise - a tailoring workshop for the training and work of young people from vulnerable social groups was created by the National Alliance for Volunteer Work. The aim is to give young people of low social status from vulnerable groups the opportunity to receive training and employment in the



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labor market through the acquisition of vocational and social skills. The company is the result of a partnership between the municipality of Plovdiv and the National Alliance and is funded by the Society for Assistance to Bulgarian Homes, Berlin through donors from the German city of Dortmund, as well as courtesy of the CSC "St. Georgi" - Plovdiv. The workshop is housed in the "St. Georgi" - Plovdiv, and the value of the investment for the first year is 50 thousand euros. With part of the funds, major repairs were made to the premises - flooring, joinery, partition walls construction, and specialized technical equipment and machinery were purchased. The workshop began providing support for four young women at the time of the start-up.

Next, resources should be invested in enhancing the capacity of local NGOs and municipalities to maximize social contracting opportunities. This is a good approach to bring together the efforts of the most local stakeholders to overcome the problems of vulnerable groups on the ground. This will help to create better conditions for upgrading subsequently with socially entrepreneurial activities.

Municipalities should be encouraged to apply through partnership projects focusing on social entrepreneurship and innovation.

The planned resource under operational programs for the current programming period 2014-2020 should be used to strengthen partnerships between local authorities and social enterprises.

Important: The practice in the previous programming period 2007-2013 was to use financial support for the development of social enterprises by municipalities to finance their own initiatives in this field in the form of so-called "municipal social enterprises". Given the characteristics of the Montana district, as well as the EU's understanding of social enterprises, such a practice would not produce successful and lasting results (burdens the municipality with unusual functions, such a practice does not stimulate the development of a local competitive market and does not impose successful models of fair competition - which are indispensable in order to maximize the potential of social entrepreneurship to solve problems).

It is important to note that the best practice in other countries is for local authorities to promote social entrepreneurship and support social enterprises, but not by creating their own. This hinders private initiative and hinders the development of opportunities other than municipal 'social enterprises'.



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- Local Non-Government Organizations

NGOs that have been successfully working with the Roma group, in some form but on a small scale, have been identified in the area. The involvement of such organizations as partners in the development of social entrepreneurship on the ground is a good move in terms of using their accumulated experience and resources. It is also important that all forms that are currently acting in this direction, recognized by the community, receive additional support or the opportunity to build on the results they have achieved. In this sense, it is recommended that similar structures involving young Roma be encouraged and supported (including through joint projects). It would also be extremely useful to include community centers, which, according to NGO portal data, are involved in some of the educational and youth activities in the district and can be a successful resource for access and development of activities in small settlements.

- Local Business

Usually, in their corporate social responsibility programs, local companies seek support for sustainable social solutions. Therefore, local businesses should find their place in a well-structured program to support social entrepreneurship in individual areas, on the one hand as institutional partners, and on the other, by being encouraged to incorporate such initiatives into their corporate social responsibility strategies. In Montana County, there is a history of serious corporate social responsibility for social projects.

Important: The development of social entrepreneurship as a tool for overcoming the problems of vulnerable groups in various fields (social, health, educational, labor market integration, etc.) is supported within the corporate social responsibility of many companies. For example, Vivacom supports the Hope Soap Soap Workshop of the Social Change and Inclusion Foundation, the UniCredit Foundation of UniCredit Bulbank supports the Bulgarian Center for Nonprofit Law's Social Entrepreneurship Program, Reach for Change is a joint initiative of New Television and Rich Forge Foundation.

C. Improving the development environment

The following needs have been identified for the Montana District:



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- providing specialized knowledge and activities - for example, the knowledge and capacity to undertake vocational training, which requires a licensing procedure and trained experts;
- staff who know and are prepared to work with the needs of Roma youth;
- Knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship such as developing business plans, their implementation and specialized knowledge in marketing, communications, etc.;
- provision of infrastructure (production, access to markets) and financing;
- Understanding the importance and capabilities of social enterprises;
- trust and collaboration with local authorities.

Currently, in Montana, these resources are scattered between the district, the municipality, local NGOs (registered as providers of social services; working in the field of vocational education; business incubators; managing youth information centers), national NGOs providing social services in its territory. Targeted action is needed to pool resources, with the focus on maximizing the involvement of local organizations and thus ensuring the sustainable development of the social entrepreneurship.

In order to develop social entrepreneurship at the local level, it is very important to have an environment to stimulate this. The recommendations in this regard are:

- Inclusion of social entrepreneurship as a specific priority and measure in regional strategies for the development of social services and municipal ones, as well as in local strategies for the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (where available) and in youth strategies.



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For example, the regional development strategy has a number of measures targeting small and medium-sized enterprises, or in general the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, but there are no explicit/specific measures for those SMEs that include vulnerable groups. Enterprises remain in the competitiveness and economy section and vulnerable groups in social development (with the exception of sometimes measures aimed at supporting entrepreneurs who employ disabled people).

Each of the adopted strategies (most of which have a 2020 horizon) needs to explicitly envisage measures aimed at supporting social entrepreneurship, which will ensure that public resources are allocated to the development of this policy.

- Provide a mechanism for assessing the impact of different social instruments.

Many measures are envisaged to address the problems of the target groups, but good policy requires constant assessment of the effectiveness (how well they achieve the set goals) and the efficiency (with what resource) of the measures taken. Introducing such a mechanism will help demonstrate the need to stimulate successful models and reduce support for those who are less effective. This is how the benefits of social entrepreneurship can be demonstrated, including against other policies aimed at integrating target groups.

- Designation of a responsible person at the local level for the development of social entrepreneurship.

Once a policy has been adopted to support social entrepreneurship, it is also necessary to designate a responsible person to monitor its implementation. It is good for such a person to have a strong interest, but also a high enough position to encourage other structures to fulfill their commitments.

- Introduce additional local measures that are directly related to the programs of the Employment Agency.

National and regional plans envisage various measures aimed at tackling unemployment, including the target group mentioned. In this case, it is important that employment measures are also supported by the activities of social



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enterprises, which in turn provide continued care and support for the most vulnerable groups of the unemployed to be included in the labor market.

The Montana District Strategy for Roma Integration (2012-2020) outlines a general measure aimed at Objective 4 "Employment" - "Promotion of Entrepreneurship" to start a business. Some of the most successful models are when a network of services is in place.

D. Ensuring development capacity.

In addition to a supportive political environment, social entrepreneurship needs initiative, good ideas and organizations with enough capacity to come up with them and subsequently to realize them. Very often, organizations that are familiar with the problems of the target groups do not have the courage, ingenuity or knowledge to launch some type of entrepreneurial initiative on their own without training, funding and support.

- **Establishment of a municipal-level fund to support initiatives of civic organizations.**

This will enable local civic organizations to develop, gain more recognition and, in particular, reach more people about socially significant causes. Building this resource is also necessary in view of the fact that local organizations are the strongest factor in building successful partnerships.

This will be needed as a first step in the Montana District because of the underdeveloped civic sector. Such funding can be combined with support for the development of entrepreneurship by NGOs. When funding the capacity building of NGOs to develop citizens' initiatives, funding can be provided in the form of grants. In this way, civic organizations will build on what they do in the social field and this small grant will enable them to develop a sustainable practice for working with their target group. A good starting point is that in the Montana district, NGOs working in the social sphere, youth activities and education are the most numerous. Creating such a local program will develop the capacity and resources of local organizations.

In addition to helping local organizations actively develop specific civic initiatives, the fund should provide opportunities to improve the organizational



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development of these NGOs, as well as their ability to ensure the financial sustainability of the organizations themselves.

Example: There are similar mechanisms to support the development of local civic organizations and initiatives in the municipalities of Troyan, Varna, Ruse, Lovech. A municipal fund for projects of citizens, civic organizations and informal groups has been operating in Troyan since 2011. For 2011 the budget of the Fund is BGN 20,000, for 2012 it has been increased to BGN 35,000 and remains so in 2013. The Fund is managed directly by the municipality, but the annual allocation of funds is carried out through a special mechanism for broad public discussion and participation in the process. Public forums are organized in which interested citizens and organizations discuss the need and the possibility of implementing specific partnership projects and ideas on specific topics. Potential candidates for support from the municipal fund submit their ideas to the forum and those who have received the most support are supported by funding. The situation is similar with the municipal project support fund of NGOs in the town of Lovech, where the public discussion is seriously involved at the stage of identifying the areas of support from the fund and selecting the specific projects. In Rouse, the fund is set up at the municipal foundation "Rousse - City of the Free Spirit", established in 2012. Each year, the municipal council votes on the Foundation's budget, which is distributed on a competitive basis in favor of local NGOs or in the form of scholarships for local students with outstanding talents and scientific achievements. The Municipal Council annually determines the areas of support of the Foundation, and the competition mechanism is regulated in several regulations adopted by the Foundation.

- Ensuring the sustainability of Roma initiatives through greater involvement of local organizations.

Firstly, the important role of local social entrepreneurship development organizations must be emphasized. In the Montana district, the major providers of social services are not local but large national organizations. In the event of a future change in the municipality's policy of delegating services, it may be that at the local level there is no strong enough organization to serve as a corrective to the local government.

One way to overcome this trend is by encouraging large providers to partner with local organizations - for example, to develop social entrepreneurship related to their delegated social services.



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- **Promoting the model of social entrepreneurship.**

Many organizations are not aware of what social entrepreneurship is and what it has to do with their social or other activities. Conversations with organizations in the area raised different ideas for such activities. That is why it would be stimulating for organizations to learn about successful examples, as well as invest in brainstorming sessions to discuss social business ideas to engage with target groups.

- **Developing a program to support start-up social enterprises through training and counseling and create the conditions for exchanging experience and sharing resources between them.**

Very often, people are guided by a specific social idea and the way to implement it (recognizing the possibility of additional and related business activity as a mechanism for finding solutions to the problems of the target group; creating a business plan, the stages of its initial implementation in practice, marketing skills, and the like) is lacking in skills, which makes it difficult at all to actually start a business. Training and consulting support in the fields of planning, marketing, communications, fundraising would greatly help the groups and entrepreneurs themselves to organize themselves better and more successfully.

Example: "Women's Alternative for Independence, Ethnic Tolerance and Association" (ZHANETA), Razgrad is a non-profit organization providing social services and support for disadvantaged children and families (many users have very low social status and difficulties to meet their needs children who are raised). The organization launched several entrepreneurial initiatives in the period 2005-2006 with a grant, such as the "Dream" Children's Playroom, the "Red Hat" Children's Playhouse and the "Smile" Party Center. Single mothers were trained as babysitters and then hired for the initiatives. Unfortunately, the social entrepreneurship of the organization ceases 1 year after its start due to "lack of market in Razgrad" for such services on the one hand, and on the other - due to lack of financial assistance in the next stage of development.

There is a business incubator in the Montana district that has the necessary knowledge and can play an important role in a future program. At the same time, there is a lack of a mechanism in the district to enable already existing social



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enterprises and those that are being created, to exchange ideas and share available resources to solve typical problems in the development process.

Example: An essential part of the Social Center for Social Entrepreneurship Program of the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law is the mentoring and training support that NGO participants receive when preparing a business plan and the necessary conditions for launching a business initiative. Such expert support is needed during the first steps of starting a business idea, especially in the fields of marketing, advertising, attracting initial investments, fundraising, etc.

E. Incentives for social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship also needs a resource to invest, as well as other incentives. This section lists several possible ways to support social enterprises to start or grow their businesses. And something that is crucial - social enterprises need long-term assistance. It is no coincidence that the most successful social enterprise support programs are long-term.

- **Providing financial support**

In addition to building the capacity to do the specific "business", it is necessary to provide a resource to start or support in the first stages of realizing an entrepreneurial idea that is not high-interest (as the bank would provide) or that requires serious collateral (which these groups do not can provide). Therefore, programs aimed at providing a resource, competitively, whether gratuitous or low-interest, are a serious incentive to get started. In the case of financing for the development of social entrepreneurship, the support can be structured as a resource fund, in partnership with municipalities/districts and microfinance institutions operating in Bulgaria (such as Microfund AD).

Important: The Atelier for Occupational Therapy for Mentally Disabled Adults is an initiative of the National Alliance for Volunteer Work, Plovdiv, in partnership with the Home for Mentally Disabled Adults "St. Doctor", Plovdiv (specialized institution for providing social services to persons with mental retardation) and Art workshop at the community center in the village of Kurtovo Konare near Plovdiv. The workshop provides specialized training for adults with intellectual disabilities to improve their motor skills and improve their work skills and social contacts with people outside the institution. The entrepreneurial element of the



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enterprise is the sale of the manufactured products (mats, household accessories, dolls, icons, etc.), with all the proceeds from this activity being invested back into the Occupational Therapy Workshop. The initial investment was extremely important for the Atelier to get started. It was estimated at \$ 5,000, all of which was raised through a widely publicized donation campaign.

The Resource Fund should allocate support on a competitive basis. One way is to stimulate the solution of a particular problem, to call for a competition for ideas for social entrepreneurship and to select and support the best ones. Support should also be provided for the next stage in the development of the idea, which can be expressed not only in mentoring in the development of the enterprise, but also with the opportunity to "support" development. It is advisable to provide financial support in a flexible way (including individually).

Example: The Earth - Source of Income Foundation has built a support model that can be borrowed to build such funds. The Foundation aims to help disadvantaged families start small businesses and thus earn income by providing them with information, advice, training and access to financial resources through its Agribusiness Center and the newly established Land and Income EOOD. The Foundation manages a Fund that grants about 2000 - 3000 levs on average to enterprising disadvantaged families (mainly Roma, but not only), who cannot rely on bank financing because they have nothing to secure the loan. The recipients of the funds must necessarily contribute with their own labor and their own financial resources. The approved financial assistance for the benefit of families is used to purchase land and other assets needed to start a business that is initially owned by the Fund, but gradually with the development of the business idea and the gradual payment back to the funding provided, the property is transferred to assisted families. The Fund's revenue is actually derived from the management of its assets.

Example: The availability of such funds, which non-governmental organizations would have access to, would be important for social enterprises aiming to encourage the target group to start their own businesses and to use a specific property resource. Hayredin's "New Road" Association, for example, provides land and bee hives to individuals who have been trained within the "Bee" social enterprise and want to start their own businesses.

Partnership with the municipality and the local (developed) business will be crucial for the functioning of such a fund, as it will lay the foundations for long-



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term joint initiatives, mutual recognition and the achievement of common goals for the development of the local Roma community.

Example: Such support would be extremely valuable for a number of difficult social enterprises. For example, "Samaritans" Association - "Samaritans" Ltd. Although it had a good start nearly 10 years ago, the company is currently in a difficult business and needs a supportive investment. The credit products of the banks are inaccessible and extremely risky for the association as they do not comply with the specifics of its activity and that of its own company. The programs of other lending institutions behind the achievement of social goals, such as "Microfund" AD and "Ustoy" AD, are not sufficient to satisfy such a need on the one hand, and on the other, their products are geared directly to assisting representatives of the target groups and their families, not the organizations that provide them with systematic support and employment opportunities.

- **Creating more opportunities for giving away municipal property for free.**

A successful form of support will be renting a premises - something that is a serious investment and would support social entrepreneurship. In this sense, Montana County municipalities that have a problem with financial resources can take steps to support low-cost or municipal or state-owned rentals to support the operation of the social enterprise.

This incentive may also be combined with the financial support resource above.

Important: Such support has played an important role in the development of the social enterprise "Laundry Green" of the GIP-Sofia Foundation, which has been granted a 10-year right of use over an entire house in Slatina, and is home to social services, which manages the foundation, but also the laundry. A similar example is with the "Betel" Foundation for the development of a furniture restoration shop.

- **The municipality can also support social enterprises by using the services provided by social entrepreneurs for the social services delegated by the municipality.**

In conclusion, the review of experience in other countries and the outlined context for the development of social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria shows that in



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order to be able to make the most of it as a tool for solving significant social problems (and they certainly are identified for the Roma group) efforts need to be made at national and local level.

The main conclusion we can draw is that in order for social entrepreneurship to be effective, we need to have well-functioning and stable civic organizations, a local authority that relies on the partnership and invests local resources in it, a business that is socially committed to solving public problems. Therefore, active advocacy at national level is needed to introduce a coherent policy to promote the development of social entrepreneurship as an important tool for addressing the problems of the target groups (through the implementation of the measures mentioned in section A), as well as to carry out periodic evaluation of the impact of this policy.

At the district and municipality levels, on the other hand, concrete efforts should be made in building sustainable partnerships between local government, business and the non-governmental sector. The economic situation in the study area, which, in combination with other factors, has led to a deepening of the problems of the population and, in particular, to a lack of resources to help local authorities solve problems of this nature. Usually the answer that follows is that without money there is no way to develop a "business" which in turn can solve the complex and serious problems of marginalized groups or people. But another answer is possible - examples not only from other European countries but also from other places in Bulgaria - give it. A solution that is sustainable and helps seriously vulnerable groups to jump over poverty and exclusion is possible. Those who succeeded did so with little support, especially in the beginning. Therefore, we can make assumptions about what will happen if there is a targeted policy and a specific program to support more such initiatives.

In this regard, what would be a good start at the local level are the creation of local funds to fund social entrepreneurship ideas for NGOs, the provision of resources to multiply successful models of social enterprises through accessible financing and exchange of business experience, creating conditions for the competitive offering of products to social enterprises and their promotion. In each of these interventions, roles and responsibilities should be allocated to the three sectors at the local level (public, business and non-profit) in order to ensure the development of local expertise. In addition, in order to have an adequate solution to the social problem, it will also be necessary to ensure maximum



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involvement of young people who are further excluded from the Roma group. As the Montana District figures show, the only forms that show their involvement in anything at all are the forms that provide the space to feel involved, to do something, and to change their lives and those around them.

A major obstacle to Roma employment is the high level of illiteracy. Low literacy impedes the access of Roma to capacity-building and vocational training measures and limits their ability to find work and earn a decent income. About 55% of Roma aged 15-59 who are registered with the Labor Office in Berkovitsa have not even completed primary education.

Labor market policies with the potential to reach the Roma people

Labor Market Policies (LMPs) are state interventions that aim to improve market efficiency, are aimed at striking a balance and supporting selective groups in their access to the labor market. Labor market policies are categorized in terms of the instruments they seek to facilitate access to the labor market for the unemployed. There are three main types of intervention:

(1) labor market support, (2) measures and (3) services.

Supporting the labor market uses passive instruments that provide financial assistance to the unemployed (e.g. unemployment benefits) for a fixed period of time.

Labor market measures are interventions aimed at increasing the employability of the unemployed. This includes various interventions such as trainings, direct job creation, wage subsidies, incentives for start-ups and travel assistance.

Labor market services include information for job seekers on job creation, client services (counseling, CV writing, etc.) as well as job search for unemployed people.

Analyses and evaluations usually follow this categorization and evaluate the results of one or more elements of labor market policies. However, research rarely focuses on how these policies and measures reach specific target groups such as the Roma. The inclusion of Roma in the labor market is usually discussed in relation to equality or diversity policies, but rarely within the framework of labor market policies.



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There is a significant difference between countries in terms of spending on labor market policies, ranging from 0.02% of their GDP (Romania) to 3.38% of GDP (Denmark). The share of the costs of supporting the (re) integration of the unemployed into the labor market is usually inversely proportional to the seriousness of long-term unemployment. Romania and Bulgaria are among Europe's Lowest Budget Countries: Bulgaria's Expenditures 0.6% and Romania 0.02% of their GDP for Labor Market Policies.

The internal cost structure of labor market-oriented measures is also an important indicator of the state's vision of supporting the unemployed in their return/employment. Romania and Bulgaria have a very similar internal cost structure: direct job creation obviously prevails. Most countries have a more balanced cost structure, including a more even focus on (re) qualification, employment incentives and start-ups, and job creation is rarely a dominant measure. The reason for this is that studies confirm that job creation is the least effective tool with regard to the long-term (re) integration of unemployed people into the labor market. On the other hand, training, especially tailored to individual skills and tailored to the needs of the local economy, is a category of active labor market policies (ALMPs) that can have a significant positive effect on overall labor market outcomes in the medium term.

Bulgaria

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Employment Agency are the main mediators involved in the implementation of national employment policies, including programs and measures targeting the Roma. Unemployed Roma can be reached both through general and specific measures, all of which are funded by the state budget and EU funds.

In 2017, there was a significant increase in Roma participation in labor market measures. It can be explained by two factors: the increase in the number of Roma labor intermediaries and the implementation of activities under the European Youth Guarantee.

The Employment Agency's National Program for Activating Inactive Persons is the source of funding for the employment of Roma labor intermediaries. This measure is ethnically oriented and accessible to the unemployed Roma. Labor mediators support better communication and assistance between Roma and state institutions, such as employment agencies and labor offices, thus narrowing the gap between institutions and marginalized Roma communities. The average



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annual number of Roma labor mediators in 2017 reached 9216, which means that the scope of the program is close to its highest levels since the end of the last decade when it was launched. During the economic crisis, the program fell victim to austerity measures, like many other programs.

More than two-thirds of Roma labor mediators are women, and a quarter of them have a university degree. However, their work efficiency is limited by wages, which remain well below the national average wage in the country.

In the last two years, the activities of Roma labor intermediaries have been complemented by the work of mediators recruited and trained under the European Youth Guarantee. The role of the Youth Guarantee in increasing Roma employment is significant: while in 2015 2,010 unemployed young Roma participated in various forms of education and employment, in 2017 the program had 1 966 participants. In addition, Roma mediators were able to motivate another 3,012 unemployed young people to register with the labor offices. However, it should be noted that the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee is significant for groups with secondary and tertiary education, but it has limited results for low-skilled young people, such as the majority of Roma. She also uses Roma from the mediation program: there are several Roma among the newly appointed youth mediators.

The third approach to increasing Roma employment, namely entrepreneurship support, seems unsuccessful: Roma employment policy has failed to meet its objectives of promoting the start-up and management of its own micro-business. Only 1 565 people participated in trainings for starting and managing their own business for the 10 years of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, which is much less than the planned indicator for this activity - 11 500.

Potential of the Business for Roma inclusion

Our approach in this project is new in the sense that a change is expected regarding the exclusion of Roma from the labor market at the initiative of a player other than the state: it is oriented towards the educated Roma by linking them to jobs in the corporate sector. Multinational companies operate on a completely different principle from that of state agencies: their goal is to make financial profits and rarely engage in social inclusion or support for vulnerable groups. However, the changing demographic of the workforce in most European



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and North American countries requires a change in the strategies of business corporations. The Romanian and Bulgarian labor markets are also experiencing a growing shortage of skilled labor (closely linked to the immigration of workers in Western Europe). While the employment of inactive segments of the population so far would be an obvious solution to the problem, the inclusion of the Roma, as the largest and least integrated minority in the cross-border region, remains a serious challenge. Existing research shows that there is no agreement on how Roma should be integrated into the labor market in the labor market. We will present a brief overview of research on diversity policies and diversity management in the corporate sector.

Organizational management studies are asymmetrical. In the West, several case studies and comparative studies have been conducted on the successes and failures of diversity management methods, while in Eastern Europe, with the exception of a few isolated cases, there are no such academic and research traditions. This is due to a number of reasons, including a lack of a long history of a market economy and relevant academic experience with corporate organizational culture, a lack of social experience with multiculturalism, and therefore limited interest in managing diversity in the corporate sector. The literature review provides information on key issues related to diversity management, with particular emphasis on the applicability of these integration methods and management tools to Roma inclusion.

But first, we have to answer a few important questions: When talking about diversity management, what is the specific purpose of these approaches? Do we see it as a charity where the corporate sector helps the poor, disadvantaged people, the segregated groups in society? Or is it happening for the greater common good, for the well-being of all, which in the long run also leads to individual benefits? Or is it something more specific like a financial gain, a profit that drives the whole process?

A number of studies have highlighted that diversity management can bring different benefits to team performance in the business sector. According to some, diversity in the workplace involves not only better utilization of talent, but also greater creativity and opportunities to solve problems within an organization.

One of the key aspects of diversity management is to raise the personal awareness of all participants in the process regarding race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation and more. This approach is consistent with diversity



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management initiatives, consisting of training and development efforts such as diversity awareness training, leadership training, mentoring and personal support groups. Diversity as a resource becomes the focus of this approach whereby the whole process of managerial intervention aims to make better use of the various skills, talents and knowledge of employees.

There are three typical regional-specific models in terms of corporate attitudes to diversity and diversity management practices.

☐ Assimilationist model: The suppression of differences and behavior characteristic of a racial disparity model in which the only way to differentiate among different employees is based on merit and job performance. This model is the most widespread.

☐ Lessee model: based on the idea of tolerance of diversity. Employee differences are taken into account here, business operations are based on their differences (eg call centers and consulting firms where employees from different countries contribute to the business with their language skills and relevant cultural competences), but workforce diversity is not managed from above through management tools or other. The management hopes that it will not encounter significant conflicts between different employees and resort to intervention only for unexpected problems that require "solutions". Otherwise, "things are resolved by themselves" Many companies take advantage of and benefit from a diverse workforce, but are less open and willing to use management tools for intervention, unless absolutely necessary.

☐ Integration model: in our view, this is the most advanced model and is based on the idea of accounting for diversity and capitalizing it constructively, through mediation and governance. This model is typical of small companies with a horizontal structure and a democratic decision-making process.

As far as widespread attitudes toward diversity are concerned, the Montana region, like many regions of the country, is struggling with its long-standing historical heritage of the assimilationist model (the prevailing national culture suppresses others), accompanied by a lack of multicultural experience.

From a managerial and organizational perspective, more problematic dimensions of diversity, such as ethnicity or sexuality, remain unaccepted in the region. This also happens as a consequence of not declaring these kinds of differences (people do not declare their disadvantage in questionnaires, even when asked because



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they are afraid of being stigmatized or lose their jobs first in possible redundancies) or of self-censorship of organizations, provoked by concerns of not being accused of collecting "sensitive information".

Mostly large companies "allow" people from different groups and have a diversity management policy, because of the large number of employees, the likelihood of hiring a Roma or a representative of another minority is simply higher. Small companies do not usually hire people from minority groups and therefore do not manage diversity. Certain sectors are more likely to employ Roma than others; this includes sectors requiring heavy physical work, difficult working conditions (construction) or other negative aspects. The current and growing labor shortage in the region may change the situation, but this is not yet supported by research evidence.

The Roma minority in Romania

The Roma population in Romania is the second minority after the Hungarian minority. At the census conducted in 2011, there were a total of about 620,000 Roma people, an increase by 15.6% from the census results for the Roma population in 2002. Roma represent 3.2% of the total resident population and it is relatively uniformly distributed throughout the country. The Roma population registers relatively high percentages in the following counties: Calarasi (8.1%), Mures (8.8%), Salaj (6.9%), Bihor (6.1%). The Hungarian minority has a majority in the counties of Harghita (84.8%) and Covasna (73.6%). According to different estimations, the number of Roma in Romania is between 1,5 - 2,5 million persons, around 10% of the total population.

The difference between the data registered in the census and the estimates made in various reports is because Roma do not declare their identity as a consequence of the fear accumulated throughout the history (deportations, pogroms, actions that happened during the Second World War), and also because of the process of assimilation in the communist period, when even the use of the Romani language was forbidden.

EDUCATION

The main education policy instruments for the Roma population are the National Education Law (Law 1/2011) and the Strategy of the Government of Romania for Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for the period



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2012-2020, Chapter Education (Government Decision no. 1.221/2011). Regarding the Roma population, over the last 20 years the most important educational public policies implemented by the Ministry of Education are:

- Special seats for Roma in Universities (as affirmative measures to improve access to high education) - the beginning of the programme was in 1992, as an initiative of the University of Bucharest.
- School mediators program (2000)
- Promoting Romani language at university level by setting up the Romani language & history department within the Foreign Languages Faculty part of the University of Bucharest (1998)
- Setting up the position of Inspector for Roma Education within the School General Inspectorate (1999)
- Bilingual kindergarten summer (Romani-Romanian, 2012)
- The Second Chance Program (2015): it is not only for Roma, but the majority of the beneficiaries are Roma
- Forbidding segregation in education (2007)

Despite the fact that both NGOs and various institutions have implemented activities within the remit of the public policies listed above and other programs and projects for Roma, the educational level of the Roma population is still very low. Various studies carried out in the recent years show the following educational problems of the Roma population in Romania:

- Only 37% of Roma children with age between 3-6 years are in pre-school education
- There is a significant discrepancy between national average (93.5%) and the enrolment rate of Roma (70%) in primary school
- 25% of the adults over 16 years old declared that they cannot read and write, and women are more affected by illiteracy; 23% of the Roma population did not graduate from any school.

For many Roma families the last level of education is the completion of eight grades. The lack of financial resources is one of the reasons why Roma students do not continue their studies after they finalize the eight grades.



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The level of education of the Roma population is closely related to their level of qualification and labour market integration. Only 17% attend high schools or vocational schools.

HEALTH

Romanian citizens benefit of free medical services in the public health system if they have a health insurance. Employees with a labour contract receive a mandatory medical insurance. People who are not employed may benefit from health insurance if they pay a certain contribution for the medical insurance. Also, all the children up to 18 years or up to 26 years if they are students receive free medical services in the public health system. People who do not have health insurance receive only emergency medical services in a minimum package of health services.

In the study conducted in the frame of the project "EU - Inclusive", the data collected shows that only half of the people included in the research had health insurance compared to 97% of the Romanian population. Also as a consequence of this situation, Roma access to health services is limited, morbidity among the Roma population is higher than the majority of the population and the life expectancy in some areas is up to 10 years lower.

The program of health of mediators initiated by Romani Criss in 1996, is a good practice for the facilitation of Roma access to health services. This program was taken over by the Ministry of Health that trained and hired health mediators.

HOUSING

More than a half of the Roma population lives in rural areas. A large part of the Roma live in the peripheral areas of localities. Relevant differences are observed between the neighbourhoods in which the majority of population and the Roma population live. The endowment of the houses of the Roma with goods for long-term is deficient, for example, only 37% of Roma own a refrigerator. Also, Roma houses are made by materials with a poor quality and they are overcrowded.

Regarding this, 23% of the Roma persons share the same room with at least two more persons.

Regarding utilities in Roma houses in 2017, 36% of the Roma houses were connected to the drinking water network and 91% from the houses of the Roma were connected to the electricity network compared to 84% in 2008.



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EMPLOYMENT

The low level of education of the Roma population is closely related to their access to the labour market. In addition, Roma face discriminatory attitudes when they look for jobs. After 1989, in the transition period, many Roma have lost their jobs, one of the causes are related to the fact that some sectors were disbanded such as was the case of agricultural cooperatives. The vast majority of Roma do not own land, so a good part of the Roma are daily workers in rural areas.

Traditional crafts practiced by Roma are transmitted from generation to generation. The most popular traditional jobs in which Roma can be found are: blacksmiths, musicians, silversmiths, brick making, coppersmiths, spoon makers. Approximately 3/5 of Roma practicing traditional crafts are found in rural areas.

Traditional crafts are practiced by about 13% of the employed Roma persons.

Modern professions such as auto mechanic, driver, welder, electrician, painter, worker sanitation are also found among the Roma population in urban areas. Also in the system of education there are Roma people working as: school mediator, teacher of Romani language, school inspector.

The employment rate of the Roma population was 35.5% compared to 58% national employment rate of the population in 2019 .

Lack of jobs is the main barrier to social inclusion of Roma in Romania.

Romanian Legislation in the field on non-discrimination

a. The Romanian Constitution

The fundamental law of the state, the Romanian Constitution expressly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political adherence, property or social origin. In addition, it "recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity." It provides for the equality of citizens "before the law and public authorities, without any privilege or discrimination" and mentions that "any instigation to [...] national, racial, class or religious hatred, any incitement to discrimination" are prohibited by law.



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The Constitution provides that international treaties on fundamental human rights have priority to national regulations in case of disparities, unless the Constitution or laws comprise more favourable provisions. In this way, the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights are directly applicable, having superior legal force to other internal legislation.

b. The Framework Law regarding the prevention and sanctioning of discrimination

The principle of equality and non-discrimination provided in the Constitution is further detailed through the Governmental Ordinance No. 137/2000 on the prevention and punishment of all forms of discrimination (hereafter Anti-discrimination Law or GO 137/2000). It transposes into the Romanian legislation the Directives 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

Since its adoption in 2000, the Anti-discrimination Law has been amended several times. The amendments improved significantly the Anti-discrimination Law, but further clarifications and amendments are needed in order to improve the legislation in the field.

The Anti-discrimination Law defines discrimination as follows: "any difference, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, social status, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic disease, HIV positive status, belonging to a disadvantaged group or any other criterion, aiming to or resulting in a restriction or prevention of the equal recognition, use or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social and cultural field or in any other fields of public life."

This article lists all the grounds which the Anti-discrimination Directives provide for, but also adds some other grounds such as 'social status' and 'belonging to a disadvantaged group' and by the expression 'any other criterion' leaves the list open.

The Anti-discrimination Law defines the following forms of discrimination: direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, incitement to discrimination, harassment,



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victimization and multiple discrimination. It also sanctions the breach of the right to human dignity.

The provisions of the Law are applicable in all the public spheres of life, especially in political, economical and cultural fields. Its general fields of application are: equality in economic activity and in employment; access to public services (administrative, judicial, healthcare and other services) and to goods and facilities; access to education; freedom of movement, right to freely choose a residence, access to public places; and the right to personal dignity.

Through extending the Anti-discrimination Law's applicability to all grounds and in any public field, Romania has introduced into the national legislation an enhanced protection of the victims, as compared to the one stipulated in the Directives.

c. Other laws providing for non-discrimination

The Anti-discrimination Law is complemented by numerous other relevant provisions from various areas of law such as labour, criminal and administrative fields.

The Labour Code provides for the principle of equal treatment in employment relations both for employees and employers and prohibits all forms of discrimination. According to the Code, the employee has the right to adequate working conditions, social welfare, security and healthcare in work, to equal payment for equal work and to respect of dignity and conscience without discrimination. Discrimination is also prohibited in establishing and granting wages.

The National Education Law stipulates that the Romanian state grants to all of its citizens equal rights to access to all levels and forms of education, without any forms of discrimination. Among the governing principles at pre-university and university level, the law mentions the 'principle of recognition and guarantee of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, the right to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity', as well as 'the principle of ensuring equal opportunities'. Discrimination on the grounds of age, ethnicity, sex, social origin, political views, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or other criteria is prohibited expressly only in tertiary education (university level). There are also provisions on affirmative measures. In 2007, the Ministry of Education issued an order prohibiting the Roma children's



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segregation in schools and a methodology for prevention and elimination in schools of the segregation of Roma children. In addition, according to the National Education Law, inclusion of children in special education needs groups due to abusive diagnostic assessment based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, belonging to a disadvantaged category, or any other criterion "shall be punished".

d. Specific legislation regarding Roma

Discrimination of Roma is prohibited by the laws described above either on ethnic ground or belonging to disadvantaged group, or through general non-discrimination and equality provisions. Other criteria, such as language can act as a proxy for the ethnic ground. The right of Roma people to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity, as persons belonging to the Roma national minority, is inscribed in the Constitution and other relevant laws.

After the Strategy of the Government of Romania for improving the condition of the Roma for the period 2001-2010, a new strategy was adopted in 2011. The Romanian Government's Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2012-2020 outlines objectives in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, culture and social infrastructure.

Predominant negative stereotypes (Roma don't want to work, Roma don't want to get employed legally) are present also at the responsible authorities' level having a mandate in helping Roma access to the labour market. Roma people consider themselves discriminated against by the public institutions, being treated "worse or similarly" with people of other ethnicities. They consider that ethnic affiliation is an important aspect for being successful in life and for getting a job, but also for their children to have success at school. The unemployed Roma people state that their unsuccessful access to the labour market is due to the general economic context of Romania, the lack of competences or qualifications, ethnic discrimination, or because of their household activities, for example raising children. Among the interviewed Roma people, 45% had the opinion that ethnic discrimination is one of the main causes why unemployed Roma cannot find a job.

In Romania exist some subgroups or social categories that have less opportunities in terms of access to education, employment and channels of participation. The access to education, social integration of Roma young



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people and their participation to the broader society triggered long-term debates among researchers, youth workers and policymakers. If migration raised new challenges concerning the access to education and the participation of vulnerable groups in Romania, the Roma remained the subgroup with the lowest levels of education, difficult access to education and training programmes, social services, labour market and fair working conditions, but also with a limited access to institutional forms of participation. Usually, Roma youth are engaged in various forms of undeclared work and are not supported by their families to pursue a long-term formal education, many of them becoming integrated in the social security system. At the same time, Roma youth are facing ethnic stereotypes and discrimination and many of them live in isolated communities. If the common perception is that the low level of education and the early school drop off of Roma youth are triggered by cultural factors and cultural and ethnic particularities, recent studies show that 85,7% of the children interrupting school declare that financial difficulties and the need to participate in household activities determine the early school drop and not the lack of interest of Roma families in formal and non-formal education.

Recent studies highlight the fact that many Roma families are forced, because of poverty, to keep their children at home without participating in any form of learning and training. This fact presents unfavorable implications in the further development of these young people as complete beings and limits their contribution to the development of society. More importantly, the long-term disengagement from formal and non-formal education leads to the increasing feeling of social exclusion of these non-participating young people. The likelihood that these children, who are limited to primary education, will be able to acquire in the future higher levels of education is very low in the Romanian case, resulting in long-term non-participation.



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SECTION II. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to have disabled people as their specific workforce in the labor market. These individuals are often subject to discrimination and isolation. The reason for this is the existing prejudice in society that people with disabilities are "second hand". Overcoming these attitudes and integrating the unemployed from this target group, creating conditions for a normal life and social integration and realization in accessible occupations and specialties are among the key priorities of the employment policy pursued. At the same time, interaction between different state bodies and employers, implementation of modern practices and commitment of the whole society is of great importance for their achievement.

EXHIBITION

Overcoming the social impact of the economic crisis and mobilizing labor potential in order to provide the necessary workforce in an economic growth environment requires an integrated approach to social inclusion and activation of disadvantaged groups.

People with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to dignity, independence and full participation in public life. Providing the opportunity to benefit from this is at the heart of both EU activities and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by the EU.

The purpose of the Convention, which entered into force on 3 May 2008, together with its Protocol, is to promote and protect the full and equitable enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. In substance, this is a significant step forward: the document identifies disability not only as a matter of social assistance but also as a human rights and legal issue.

The Convention reflects the core elements of the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which combines anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and active inclusion. Rights recognized by the Convention cover almost all policy areas and the EU Disability Strategy seeks to ensure its full implementation.



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Areas of action

Accessibility

Accessibility is essential for the individual to participate in society. The EU Disability Strategy therefore seeks to eliminate the access difficulties they face. The main areas of action include the built environment, transport, information and communications, and services.

The EU uses tools such as research, policies, legislation and standardization to ensure the provision of affordable services and products across the European Union. In addition, steps are being taken to improve the functioning of the market for products with special accessibility for people with disabilities, to ensure that it works for their benefit. The European Commission promotes the Design for all approach to maximize use by the population. Work is also underway to create a European accessibility law defining the main framework for goods and services.

Participation

People with disabilities and their families should be able to participate equally with others in all aspects of social and economic life. They should be able to exercise their rights as citizens, including the right to move freely, to choose where and how to live and to have full access to cultural, recreational and sporting activities.

The Commission is working to remove the barriers that people with disabilities face in their daily lives, as individuals, consumers, learners, participants in economic and social life. Examples of this activity include: promoting a European parking card for people with disabilities; supporting the transition in the Member States from institutional to residential care and promoting participation in sport by organizing special sporting events for people with disabilities.

Equality

53% of Europeans believe that discrimination on the basis of disability or age is widespread in the EU. The EU promotes equal treatment of people with disabilities through a two-pronged approach, covering legislation and strategies against discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in other policies. Also, serious attention is paid to the impact on people with disabilities of discrimination on the basis of age, gender and sexual orientation.



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The Commission ensures the full implementation of the EU directive prohibiting discrimination on the labor market on the basis of disability. Diversity and the fight against discrimination are also promoted by raising awareness at European and national level and supporting the work of NGOs in this field.

The Commission has also put forward a proposal for another directive on equal treatment, but this time outside the field of employment, covering access to goods and services.

Employment

Quality jobs provide independence, stimulate personal development and offer the best protection against poverty.

The Commission is seeking to improve the employment situation of people with disabilities. It pays particular attention to the difficulties of young people with disabilities. Working conditions and professional development are taken into account with the social partners. Other measures include more accessible jobs, facilitating on-the-job training and improving access to the open labor market for people with disabilities in the employment of people with disabilities.

As many people with disabilities need help, there is a growing need for personal care assistants and care providers.

Member States shall define their employment policies in accordance with European guidelines. The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth has set a target of reaching a 75% employment rate in Europe. Therefore, the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor market must be increased, thus helping to reach the goal of saving 20 million Europeans from poverty by 2020.

Education

The EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 focuses on quality education and lifelong learning. They are key factors in enabling people with disabilities to participate fully in society and improve their quality of life. However, this has not yet been achieved and there is considerable segregation in European education.

The EU respects national responsibility for the content and organization



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of education. At the same time, national efforts are being promoted to promote inclusive education and lifelong learning for pupils and students with disabilities. Also, the Lifelong Learning Program promotes their mobility within the EU.

Social protection and inclusion

People with disabilities should be able to benefit from services such as social protection, poverty reduction programs, disability assistance and community housing. Member States are primarily responsible for these issues but define common objectives and indicators in a framework called the Open Method of Coordination.

Efforts at national level are evaluated by the European Commission and the Council in a joint report highlighting the achievements of pan-European initiatives in individual countries. The Commission is also assisting EU candidate countries and pre-accession countries in reforming their social care systems. Joint Incorporation Memoranda are drawn up to set priorities.

The EU supports national measures to ensure high-quality, sustainable social protection for people with disabilities, notably by facilitating policy exchanges. In addition, the development and implementation of social innovation programs is encouraged.

Health care

People with disabilities need equal access to high-quality, gender-sensitive health care, rehabilitation and other specific services.

Member States have the primary responsibility for organizing and providing healthcare. The Commission supports policies to improve access to basic care and specific services for people with disabilities. It also promotes safety and hygiene at work so as to reduce the risk of work-related accidents and help people with disabilities return to the labor market.

External activity

The EU and its Member States promote the rights of persons with disabilities in their foreign policies, including enlargement and international development.

The EU outlines the situation of disability as a human rights issue by raising awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with



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Disabilities as part of its humanitarian aid work. Disability issues will continue to be publicized in international organizations such as the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Commission will also monitor the progress made by candidate and potential candidate countries in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Instruments from pre-accession financial assistance will be used for this purpose.

EU instruments

The EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 provides a framework for concerted action at national and European level to improve the situation of people with disabilities. It aims to:

- make goods and services and aids available for the disabled,
- ensure that people with disabilities enjoy all EU civil rights,
- promote the provision of high quality, residence based services,
- fight discrimination for disability,
- facilitate access for many more disabled people to the open labor market,
- promote inclusive education and lifelong learning for pupils and students with disabilities,
- fight poverty and social exclusion by ensuring adequate living conditions,
- promote equal access to health care and related services,
- promote the rights of persons with disabilities through international and EU enlargement programs,
- raise awareness of disability issues and make people with disabilities better aware of their rights and how to exercise them,
- improve the use of EU financial instruments for accessibility and anti-discrimination.

Financial instruments



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Structural funds

The European Social Fund supports the active inclusion of people with disabilities in society and the labor market. It participates in the financing of projects that increase the opportunities for employment or adaptation of human resources to the labor market. The European Regional Development Fund finances the development of basic infrastructure in Europe. These funds have provisions that prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability and guarantee compliance with accessibility requirements. Member States are responsible for funding priorities and project selection. An important criterion for the selection of projects is accessibility for people with disabilities.

Progress Program

Since 2007, several projects for people with disabilities have been funded under the Progress Program for Employment and Social Solidarity. These projects contribute to achieving the goals set by the EU in the fields of employment, social inclusion and protection, working conditions, gender equality, combating discrimination and diversity. Progress also has a European Union co-financing mechanism for NGOs for people with disabilities.

The Framework Programs for Research and Research support research and technological development for people with disabilities in areas such as information and communication technologies, transport, the built environment, aids for the disabled and social problems.

Citizens' Involvement

Each year, on 3 December, the European Commission, together with the European Disability Forum, organize a conference to mark the European Day of People with Disabilities.

These conferences bring together politicians, people with and without disabilities, academic experts, the media and other stakeholders. They are part of the EU's efforts to publicize the problems of people with disabilities, as outlined in the European Disability Strategy.

They also encourage the exchange of good practice in important areas for the active inclusion of people with disabilities and encourage networking.

Each year there is a different topic related to disability. Previous topics included independent lifestyles, local activities, the internal market, design



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for all, education and employment.

The conclusions of these conferences are reflected in the European Commission's disability policy and support the disability strategy.

The employment of people with disabilities in Bulgaria is a national priority for our country as an EU member, subject to constant political and public attention, as well as the maximum degree of coordination of policies related to it.

The implementation of this vulnerable group in the labor market is one of the main tools for integrating people with disabilities in all areas of public life.

The term "disabled people" refers to persons whose physical, mental, or mental health disabilities have been impaired as a result of various disabilities, in a manner that deviates from the typical age, thereby preventing them from participating in life society."

The Disability Integration Act extends the above definition by adding the following: "A person with permanent disability is a person for whom the medical examination authorities have established a degree of disability or have determined a type and degree of disability of 50 and over 50 percent."

People with disabilities have limited employment opportunities due to discrimination, lack of education, experience, and trust. People with disabilities are discriminated against in comparison to other workers and receive a lower wage.

Persons with disabilities are approximately 10% of the European Union's population, with the majority of them elderly. In 1998, the European Commission adopted a *Code of Good Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities*, and in May 1999 the social partners formally adopted a Joint Declaration on the Employment of People with Disabilities. The European Employment Strategy and its guidelines formally recognize and formulate the problems faced by people with disabilities in finding and retaining a job. According to the Employment Agency in Bulgaria, 13 525 people with disabilities actively sought employment in 2012, representing 4% of the total number of registered unemployed persons. In 2014, the share of registered unemployed with permanent disabilities was 4.1%. The unemployed in this risk group are distinguished by some physical, mental, professional and educational characteristics:



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- people with common diseases - persons with 50 to 70 percent of disability are included in this group. They have largely retained their ability to work, making it easier to get a job, except for workplaces associated with heavy physical activity.

- people with disabilities of the musculoskeletal system. Their number is about 20% of the total number of persons with reduced working capacity. It is difficult for them to find the right job, but even if they are not found, they cannot be realized due to the lack of accessible environment.

- people with mental and mental disabilities - the proportion of registered job seekers is around 11%. Their chances for employment are insignificant. Employers refuse to hire them.

- People with visual impairments have a relative share of almost 9% of the total number of registered persons, and their chances of employment in the free labor market are very low.

The Disability Integration Act creates conditions for the use of the rights of persons with disabilities for self-determination and full participation in the life of the country and in the realities of the market economy. It aims to provide:

- equality of persons with disabilities;
- social integration of people with disabilities and the exercise of their rights;
- support for people with disabilities and their families;
- integrating people with disabilities into the work environment.

For the implementation of the state policy for the integration of people with disabilities, the Agency for People with Disabilities is established.

The Agency for People with Disabilities provides information on funding opportunities for projects and programs under the Disability Integration Act to:

1. people with disabilities;
2. employers/appointing authorities;
3. specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities.

The employment of people with disabilities is a priority that requires constant political and public attention as well as a maximum degree of coordination of policies related to it. In this regard, a Long-term strategy for the employment of



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people with disabilities with horizon 2011-2020 was developed and adopted. Its vision is to create conditions for full integration of people with disabilities in the economic and social life of the country by providing access to adequate forms of vocational training and employment for people with disabilities.

Ensuring conditions for the effective exercise of the right to freely choose the employment of people with disabilities in working age and improving their quality of life is a key objective of the **Long-Term Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2011-2020**. The main areas of work include:

- Ensuring employment of unemployed persons with permanent disabilities in working age, including through flexible forms of employment, in the primary labor market and under employment programs, with a view to overcoming their social exclusion and their full integration into society;
- diversifying incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities and adjusting their work environment to their needs;
- Impact on employers' attitudes and stereotypes regarding the employment of people with disabilities;
- Providing access to finance and opportunities to start an independent business;

An accessible information and communication environment

Since August 2013, Bulgaria is the first European country to have a unified system of government policy towards people with disabilities. An extremely comprehensive database has been created, based on more than 100 documents (regulations, strategies, programs) with nearly 1600 indicators affecting, in various aspects, health status, social, employment and educational status, a register of people with permanent disabilities and information for current programs in this area.

In implementation of the Project "Creating a Unified System for Managing the Complete Process of Implementing the State Policy for Working with People with Disabilities in Bulgaria", the Agency for People with Disabilities has built and implemented this information system. The system provides access to information, including for people with disabilities - a program for the work of the blind is installed. Currently, agreements have been concluded to provide and exchange data relevant for the employment of people with disabilities with the National Social Security Institute, the Employment Agency and the Ministry of Education and Science. The



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National Social Security Institute provides information on a monthly basis in accordance with the provisions of the agreement. The information collected in the information system is used to improve the process of development and increase the efficiency of implementation and control over the implementation of the state employment policy for people with disabilities. It assists the Agency for the Disability in analyzing, planning and implementing the state employment policy for people with disabilities at national, regional and municipal levels. Information that does not contain personal data is publicly available and can be used by all interested citizens and organizations. Data collection in the information system is carried out in compliance with human rights and fundamental freedoms, ethical principles, observance of the Law on Protection of Personal Data and relevant legal framework, ensuring confidentiality and privacy.

In the area of integration of people with disabilities, an integrated approach to policy management is applied. The policy of integration of persons with disabilities is related to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the need for persons with disabilities to ensure the full enjoyment of their rights without any discrimination. This policy applies the new person-centered approach.

According to data from the Employment Agency in 2016, under the National Program for Employment and Training of Persons with Permanent Disabilities, 1 592 persons were included in new employment. In 2017, programs and measures funded by the state budget aimed at providing employment for people with disabilities continue to be implemented.

People with disabilities should have access to appropriate forms of vocational training and rehabilitation, and their employment opportunities should be announced on the open labor market. Access to the labor market depends to a large extent on the qualifications obtained through vocational training, which can only begin after the educational minimum has been obtained. This means that in order for people with disabilities to participate actively in the labor market, it is necessary, first and foremost, to have access to the education system. The vocational training of students with disabilities is carried out in the system of the existing special schools or in the specialized training centers for people with visual or hearing impairments. It is well known that training in special schools offers a limited choice of professions that often do not meet the requirements of the labor market. The Employment Agency



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data eloquently supports this finding, namely:

In order to provide suitable forms for qualification and retraining in 2016, a Professional Project was implemented under the National Employment Action Plan. The project targets the most vulnerable groups in the labor market, one of whom is the disabled. The people involved in the project are trained in the professions of cook, waiter, bartender, sales consultant or computer operator. During the project implementation period, 41 unemployed persons with disabilities participated.

Another project implemented under the National Employment Action Plan is the Chance of Success, in which people with disabilities are also one of the target groups. Conflict management training and vocational training in construction, engineering, administration and management, secretarial and administrative activities, applied informatics and food technology were provided under this project. 29 disabled people have successfully completed the vocational training course.

In order to increase the professional and key competences of the unemployed in accordance with the National Plan, a project "Improving the employability of unemployed persons through increased professional and key competences" is being implemented at the Bulgarian-German Center for Vocational Training. The project includes a set of measures for information, counseling, motivational training, acquisition of knowledge and skills in different professions/specialties, key competences and social skills. People with disabilities are the main participants in the project activities.

There are seven Social Training and Professional Centers (SOCCs) operating on the territory of the country with a total capacity of 432 places. The SOCCs provide social services aimed at vocational training for persons with disabilities and persons with disabilities over the age of 16. With the admission of the trainees an assessment of the needs for each is made, an individual plan of work during the training is prepared. A team of highly qualified specialists periodically reviews this plan and updates as necessary. The training is carried out according to curricula and programs agreed and approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science. The course ends with qualifying exams. Students receive a certificate of professional qualification. The training is conducted in study rooms in theory, workshops on teaching practice and in a real production environment. The professions to be mastered



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are carpentry, orderly, worker in the catering establishment, construction assistant, tailor of women's and men's clothing, floriculture and landscaping and more. The aim is for people with disabilities to acquire the necessary professional qualifications, which will enable them to enter the labor market.

Establishment of a system for continuous training and professional development of the staff in specialized enterprises and cooperatives for people with disabilities.

The training and qualification of the employees in the Labor Productive Cooperatives (TPC) is being carried out, which is one of the priority tasks of the leadership of the National Council of the Labor Productive Cooperatives. Upgrading skills is an important factor both in improving productivity and in the sustainable development of the cooperatives in which people with disabilities work. The content of the training is oriented towards issues that are important for the more effective management of TPC. The main topics discussed are Entrepreneurship and Management, SME Development, Innovation - Features, Policies and Practices, PPP Public-Private Partnership and Social Entrepreneurship, Management Systems of human resources - an opportunity for implementation in the CCI. The knowledge gained by CCP leaders and specialists enables them to meet the challenges of a market economy, especially in times of economic and financial crisis. In 2016, 156 people were trained.

Providing suitable employment forms:

In 2014-2016, the average number of persons employed in specialized enterprises and cooperatives of persons with disabilities was 3,110, of which 1 575 were persons with permanent disabilities. People with disabilities work in the production and service sectors as follows:

- In the field of production - clothing mainly in the field of clothing, footwear, knitwear, knitting, hotel supplies, stationery, food production, flowers, herbs, mushrooms, canned goods, production of electrical installations, plastic, metal products and filters, cardboard, carpentry, furniture and stonemasonry, printing, printing and publishing, manufacturing and packaging of medical devices, production of household articles made of wood, straw and bamboo, creation and broadcasting of radio programs, production of software products you; martenitsas and fir-tree decorations.
- In the field of service provision, disabled employees offer computer



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service, accounting, bookbinding, dental, cosmetic and social services, occupational therapy for patients from healthcare facilities; tourist activity; machine cleaning of offices, sanitary facilities and public buildings, public laundry, maintenance of green spaces, servicing of automatic coffee and hot drinks machines, auto and transport services; construction and assembly services, etc.

Under the Integrated Persons with Disabilities Act (ZIHU), specialized enterprises and cooperatives of persons with disabilities should be registered under the Commercial Act or under the Cooperatives Act, produce goods or provide services. The list of personnel should have a relative share of persons with permanent disabilities, as follows: for the blind and visually impaired - not less than 20 percent of the census staff, and for specialized enterprises and cooperatives of persons with disabilities hearing for people with other disabilities - not less than 30 percent of the census staff. All employees, including people with disabilities, work with or have a basic employment contract.

The Agency for People with Disabilities maintains a Register of Specialized Enterprises and Co-operatives of People with Disabilities, which stores and keeps up-to-date data on both the constantly changing list of staff and the percentage of people with disabilities working there and the activities of registered organizations.

To create conditions for strengthening and enhancing the competitiveness of specialized enterprises and cooperatives, the Government of Bulgaria, together with nationally representative organizations of and for people with disabilities, prepares specific proposals for amendments to the Public Procurement Law, which is one of the key laws for regulating the procedures on the use of public funds for the implementation of projects of the state, municipalities and other contracting authorities in the field of construction and supply of goods, and services. This law is a working financial instrument for the real support of specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities, therefore measures have been taken to overcome one of the main obstacles, namely the elimination of the condition that specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities can fulfill the most - less than 80 percent of the subject of the contract with own production. It should be noted that the PPA is in line with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of



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Persons with Disabilities, namely: promoting the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include preferential employment programs, economic incentives and other measures.

In connection with increasing the competitiveness of specialized enterprises and cooperatives through the implementation of a procedure for granting financial aid for investments in modern technologies and equipment through the implementation of contracts for investment projects concluded by the specialized enterprises and cooperatives in the period 2014-2016 70 new jobs for people with permanent disabilities working in a specialized work environment. 27 investment projects have been implemented for technological renovation and organizational improvement of business activity, equipment and job creation, refurbishment of existing jobs and improvement of competitive opportunities.

Currently, there are 131 specialized enterprises and cooperatives of persons with disabilities registered in Bulgaria, employing 2,950 persons, of whom 1,520 are disabled. The Agency for People with Disabilities implements programs aimed at social entrepreneurship, whose main purpose is to provide employment for people with permanent disabilities with a view to overcoming their social exclusion, fully integrating them into society and creating preconditions for an independent and dignified life.

The Agency for People with Disabilities is one of the institutions relevant to the development of independent economic activity by people with permanent disabilities. The program is regulated by Art. 31 of the Law on Integration of Persons with Disabilities and Art. 19 of the Rules for Implementation of the Disability Integration Act. The Agency for People with Disabilities conducts competitions annually in accordance with the methodology approved by the Minister of Labor and Social Policy, which was refined in 2013 and the amount of the subsidy has been increased from BGN 15,000 to BGN 20,000 to reduce the administrative and regulatory burden for applicants under the Program.

In 2014, two competitions were held at the Agency for People with Disabilities for people with permanent disabilities who wish to start or expand their own business. The number of projects financed was 28, with a total grant amount of BGN 327 100. In 2015, the projects received were 115, of which 32 were approved. The total grant amount was BGN 541 222.



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Funded projects of persons with permanent disability in the 2014-2016 period are of different focus. The activities for which the Agency for People with Disabilities awarded funding were in the areas of production, crafts, services and trade.

National Program for Employment and Training of Persons with Permanent Disabilities

The National Program is aimed at increasing the employability and employment of registered unemployed persons with permanent disabilities or successfully treated drug addicts of working age, as a prerequisite for overcoming their social exclusion and their full value integration into society. Priority in the program includes persons with over 71% reduced working capacity; disabled war veterans; people with sensory disabilities; people with mental disabilities. Employers create jobs under the Program for a period of 24 months, including, as a matter of priority, those who have signed a financing agreement under the Integration of Persons with Disabilities Act to provide access to jobs, as well as to adapt and / or equip jobs for people with disabilities. In 2014, the Program included 413 persons with permanent disabilities. On average, 1,748 persons worked monthly. Funds in the amount of BGN 6 683 026 have been spent. In 2015, 1592 persons with permanent disabilities were included, with an average of 1818 persons working monthly. Funds in the amount of 7 878 881 BGN have been spent.

Encouraging employers to hire unemployed persons with permanent disabilities up to the age of 29, including disabled war veterans, as well as youth from social homes who have completed their education under the Employment Promotion Act.

In 2014, 114 young people with permanent disabilities were included in employment under the Employment Promotion Act (EPA). On average, 112 persons worked monthly. The funds spent amounted to BGN 248 471. In 2015, 81 young people with permanent disabilities were included in the above mentioned measure from the Health Protection Act. On average, 86 people worked monthly. The funds spent amount to 168 246 BGN.

The measures for the employment of unemployed persons with permanent disabilities, including war invalids under the Employment Promotion Act and the employment of unemployed persons with permanent disabilities for temporary, seasonal or part-time work in 2014 included a total of 629 persons with



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permanent disabilities. On average, 554 persons worked monthly. The funds spent amounted to BGN 1 453 670. In 2015, the mentioned employment measures included a total of 1295 persons with permanent disabilities. On average, 832 people worked monthly. The funds spent are in the amount of BGN 2 353 493.

National program „Interest-free loan for people with disabilities”:

The purpose of the program is to provide employment, equal treatment and creation of conditions for leading a complete life and employment of people with disabilities, which subsidizes the interest of borrowers with disabilities under the Guarantee Fund for Microcredit Project (GFM) of the Ministry of Labor and social policy. In 2014, the program reimbursed the interest rates of 69 borrowers with disabilities. The funds spent amounted to BGN 74,990. In 2015, the interest was repaid to 40 persons with disabilities borrowers under the Program. The funds spent amount to 33 369 BGN.

National Program “Disability Assistants”:

The National Program is implemented in the activity “Personal Assistant” and provides employment for unemployed persons of working age who take care of their relatives permanently - seriously ill or with permanent disabilities, thus preventing the risk of their falling into poverty. The program has a significant impact on reducing the number of people with disabilities accommodated in specialized institutions by bringing them into a family environment and facilitating job creation in the field of social services. In 2014, the Program included 4,253 personal assistants who provided ongoing care for 3,338 disabled or seriously ill people. On average, 3,338 people worked monthly. Funds were spent in the amount of BGN 9 864 753. In 2015, 4495 personal assistants were involved in employment under the Program, who cared for 3504 disabled or seriously ill people. On average, 3504 persons worked monthly. Funds in the amount of BGN 9 013 723 have been spent.

New Opportunities Scheme under Operational Program "Human Resources Development", Priority Axis 5 "Social Inclusion and Promotion of the Social Economy", Major Area of Intervention 5.1: "Supporting the Social Economy":

The procedure is implemented with the financial support of the European Union through the European Social Fund. The total amount of the grant is BGN 30 million. The activities were carried out on the territory of the whole country



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during the period 2011-2013, the aim being to support the process of development of the social economy and the creation of social capital, through the support of the municipalities for providing employment and activity to persons from risk groups. The implementation of the scheme is in response to the need to introduce models to support the development of social enterprises to achieve social impact, by improving the social status of persons from vulnerable groups. 32 contracts were concluded with the value of 8 203 650,76 BGN. In 2013, 30 contracts were implemented in which social enterprises for landscaping and public works, catering, including public dining rooms, home social patronage, for carrying out technical activities in support of the municipal administration, were opened laundry and traditional crafts.

In 2015, there were 30 social enterprises operating on the territory of the country, 20 of which were opened in 2013, employing 518 persons from vulnerable groups (including staff of management companies and specialists). , all of which cover more than one vulnerable group of persons: persons with permanent disabilities, persons deprived of imprisonment, single parents, many mothers, persons from minority ethnic groups, persons leaving specialized institutions, persons suffering from various addictions, long-term unemployed persons, object social assistance.

Operation Chance for All under Operational Program "Human Resources Development", Priority Axis 5 "Social Inclusion and Promotion of the Social Economy", Intervention Area 5.1. "Supporting the social economy":

In 2013, the implementation of the scheme was completed, with a total grant amounting to BGN 20 million. The operation was aimed at supporting the social inclusion of people with disabilities by supporting specialized enterprises and cooperatives for people with disabilities to provide training for the acquisition or upgrading of vocational qualifications and employment for people with disabilities. The scheme focuses on training for the acquisition or upgrading of vocational training and/or for the acquisition of key competences of people with disabilities and ensuring their subsequent employment for one year. The measures target both new recruits and employees of these organizations, thereby ensuring increased competitiveness and stabilization of market positions. The scheme was divided into two components in accordance with the state aid regulation. As a result of the implementation of the projects 109 people have been trained. The number of people who started work in the social



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economy sector is 29, with employment being provided for all.

Projects with the support of the Human Resources Development Operational Program, aimed at improving the quality of services and reaching more users from disadvantaged groups, are also continuing.

Some of the most successful social services to support people with disabilities and their families in the home environment are the services of "personal assistant", "social assistant" and "home assistant". In 2015, "Personal Assistant" included 4 495 persons.

Under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" in 2014, the scheme "Qualification services and promotion of employment" continues to be implemented, which provides training for acquiring or upgrading the professional qualification of unemployed persons, with priority for people with disabilities, and subsequent internship with an employer for a period of three months.

Under the Compassion scheme, projects are ongoing to create or expand the activities of support centers for people with permanent disabilities.

In 2017 the activities under the National Program for Employment and Training of Persons with Permanent Disabilities and the Credit without Interest for Persons with Disabilities continue.

The main goals of the implemented programs are to expand employment opportunities for people with permanent disabilities in the following areas:

- ensuring long-term employment for people with disabilities of working age;
- ensuring social integration and opportunities for increasing employability;
- improving the professional skills and qualifications of people with permanent disabilities;
- reducing the poverty rate of people with disabilities in working age;
- Reducing poverty in working-age families of people with disabilities;
- raising the standard of living of disabled people;
- raising the standard of living of disabled people for the group by 29;



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- reducing the number of unemployed people with disabilities in working age;

Indicators of realized benefits for 2014 and 2015 are presented in Table. 1

Table. 1. Benefits/impact indicators and targets

<i>Benefits/effects:</i> Performance indicators	Unit	Target value	
		2014	2015
1. Integrated people with disabilities in the community by providing translators and escorts for visits to community, health and cultural institutions.	number	41 000	41 000
2. New jobs created for people with disabilities under Art. 25 and Art. 28 of the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities.	number	60	60
3. Jobs with ensured and/or improved health and safety at work.	number	1 100	1 100
4. Technologically updated specialized enterprises and cooperatives by their total number.	percentage	15	15
5. People with disabilities included in rehabilitation and social integration activities.	number	3 000	3 000
6. Entrepreneurs - people with disabilities who have started an independent business activity.	number	35	35

Emphasis is placed on deinstitutionalizing care and extending access to services, supporting families, creating a more effective funding mechanism and creating an independent and dignified living environment for people with disabilities according to their individual needs.



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Providing employment mediation:

The “Labor Office” Directorates carry out labor mediation of the so-called. disadvantaged groups in the labor market, incl. people with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are equal when using the services provided by the territorial divisions of the Employment Agency - “Labor Office” Directorates, after registering as job seekers:

- information on job vacancies announced;
- information on programs and measures for maintaining and promoting employment;
- Information and recruitment mediation;
- psychological support;
- professional orientation;
- participation in adult learning;
- inclusion in employment and training programs and measures;
- Scholarships for training, means of transportation and accommodation for the duration of the training.

The complex problems associated with the employment of people with different disabilities condition the implementation of a differentiated approach to their care, tailored to their specific needs, health and educational attainment. In this regard, each “Labor Office” Directorate has a designated labor intermediary to work with this group of job seekers.

In 2014, the average annual number of persons with permanent disabilities registered with the “Labor Office” Directorates was 15,100, with a share of 4.1% of all registered unemployed persons. Out of them, 5 502 persons were employed through the mediation of the Employment Agency.

In 2015, the average annual number of registered persons with permanent disabilities was 15 670, their share of all registered unemployed persons being 4.2%. Out of these, 7 515 persons have been employed through the mediation of the Employment Agency.

Ensuring an adequate regulatory environment:



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The realization of the labor market of people with disabilities is one of the main tools for their integration in all areas of public life.

According to the Disability Integration Act, the employment of people with disabilities is carried out through an integrated and specialized work environment.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Employment Agency are developing and implementing national employment promotion programs and measures that provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the labor market. The programs and measures provide incentives for employers to provide employment for people with disabilities. The employer or the appointing authority is obliged to tailor the workplace to the needs of the disabled person when hiring him or when the injury occurs to the disabled person after hiring him, unless the costs are unreasonably high and would seriously hinder the employer.

The employer or the appointing authority, respectively, may apply for projects with The Agency for People with Disabilities for a grant to: provide access to the workplace for a permanently disabled person; adaptation of the workplace for a person with permanent disability; permanent workplace equipment for the workplace.

The Agency for People with Disabilities annually determines the amount of funds it administers to fund employer projects. The Agency for People with Disabilities provides funding for approved projects on the basis of a contract with the employer. The employer employs people with permanent disabilities for at least three years after the funds have been utilized. An employer who has not utilized the funds under the contract or has not appointed people with permanent disabilities reimburses the amounts received with legal interest. The procedure for applying for and granting funds is set out in the Implementing Regulations (ZIHU).

An employer who has concluded a contract under Art. 25, para. 3 of ZIHU, enjoys preferences provided that it does not use such under the terms of the Employment Promotion Act: funds from the state budget for 30 percent of the contributions paid by the employer for the state social insurance, the compulsory health insurance and the supplementary compulsory pension insurance for employees with disabilities in accordance with the procedure laid down in the law implementing regulations; the funds spent for the purposes of art. 25, para. 1,



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shall be accounted for in accordance with the effective accounting legislation and the tax law shall apply the general order of the Corporate Income Tax Act. The Agency for People with Disabilities controls the spending of funds.

According to Art. 27 of ZIHU from the total number of jobs under Art. 315, para. 1 of the Labor Code, the employer determines not less than half for people with permanent disabilities. The employer is obliged to notify the territorial divisions of the Employment Agency about the assigned jobs and to announce the vacancies therefrom within 14 days after their determination.

The Council of Ministers approves a list of goods and services that are assigned to specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities under the procedure of the Public Procurement Act.

The Executive Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities approves programs and projects for the initiation and development of independent business activities of persons with disabilities under the conditions and in the order specified in the Regulations for the implementation of the law.

Programs continue to be implemented through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to target the employment of people with disabilities.

- o Creating new jobs for people with disabilities, by financing employer projects from the usual and specialized work environment to provide access to jobs for people with disabilities, to adapt and equip them. These programs encourage cited employers to hire people with permanent disabilities, which overcomes their social exclusion, provides them with a steady income, reduces the cost of social assistance, and achieves their full integration into society.

- o Jobs with secured and/or improved health and safety at work - financing projects of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities with social orientation, through which health and safety at work is achieved, improving the qualification of the employed in disabled people and others. This leads to a reduction in the risk of work-related accidents and prevents health workers from being prevented. This activity is in line with one of the objectives of European labor market policy, namely improving the quality of jobs.

- o Technologically renewed specialized enterprises and cooperatives by their total number - an important indicator of the extent to which the specialized enterprises and cooperatives of disabled people are modernized and modernized.



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The technological renewal of these enterprises and cooperatives is vital for their survival, especially in a time of global economic crisis.

- People with disabilities involved in rehabilitation and social integration activities - financing projects of non-governmental organizations in the field of rehabilitation and social integration of the target group. This program achieves a partnership of the state with the non-governmental sector for the implementation of various activities.

- Entrepreneurs - people with disabilities who have started self-employment - provision is made to encourage self-employment for people with permanent disabilities. It is the same form of employment that very often is the only alternative for people with permanent disabilities for employment. By starting an independent business, people with disabilities reintegrate into society, improve their social and financial status, become full citizens who can lead the decent life that everyone deserves.

- o Sites of international, national and regional importance, adapted for people with disabilities - funding for projects to provide architectural access and adaptation of cultural, sports and historical sites provides prerequisites for active social inclusion of people with disabilities with specific needs their spatial movement for their participation in the cultural, social and sports life in the country. Thus, their social significance and self-esteem are increased and their inclusion in the national cultural and historical wealth of the country is achieved.

- o Employers of people with disabilities enjoying the preference for reimbursement of their contributions - this indicator takes into account the number of used employers from a specialized and ordinary working environment from the reimbursement of a percentage of their contributions paid. The reimbursed funds are used by employers for the rehabilitation and social integration of people with disabilities, as well as for investments. This preference seeks to provide better working conditions for disabled workers in specialized enterprises, cooperatives and treatment centers and to encourage employers from normal working environments to hire disabled workers in working age, thereby integrate into society.

Annually until 31 August of this year nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities and organizations of employers of people with disabilities may submit to the ministries consumers and other contracting authorities within the meaning of the Public Procurement Law next year proposals



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containing the types of goods produced and services and capacities in specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities. Consumer Ministries and other contracting authorities within the meaning of the Public Procurement Act within one month from the expiration of the term under para. 1 submit the proposals they receive to the National Council for the Integration of People with Disabilities. The National Council for the Integration of People with Disabilities submits to the Council of Ministers an opinion on updating the list of goods and services for their procurement through specialized procurement of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities.

A change in the Law on the Integration of Persons with Disabilities in 2013 had a positive effect on the implementation of the stabilization and urgent measures to improve the social status of Bulgarian citizens, the business environment to democratize governance (including the business environment of the people with disabilities). Reduces the administrative burden of business after aligning the regulatory framework with the Law on Restriction of Administrative Regulation and Administrative Control over Business related to the registration of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities and persons performing activities for provision and repair of aids, devices and equipment and medical devices intended for the disabled.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy takes real steps to promote specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities and expand their employment. In this regard, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy supports and jointly with nationally representative organizations of and for people with disabilities, specific proposals for amendments to the Public Procurement Law have been prepared. This Act is a working financial instrument for the real support of specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities, therefore measures have been taken to overcome one of the main obstacles, namely the elimination of the condition that specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities can fulfill the most - less than 80 percent of the subject of the contract with own production. The amendments to the Act also aim to create real steps to encourage specialized enterprises or cooperatives of persons with disabilities and expand their employment.

The Council of Ministers Decision adopted a Plan for reducing the regulatory burden on business. The measures provided for the need to change the procedures for financing projects by the Agency for People with Disabilities, and



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in particular to the methodologies developed in this regard (the methodologies under Articles 17, 19 and 20 of the AIPD). As a result of the implementation of the measures envisaged, changes were made to the three methodologies, which resulted in the refinement of the procedures and the manner of submitting the required documents by the candidates, eliminating some of them as they are public and can be verified ex officio in the Commercial Register. or in registries maintained by other administrations. It also provided the opportunity to submit the required application documents electronically, regulating the number of originals and copies of application documents.

The integration of people with disabilities into the labor market is crucial for their acceptance by society and breaking the existing practice of social exclusion of this category of persons. Increased opportunities to improve their well-being as a result of ongoing training programs and job opportunities will at the same time increase their motivation and confidence in institutions and employers. For their part, companies employing disabled people must be subsidized by the state in adapting workplaces for persons of this category to specialized working conditions. Only in this way will the stigma of "second hand people" be overcome and the isolation of disabled people from the real economy will be stopped.

WEAKNESSES / STRENGTHS OF THE PROCESS OF ACTIVE PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION OF DISABLED PERSONS

The process of social and professional integration of people with disabilities is difficult because of a number of obstacles that can be grouped as follows:

- Barriers of a personal nature - low self-esteem, negativism, lack of information on the rights of persons with disabilities, low level of education and qualification, reduction of opportunities for retraining and vocational training.
- Socio-economic barriers - the stereotypes of society, prejudices, social policies focused on reducing poverty and not on integration measures, lack of information and training of workers and employees on the opportunities of persons with disabilities, but also and the attitude that the employer must respect their rights, as well as the global economic crisis, the reduced employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.



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- Institutional barriers - insufficient staff and sometimes unprepared social workers, poor cooperation between specialists, material resources are not tailored to the needs of the disabled, lack of programs to determine individual potential, inability to provide appropriate instruction, lack of consultation to find appropriate work.

However, we can identify some positive aspects, some strengths that give us back confidence about the opportunities for social and professional integration of people with disabilities, the main ones being:

- Creating associative, active networks;
- The existence of a legal framework that recognizes access to employment as a necessary condition for social inclusion and independence from persons with disabilities;
- Obligations of employers to employ disabled persons.

According to data from the National Social Security Institute and the National Statistical Institute, people with disabilities in working age in Bulgaria are around 200,000 people, of which about 10 percent are employed in various spheres of public life. According to the Employment Agency (EA), in 2015, 15,670 people with disabilities were actively seeking employment, which represents about 4 percent of the total number of registered unemployed persons. In the same year, under the measures enshrined in the Employment Promotion Act and the National Permanent Disability Training and Employment Program, the Employment Agency provided employment to 4,807 people from the target group. In 2014, under the Employment Programs regulated by the Disability Integration Act, the Agency for People with Disabilities provided support for maintaining the jobs of 1743 people with permanent disabilities, 1683 of them in specialized enterprises and cooperatives. (www.nsi.bg).

But beyond these statistics, Bulgaria still lacks accurate information on the number of people with disabilities in the country. The same is true of their problems and how well they are resolved. In no case do they affect only their easy access to public places as well as to the workplace. These include problems with their employment, and their full integration into society. It is a well-known fact that a very large number of people with disabilities cannot find a job and their financial difficulties are serious. The Unified Information System for People



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with Disabilities, which has been operational since August 2013, gives them a complete picture of their lives. The funding is from the Human Resources Development Operational Programme. The system is the basis for developing adequate policies that address this section of society.

Despite the legal conditions created, many people with disabilities are deprived of good employment. The professional rehabilitation of many disabled people is carried out in specialized enterprises and cooperatives. Experience so far shows that this does not lead to an improvement in their professional training and employment.

Educational integration is not just an institutional relocation of students from one type of school to another, but a whole and essentially new process. For those children who do not have a head start, special care needs to be taken to ensure that they participate fully in the educational process and to create a supportive environment. It is a complete system of mutually supportive actions that cannot be built on a piecemeal basis.

For children with special educational needs, it is necessary to create a system of support, including assistance with the learning process, organization of additional training and accessibility of external school resources. The "integrated" component of the concept of "integrated education" does not refer solely to the school environment. This is a holistic process that involves (according to the Salamanca Declaration) so-called "community-based rehabilitation", which means:

- ☐ inclusion of children with special needs in common activities inside and outside the school with other children;
- ☐ inclusion of community resources (municipal administration, local NGOs and initiative groups, creative companies, theaters, nearby universities, etc.) in activities aimed at children with special needs.

Educational integration as a problem has a broader social dimension and cannot be solved solely by measures in the field of education. It is necessary not only to achieve a supportive environment and purposefulness of efforts, but also a normatively substantiated participation of different social formations, organizations and institutions in the complex implementation of the strategy for the integration of children with special educational needs, according to the following approaches:

- ☐ *Individual approach*



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☐ *Interdisciplinary approach* - building teams of professionals with complementary competencies at all levels of management and process implementation that maintain multimedia communications;

☐ *A participatory approach* to managing and implementing the integration process at all levels;

☐ Developing and implementing *standards of good practice* in the field to follow international standards, while being feasible and achievable in our circumstances;

☐ Creating conditions for *learning from the experience* - participants in the process should have appropriate training formats (discussion groups, consultations, supervision, etc.) that allow them to learn their experience from the practice and integrate the learned back into practice. This approach is known as reflective practice and has been tested in a variety of training settings, including in Bulgaria.

☐ Adequate training and coaching of people entering new social roles or the parameters of whose social roles are changing significantly;

The principles of integrated education are set out in the National Plan for the Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases into the system of public education and are in line with the Salamanca Declaration (Salamanca, 1994). The integrated education of children with special educational needs guarantees their equality with other members of society and is an indicator of the evolutionary level of each society.

In addition to access to quality education, people with disabilities should also be given the **opportunity to work** within the free labor market. This is one of the most important factors for their integration and independence.

„The employment of people with disabilities is a national priority that requires constant political and public attention, as well as the maximum degree of coordination of policies related to it. Reaching the labor market of this vulnerable group is one of the main tools for integrating people with disabilities in all areas of public life.” With this categorical declaration, the most up-to-date document on the employment realization of people with disabilities in Bulgaria, called ‘THE LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FOR DISABLED PEOPLE 2011-2020’ begins



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There are 131 specialized enterprises and cooperatives for people with disabilities in the country, which employs 2,950 people, of whom 1,520 are persons with disabilities. The market share of these enterprises, as well as of the cooperatives for people with disabilities, continues to shrink, which is why a significant number of jobs for people with disabilities are closed. In addition to the few specialized companies for the hearing and visual impairment, the specialized companies mainly accept people who, by medical criteria, have been identified as unfit to work in their current workplace in a free market environment. These enterprises mainly employ people with chronic conditions, for whom communication with the environment is not a problem and a very small number of people with disabilities. Specialized enterprises benefit from tax incentives and direct government subsidies. (The Agency for People with Disabilities, 2016)

The employment of people with disabilities in Bulgaria is mainly regulated by two normative documents: the **Employment Promotion Act** and the **Disability Integration Act (ZIHU)**. There are also other normative documents that, to varying degrees, have to do with the vocational training and employment of people with disabilities.

The **Labor Code** stipulates that employers who have more than 50 employees must annually identify jobs suitable for people with reduced working capacity of 4 - 10% of the total staff. However, the practice shows that employers do not comply with this provision (according to the data of the Executive Agency of the General Labor Inspectorate, only 244 violations were found in 2016 related to non-compliance with the provision of Article 315 of the Labor Code. (www.nsi.bg))

The Disability Integration Act, in the "Employment" section, regulates the right to work of persons with disabilities in an integrated work environment, as well as the rights and obligations of employers. The conditions have been created in the three forms of employment: in the usual environment, in specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities, in the development of their own business. The Council of Ministers annually determines a list of goods and services, the production of which is assigned to specialized enterprises and cooperatives. They are granted subsidies annually for protected projects and programs. 30% of the contributions due are also subsidized. The Disability Integration Act (ZIHU) creates conditions for the use of the rights of persons with disabilities for self-determination and full participation in the life of the country and in the realities of the market economy. The creation of an environment in



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which people with disabilities are as independent as possible while ensuring their rights to social protection, adequate social services, integrated education and training, appropriate working environment, accessible living and architectural environment, opportunities is guaranteed. for cultural and sporting events, etc. With regard to the employment of people in this vulnerable group, the law allows employers from ordinary and specialized work environments to be stimulated if they provide them with jobs - 30/50 percent of the social security contributions, which are at the expense of the employer, financial resources are provided for workplace adaptation, workplace equipment, health and safety at work, etc. The law enables entrepreneurs with entrepreneurial spirit to start an independent business by providing them with a certain financial resource.

Another very important law that guarantees equal access for people with disabilities to the free labor market is the ***Anti-Discrimination Act***. It regulates protection against all forms of discrimination and promotes its prevention, its purpose being to guarantee to every person the right to equality before the law, equality of treatment and opportunities for participation in public life and effective protection against discrimination. The law defines direct and indirect discrimination, harassment (victimization), incitement to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and racial segregation. There are a number of exceptions where different treatment of persons is not considered as discrimination. Special measures for the benefit of persons or groups shall not be considered as discrimination in order to balance their opportunities, while such measures are necessary.

According to the ***Civil Servant Act***, no discrimination, privilege or restriction based on the existence of a disability is allowed in the civil service. In Art. 9a are fixed quotas for assigning positions for people with permanent disabilities - at least two percent of the total number of posts for employment in an administration with a total number of staff over 50 or one post for employment in administration with a total staff of 26 to 50 people. The positions are filled after a competition involving only people with permanent disabilities.

The Corporate Income Tax Act provides for a complete corporate tax transfer of legal entities with the status of specialized enterprises, cooperatives and separate production units, members of nationally represented organizations of persons with disabilities and organizations for people with disabilities. The funds



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provided are used for the rehabilitation and social integration of people with disabilities.

Persons with permanent disabilities who receive income from employment benefit from tax relief under the conditions and procedures laid down in the *Personal Income Tax Act*. Pursuant to the provisions of this law, the amount of annual tax bases for persons with 50 and more than 50 percent reduced working capacity, determined by a decision of a competent authority, shall be reduced by BGN 7920, including the year of incapacity for work and the year on the expiry date of the decision, and the monthly tax base is reduced by BGN 660, including the month of incapacity for work and the month of expiration of the expert decision issued by the medical expert.

The Employment Agency implements programs and incentive measures for employment and training under the Employment Promotion Act, aimed at providing employment and raising the qualification of people with permanent disabilities, as well as providing care in the family environment for people with permanent disabilities and seriously ill single people.

The Agency for People with Disabilities provides grants to start a business or support the development of an existing business for people with 50 and more than 50% permanent disability. Both business owners and individuals with permanent disabilities can apply for funding.

From the review of the regulatory framework and taking into account the employment data, we formulate some conclusions and findings and questions:

- Bulgarian legislation is largely in line with European legislation;
- Incentive economic and regulatory mechanisms are in place;
- There is doubt about the adequacy of the regulatory framework (which seems perfect) with regard to economic realities;
- To what extent the initiatives of the state are adequate to the values of the society;
- Is the Bulgarian employer, on the one hand, and people with disabilities on the other, ready for a change in attitudes and behavior.

Judging by the current functional adequacy of the legal, regulatory and administrative capacity, the problem of employment of persons with disabilities



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should not exist or be kept to a minimum. However, the facts, as we can see from the information presented above, are disturbing.

This is probably one of the main factors for the creation of the Long-term strategy for employment of people with disabilities 2011-2020, adopted by Protocol No. 25.2 of the Council of Ministers of 29.06.2011 and outlines specific measures that need to be taken to ensure a decent working life for people with disabilities.

By Council of Ministers Decision No. 104 of 2 February 2012, an Action Plan for the period 2012-2013 was adopted on the implementation of the Long-term strategy for employment of people with disabilities 2011-2020.

The strategy is adopted in implementation of the Government's Program for European Development and is based on the principles of equality set out in the Council of Europe recommendations, good practices of EU Member States, the principles in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Standard Rules of the United Nations for Equality and Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

The main goal of the Strategy is to provide conditions for the effective exercise of the right to freely choose the employment of people with disabilities of working age and to improve their quality of life as a condition for free and full inclusion in the public life of the country. The activities and measures that the Strategy envisages for the achievement of the objectives are grouped into several operational modules according to the aspects of the intervention (Long-term Strategy, 2011):

1) Provision of suitable forms for qualification and retraining

Access to the labor market depends to a large extent on the qualifications obtained through vocational training. Vocational training itself can only begin after obtaining an educational minimum. This means that for people with disabilities to participate more actively in the labor market, it is necessary, first and foremost, to have greater access to the education system.

The Employment Agency has eloquently endorsed this finding, namely:

- People with disabilities have low educational qualifications - according to the EA data, 52.5% of the active unemployed persons with disabilities in 2009 have primary and lower education. In the last ten years, there has been no trend of decreasing this percentage;



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- People with disabilities suffer from lack of professional qualifications - in 2009 The Employment Agency reported that 57.9% of job seekers with permanent disabilities do not have professional qualifications; In the last ten years, there has been no trend of decreasing this percentage;

2) Providing suitable forms of employment

The implementation of the strategic and operational goals of the strategy can be achieved by introducing three forms of employment for people with disabilities: protected; supported; independent business activity of people with disabilities.

3) Ensuring an accessible environment

The employment of people with disabilities is closely linked to the availability of accessible environments in its overall diversity. Providing such an environment remains one of the most serious problems that is currently not adequately addressed. This problem exists to a different extent in the other Member States as its solution depends on many and different (state and local) structures. This measure includes: overcoming architectural barriers; accessible transport; accessible information and communication environment.

4) Providing employment mediation

The purpose of specialized employment mediation is to organize more active involvement of people with disabilities in motivational courses and group psychological training. To evaluate the opportunities for carrying out certain activities by people with disabilities, as well as their competences with a view to further professional qualification and vocational guidance.

5) Provision of accessories, appliances and equipment and medical devices

The purpose of such products is to enable a disabled person to fulfill their work commitments more efficiently, with a higher level of quality and, as a result, to increase their income from work.

6) Ensuring an adequate regulatory environment

The broad goals that the strategy sets are secured with the necessary administrative capacity, defining the functions and tasks of the institutions implementing the state policy for employment and social integration of people with disabilities.



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The 2011-2020 Long-term Strategy is the most significant and large-scale plan, designing in structural detail the process of work integration of people with disabilities. On the plus side, she summarizes her experience so far by relying on the social model, but without resorting to extreme nihilism by neglecting the medical approach. The strategy offers a good model, balanced and ambitious at the same time, tailored to the specificity and diversity of the problem and in line with European and world trends. A weakness, in our view, is that the maturity level of Bulgarian society (including people with disabilities), social and economic realities are not sufficiently taken into account.

MAJOR PROBLEMS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

According to the World Health Organization, people with disabilities are approximately 10% of each country's population, and World Bank information sources indicate that they are also 20% of the world's poorest people. Disabilities are both cause and effect of poverty, and according to the United Nations, 82% of people with disabilities in developing countries live below the poverty line. These figures are higher in countries devastated by civil wars or natural disasters. Practically everywhere in the world, people with disabilities suffer some form of discrimination and are strongly rejected by the social, economic and political life of the community. This is also the main reason for the high level of poverty among this vulnerable group. This is also due to their difficult lifestyle and high mortality.

Throughout the world, the problems of people with disabilities are similar, the differences are in the efforts made in each country to facilitate the lives of disadvantaged people. The main problems can be divided into several groups.

Rejection and isolation from the society

Disadvantaged persons are subject to discrimination from birth or from the moment the disability occurs. The birth of a disabled child in many societies is perceived as a tragedy due to the fact that its upbringing requires more care and it is suggested that it cannot take care of itself when it grows up. This problem is particularly serious in underdeveloped economic countries. Such children are often excluded from the daily activities of the family and the community, and their voices remain unheard. Too often damage is perceived as extremely negative as a result of cultural factors, ignorance, prejudice or fear. In some



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places it is considered a curse or a punishment of God. People with disabilities are considered "non-human" and unfit to participate in community activities. Many families with children with disabilities are both afraid and ashamed. They have a tendency to hide children with disabilities and not offer them any development opportunities. When disadvantaged people are invisible to society, protecting their rights becomes extremely difficult and is a signal that overcoming the ingrained negative stereotypes should become a priority for society. These stereotypes lead to people with disabilities developing an addiction syndrome, inferiority complex and a sense of reconciliation and unwillingness to become involved in the society in which they were born and live. It is obvious that much of the suffering of people with disabilities is caused by prejudice or cultural order. In this regard, the influence of more developed societies in overcoming these attitudes is of the utmost importance.

Unequal distribution of available resources

In countries where resources are severely scarce, equitable distribution of resources between healthy and disabled children is considered economic irresponsibility because children with disabilities may not be helpful in the future of the family. In the face of extreme poverty, this is considered a cruel but reasonable solution. Disabled people often account for the smallest share of available food, health and education resources. This leads to further deterioration of their health and increases their isolation.

Health care

People with disabilities have the same need for access to health services as anyone else, but in practice it is not provided. Hospital centers are in many cases physically inaccessible and/or remote (most often in rural areas). Disabled women are often complained of by doctors who deny them access to reproductive health services. In most cases, health care information is not available. Disadvantaged people are not a target group for health education, and many of them actually need special medical care.

Education

Universal primary education is impossible without the inclusion of children with disabilities. According to UNICEF, 98% of them receive non-formal education. Even if the school is physically accessible, many children with disabilities remain unaffected. Many parents have a fear that the child will not cope or "shame" the



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family, hurting their siblings' marriage prospects. Deprived children are often disadvantaged, have low self-esteem and do not receive the support they need to participate equally in public life.

At the same time, the lack of access to education should not be seen as a mere result of cultural barriers. Physical access to schools and transport and access to technical aids are also problems that need to be addressed. For results to be effective, integrated education requires investment in the construction of buildings without architectural barriers. In addition, appropriate teacher training is required to provide the necessary support to children with disabilities.

Special educational programs are also needed in which children with disabilities can receive more attention and appropriate care.

Employment and exploitation

Later in life, people with disabilities have limited job opportunities due to discrimination, lack of education, experience and confidence. In fact, their job opportunities in developing countries are almost non-existent. Many disabled people are forced to beg to survive. The lack of employment opportunities is most strongly reflected in the rejection of disadvantaged people by society.

People with disabilities are discriminated against in comparison to other workers and receive a lower wage. In developing countries, this can bring some benefits for the employer, but also for severe exploitation among this group of people. Exploitation is even more severe in people with intellectual disabilities or with speech and hearing impairments.

Poverty

The presence of the problems listed above places people with disabilities in a state of chronic poverty with little opportunity to leave the closed circle. Obviously, removing barriers and empowering people with disabilities to get involved in social life would help reduce the level of poverty throughout society. Without their inclusion, sustainable reduction of poverty for the entire society is impossible.

Lack of accessible architectural environment

In addition to social barriers, people with disabilities also face architectural barriers that limit their access to public services and impede the exercise of their rights. Most roads, housing and public facilities (including public transport) do not



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have special facilities for the needy. People with sensory disabilities are completely removed from the information world because public services do not provide information in the required form, such as braille and sign language.

Specific care for women with disabilities

Girls and women with disabilities also suffer from discrimination. They are often excluded from education, health services, family life and work. In some underdeveloped societies, they are also forced to tolerate sexual abuse at high risk of contracting AIDS. The sexuality of people with disabilities in general (and women in particular) is perceived as something unfamiliar and even shameful, which is why it is not discussed. It is simply accepted that disadvantaged people do not have sexual intercourse, which is another explanation why information on how to prevent AIDS is difficult to reach in these groups.

Participation in the political process

Often, people with disabilities are excluded from decision-making processes, including their right to vote. In most cases, this is due to barriers to access, such as lack of access to understandable media or architectural access to voting venues.

The problems outlined above are not an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of decision-makers taking action to address the problems of people with disabilities.

The brief overview of disabled people in Bulgaria shows the country's aspiration to keep up with European trends in finding solutions to the problems of people with disabilities.

It is clear that initiatives for people with disabilities in both the EU and Bulgaria should not stop there, but develop and remain on the agenda of society. Our society is also obliged to provide adequate support to non-governmental organizations working for the protection of persons with disabilities, and their voice, though critical, is increasingly heard because they have a greater understanding of the problems of persons with disabilities.

Legislation needs to be brought to the knowledge of both people with disabilities and the institutions and persons responsible for putting them into practice. It is here that public corrections can have an impact on disadvantaged people.



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It is evident from the above that a very small percentage of people with permanent disabilities have found and have a chance to find a job in the labor market. The reasons for this are numerous and of different nature. Some of the more important ones are:

- social exclusion and lack of motivation;
- inadequate attitude of the employers towards the target group;
- unsecured access to the workplace;
- lack of appropriate working environment tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities;
- poor public awareness;
- Poor professional qualifications.

Career guidance through social services for supported employment and specialized mediation (mediation):

Specialized labor mediation is the organization of more active involvement of people with disabilities in motivational courses and group psychological training. It is necessary to evaluate the opportunities for carrying out certain activities by persons with disabilities, as well as their competences with a view to further professional qualification and vocational guidance. On the other hand, it is necessary to train mentors to assist people with disabilities in the process of learning and fulfilling their direct responsibilities.

Providing quality career guidance for people with disabilities in Bulgaria, tailored to their individual capabilities and abilities, includes:

- Applying an individual approach to the implementation of the principles of specialized vocational guidance for people with disabilities and the introduction of the Supported Employment model, especially for people with intellectual disabilities, as a tool for entering the open labor market.
- The process of re-socialization of disadvantaged people involves the creation of conditions for employment in the open labor market.
- Develop and implement measures with economic incentives to support employers in the usual work environment in order to create jobs for people with disabilities.



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- Finding new job opportunities for people with disabilities that are geared to their potential and abilities, not to constraints and difficulties.
- Matching individual skills and preferences and workplace requirements.
- Consulting services for employers: practical guidelines for an improved work environment, universal design and creative innovation.

An accessible information and communication environment:

An important element in the lives of people with disabilities is their awareness and ability to communicate depending on their disability. The information should be provided in an accessible form - visual presentation of text, text dubbing, subtitles, braille, sign language and sign language dubbing, voice dubbing, tactile communication, enlarged fonts, accessible multimedia, as well as any written, audio, simplified, dictatorial, complementary and alternative ways, means and formats for accessible information.

Forms of employment:

Various forms of employment are also needed to empower and ensure the long-term employment of people with permanent disabilities in working age. It is the right of the person to choose the form of employment:

- Protected employment. The protected form of employment of people with permanent disabilities is not regulated by the Bulgarian legislation.
- Specialized enterprises and cooperatives for people with disabilities. They work in mixed teams, and companies participate in the market on an equal basis with companies that do not hire people with disabilities, which makes them uncompetitive.
- An open labor market.
- Home and remote forms of employment.
- Social entrepreneurship. This form of employment is applied in many EU Member States and Bulgaria. It must be encouraged, developed and secured by both the state and local authorities. The latter has real levers to promote the micro-enterprises of people with disabilities by easing the range of on-site permits and concertation regimes.

Professional rehabilitation:



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Creation and maintenance of workplaces for people with disabilities, adaptation of workplaces and equipment in accordance with the psychophysiological and anthropometric characteristics of persons with disabilities, ensuring healthy and safe working conditions, on the one hand and on the other - improving professional skills and improving the qualifications of people with disabilities, incl. with mental disabilities, with a view to guaranteeing the quality of production, successful participation in the market and expanding the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities.

Lifelong learning as a basic principle

Working as a basic form of social expression is an important human need in our society. It helps us achieve our personal goals, secures our existence and gives each of us a place in society. We can certainly say that work and social integration are inextricably linked. However, the number of those who find it increasingly difficult to achieve sustainability in the world of work due to disabilities is growing at a steady pace. They include people with intellectual disabilities, as well as people who, as a result of delayed development or problems with social interaction, need an additional post-graduation phase of education to reach professional maturity. For them, direct integration into the primary labor market is too great a challenge. This target group needs systematic and individualized provisions in order to make it easier and easier for it to enter the labor market and assist in the development of the integration process.

All measures related to labor integration focus mainly on practical vocational training. Most qualification measures are offered in companies or in company-like structures that are designed to be as realistic as possible. This gives disabled people the opportunity to study in ideal conditions. Together with the type of "on-the-job training", other measures such as career guidance, social skills, work trips and preparation for applying for a job ensure that people with disabilities can gain a solid foothold in the labor market.

The good practices in Bulgaria that we have selected focus on innovative measures in the field of vocational rehabilitation, guidance, training and employment for people with disabilities and their adaptation and multiplication will help to implement policies in this field.

Partnership: State-municipalities-NGOs - a guarantee for successful practices



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Independent and active civic organizations are the bearers of the model of change. They have to be critical, initiate debate, campaign. The purpose of the work of an NGO is to help build a stable civic structure, to maintain dialogue between civil society, the state and external actors. In addition to driving change, she is a continuing advocate for promoting democratic governance principles. NGOs must also work successfully in a network. The web is a powerful campaign tool for results.

Working with municipalities is a good opportunity for NGOs to influence decision-making and project implementation. Municipal authorities have the capacity in terms of staff, resources and influence, while NGOs can offer them specialized expertise, ideas and knowledge of existing needs in the Community.

Hiring disabled people

From a business point of view

More and more organizations are turning their attention to people with disabilities, most often as part of their strategies to increase employee diversity. They understand that this diversity among their staff brings many business benefits and is a major factor in the effectiveness, productivity and success of the organization as a whole.

The inclusion of disabled people in a diverse team is a must. Employers employing disabled people have found that:

- They enhance the ability to recruit skilled employees, which is especially useful where new knowledge and skills are needed or there is a lack of staff to recruit.
- People with disabilities are productive and reliable employees.
- People with disabilities stay longer in a particular company, are more loyal to their employers and suffer fewer workplace incidents.
- Most people with disabilities have minimal requirements and minimal workplace adjustment needs.
- Employee morale and team development increase when companies ensure peer equality.



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- They manage to retain the valuable capabilities, skills, experience and expertise of employees within the company while saving the cost of recruiting and hiring new people.
- Companies accessible to disabled customers are much more accessible and attractive to all consumers and investors.
- Improves the public image of the company by showing that in addition to its economic benefits, it also pursues social goals.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Hiring disabled people should be a type of corporate social responsibility or a normal human resources management process in a company?

When recruiting for certain positions, the recruitment of disabled employees should be part of this process and include all recruitment and selection procedures and steps. I.e. when you apply for a position, keep in mind that people with disabilities can apply for a position.

- What positions are/are not appropriate for people with disabilities?

People with disabilities work successfully in many positions, industries and professions. As with people with disabilities, this depends on the skills, training and qualifications of each individual employee.

- Would it cost me to hire a disabled person more insurance and benefits costs?

No. The cost of insurance is the same. The same applies to the cost of benefits. This is because studies show that people with disabilities are less likely to suffer accidents and are less likely to complain to their employer than people with disabilities.

- If special equipment or workplace adjustment is required, will it be expensive?

Most people with disabilities do not need expensive equipment or workplace adjustments, and for those in need, the employer can prepare a competitive proposal with the Agency for people with disabilities.



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- Will staff with disabilities get more hospital care?

There are no facts to show this.

- Will I have to spend more time training and supervising disabled employees? Will someone have to help them constantly?

Not if disabled employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to work. If they need further training, it will only be during the trial period.

- Where to find job seekers with disabilities?

Use the services of employment consultants for people with disabilities in the Support Centers <http://center.nsrhu.bg/> in Sofia, Vratsa, Panagyurishte, Sliven, Varna, Omurtag and Svilengrad, non-governmental organizations and specialized exchanges, "Labor Offices".

- Who should I contact to build an accessible workplace architectural environment and assess the need for aids?

Use the services of consultants to evaluate the work environment and offer solutions for its accessibility.

- How can I be sure that the disabled person will fit into the team? How will his colleagues react?

Specialists from the NSRF Support Centers will study the atmosphere in the office and will give managers feedback to make sure everything is done before the person starts work. If necessary, these professionals can provide training to other team members on how to work with a disabled person.

- How should colleagues treat a disabled person in the workplace?

With respect and protection of personal dignity - just as it is about the other employees.



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- What if things didn't work out, what would happen?

The chances of everything being fine are very high - studies show that people with disabilities perform well in their workplace and stay in the company for a long time. However, if things don't work out, you can apply your usual measures to handle performance issues.

Equal opportunities provided by the employer

Step 1

Binding knowledge and skills to a specific position - Find the right position.

The first step in the process of hiring a disabled person is to draw up a table with the minimum requirements for occupying a given position for each position in the company. This will help you identify jobs that can be filled by people with disabilities, as well as identify disabilities that allow employees to take up a position. Here is an example of such a table for jobs in the hotel industry:

Position	Physically damage		Hearing impairments		Visual impairments	
	Medium	Seriously	Medium	Seriously	Medium	Seriously
Team Leader / Manager	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Cashier	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Receptionist	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Front Office / PR Manager	Yes				Yes	
Restaurant manager	Yes				Yes	
Travel agent	Yes				Yes	
Reservations (not on phone)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



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Step 2

Employment policy

Develop a formal policy to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination in recruitment, promotion, relocation, career development and training. The purpose of this procedure is to provide measures not only against cases of discrimination on the basis of disability, but also against the conditions and requirements imposed on people with disabilities that would have a discriminatory effect. This will allow employers to avoid cases of direct and indirect discrimination.

The document should include all policies, procedures and practices that mid-level managers and HR professionals can use to ensure that recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career decisions are based solely on objective and related with work criteria. The existence of such a formal policy will ensure that non-discrimination is the normative principle underlying the recruitment and hiring procedures in all departments and branches of the company.

Step 3

Selection process

Use personal and job characteristics

A personality trait determines the criteria that must be met in order to take a position. Using a personality trait is useful because you do not rely on potentially discriminatory criteria or those that are irrelevant to the selection process. Personality characteristics should be based on the job description for the position in question, as it is usually a description of how the employee occupying the particular position fits into the company team, with the experience and skills required to hold the position. Personal and job descriptions should be reviewed every time they are used to make sure they are still up-to-date.

An example of a discriminatory job advertisement - First of all, the ad states that successful applicants must have a driver's license. The job involves visiting people at home. The requirement for a driver's license can prevent people with disabilities from applying for this job, since they can do the job without having a driver's license using public transportation. Therefore, it is discrimination. If, instead, the announcement states that applicants should be willing to travel, the



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condition remains clear, but there is no requirement for how to travel and candidates who do not have a driver's license due to their disability are not excluded.

The criteria for occupying a position should be graded and clear about what are the essential and what are not so important requirements. Dividing duties into basic and not so important ones will be helpful when you need to determine what aspects of the job can be delegated to another employee, if this is a necessary "adjustment" to the workplace for the disabled person.

Basic duties for the "Office Assistant" position may include communication with clients, data entry. Secondary duties, such as sending letters, etc., may be delegated to another employee, if necessary.

Available job postings

It is a good idea for employers to make sure that the recruitment process attracts as many potential employees as possible, including people with disabilities. Here are some tips:

- Include welcoming and encouraging expressions in your vacancy announcement to motivate people with disabilities to apply for the position. As this is a public announcement, you are thus publicly declaring your company commitment to equal opportunities in the selection process for the vacancy.

Examples are:

☐ "We welcome applications from all interested candidates and value the diversity of our team."

☐ "We can apply flexible labor contracts"

☐ "Applicants are evaluated solely to the best of their ability"

☐ "We are an employer that provides equal opportunities when applying for a job"

- Put on a logo "Positive for people with disabilities".

- Consider where to place the the announcement to reach people with disabilities.

☐ Use the services of agencies that work exclusively with people with disabilities;



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☐ Post the the announcement in publications targeting people with disabilities;

☐ Distribute the the announcement through nongovernmental organizations of people with disabilities;

☐ Post the the announcement on the Internet.

- Consider encouraging disabled people who are already working and who somehow represent disabled people seeking work.
- Post the the announcement in different types of media - print, internet, etc.

Application form

Particular care must be taken to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against in the way they apply for a job.

Application forms must be reviewed to ensure that they can be accessed in different formats. These formats depend on individual needs, personal preferences and access to technology, and may include a larger font, audio recording, receipt of email forms, floppy disk, disk or flash memory, Braille, and more. These alternative forms should require the same information as the standard forms. It is good to include applications in the forms, such as:

"This form is also available in alternative formats. Please contact (name, telephone number, email, fax and mobile number of the employee responsible for your company) to obtain them in a suitable format."

Application forms should not require information that is unnecessary or puts the disabled person in a dilemma. For example, remove questions about your driver's license or health status, unless this information is relevant to the position that is recorded in the personal characteristic.

Make sure you provide candidates with an opportunity to tell you about a different experience than traditional work, as some people with disabilities may not have been able to follow the traditional career path. For example, they may have gained experience as a volunteer at a charity or have other valuable experience.

Provide applicants with an opportunity to tell you (via a standard questionnaire on the application form) whether they need any interview aids. Specifying this



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information in advance will help the disabled candidate feel more secure during the interview and provide you with the necessary aids. This information should not be used as part of the selection process unless you are using a secure interviewing system for applicants. Here is an example:

"In the selection process, we will provide the necessary aids to disabled applicants.

Do you think you have any disability or health problem? Yes / No

What aids do you need to get an interview?"

Selection criteria

The selection criteria for candidates should not discriminate against people with disabilities. These criteria must be linked to the position to be selected and should not place disadvantaged candidates in the selection process.

Employees involved in the selection process should be aware that applications for people with disabilities must be considered impartially, no matter what format they are received.

When you already know that the candidate concerned is disabled:

- Consider how the necessary aids will allow the disabled candidate to cover the vacancy requirements.
- Consider whether the disabled person will meet the criteria for filling the vacancy with the help provided.
- Be flexible when talking about how these criteria can be met by a disabled person - the question is "whether", not "how".

Please note that the criteria used by your company for

selection does not discriminate against disabled candidates and whether it is possible to provide such aids to enable them to work as effectively as other employees in the company.

Here are some examples of discriminatory criteria:

- The driver's license is a standard requirement. But is it really necessary? Can't the employee do their job using public transport or a personal driver?



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- The requirement to work with specific computer software may deprive some people of the opportunity to apply for a position. Many people use adapted technologies with their own software. This may sound incomprehensible, but it does the same job and therefore refusing to hire a disabled person on the basis of these criteria is discrimination.
- The condition of "attractive appearance" for a person who will serve clients is discrimination even more so because customers are less interested in the beauty of the person who serves them, but that he is useful to them and serves them with a smile. Refusing such a job to appoint a disabled person would be discriminatory if it was based on the applicant's failure to meet your criteria for attractiveness.
- Making decisions based on assumptions for all people with disabilities, i.e. all people with disabilities should be put under a common denominator.
- The requirement for a qualification that is not necessary or not essential to a particular position is also discrimination. If a disabled person does not have such a qualification, for example, if he or she attended a specialized school where he or she did not have the opportunity to obtain a good qualification and yet has the necessary skills and competences, it is logical to drop the qualification requirement.

You must evaluate the applications individually and draw up a list of suitable candidates, taking into account the criteria in order of priority. If you are interviewing a disabled person, invite all candidates who meet the minimum criteria for a particular position. If too many candidates meet these criteria and you need more criteria to make the selection, make sure that they do not discriminate against potential candidates. The best thing you can do is focus on affirmative action so that you support disabled applicants.

Interview

A) Preparation

Try to provide the necessary aids, if any, as part of your interview preparation. These aids are as individual as the needs of people with disabilities. The main types of aids include:



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- Overcoming problems related to the physical characteristics of your office - for example, you may need aids to make your office accessible, or a dedicated parking space may be required.
- Make sure that disabled applicants are not disadvantaged - for example, receptionists should be trained on how to facilitate access for people with disabilities who are interviewed; sign language translation for hearing impaired candidates must be provided, or different documents and test papers should be provided in different formats to be accessible to people with visual impairments. All application forms and interview invitations must include the question of whether the candidate concerned needs special aids to attend the interview.

The best way to prepare the necessary aids for the disabled person is to ask him/her directly for his/her disability as part of the application process. If a candidate has declared that he or she is disabled, it is a good idea to contact him/her in advance and find out if he or she will need any aids and what exactly. This should be done as soon as you understand that such aids may be needed as it may take longer to secure them, such as hiring a sign language translator when interviewing a hearing impaired candidate.

B) Provide interviewer training

Interviewers should be trained very well in dealing with people with disabilities and providing equal opportunities to all applicants. They need to know very well the company policy for hiring disabled people. In addition, interviewers will find it useful to be trained in how to communicate with disabled applicants.

Training of interviewers to work with disabled candidates may include:

- How to avoid discrimination against people with disabilities;
- How to avoid placing people with disabilities at a disadvantage compared to other applicants;
- How to avoid discrimination by the way employment contracts and job vacancies are drawn up or as a result of any physical characteristics independent of the candidate himself.
- How to provide the necessary aids to remove any obstacles that a person with a disability or health problem faces, which includes providing suitable conditions or aids to people with disabilities during the interview or more time for discussions about disability. the applicant and the necessary aids.



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C) Interview

All interviewing and selection procedures must be objective and accurate. As an interviewer, your goal is to select the best candidate for the position. Therefore, you would not want to miss the potential of a disabled candidate.

Do not let go of your own assumptions and misunderstandings about the nature of disabilities - very often people with disabilities find innovative ways to do their daily duties with or without technical or peer help.

It is also important for people with disabilities to have a chance to talk about their capabilities and potential during the interview. Any questions regarding the applicant's state of health should be related solely to his or her ability to perform his/her duties. It would be very helpful to allow a person to talk about his or her options and limitations, since he / she knows them best. This can help you figure out if he needs the tools and what they are.

It is a good idea to ask candidates the same basic questions, and the following questions should depend on the answers to the basic ones. It's also a good idea to keep a record of each interview. Immediately after each individual interview, you should evaluate the candidate in an objective way. It is a good idea to use pre-established procedures and to base the selection process on clear criteria.

You need to consider the necessary aids to help candidates fulfill their job responsibilities, such as delegating some of the tasks to other employees or being more flexible in working hours. Remember that the selection process must be based on the applicant's abilities after being provided with all the necessary aids.

Examples of necessary aids

Typically, a call center hires full-time mid-level managers. A woman with rheumatoid arthritis applies for a manager position. Because of the pain and fatigue associated with her health, she wants her employer to be hired for half a day. The call center agrees. They also provide her with the aids she uses at her workplace.

An applicant for an administrative position does not seem to be the best person for the position, since as a result of his disability (arthritis of the hands) he writes too slowly on a computer. If the necessary aids (such as a custom keyboard) are provided, the writing speed of this candidate will be comparable to that of the



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other candidates. Therefore, the interviewer may ask the applicant to bring his or her keyboard for the test or to provide him / her with the keyboard and thus to provide him/her with a level playing field with the other candidates.

Step 4

Facilities at work place

It is recommended that when you offer a vacant position to a particular disabled person, invite them to inspect the room in which they will work and help you to provide the necessary aids and equipment for your workplace.

There are three sets of accessories that can be provided individually or in combination:

How it works - The way the work process is organized and managed.

Example: If it is impossible or very difficult for a disabled employee to attend meetings outside the workplace, you can provide a telephone or video connection. To avoid the impact of a long trip on the health of the employee, you can allow him or her to work from home.

Working hours - Match the working hours of the employee with disabilities so as to enable them to undergo treatment or rehabilitation. It can range from full-time, flexible, part-time to part-time or shared work.

Other Aids - This type of aids includes everything from equipment and help from colleagues to providing an accessible architectural environment. The most commonly used accessories in this group are orthopedic chairs, ergonomic keyboards and specialized software.

Examples of personalized workplace

The design of the workplace may make it difficult for a hearing impaired person to work because he or she works in a large common room and the floor in it is hard and that prevents him / her from hearing well. These obstacles can be avoided by moving the employee to a smaller room with a wooden floor.

Before a person with hearing and vision impairment starts a new job, he or she is fine to visit his workplace and decide what he will need. He and the employer agree on what exactly needs to be done. The employer shall ensure that all



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documents are prepared in a Braille letter, that other employees are prepared to communicate with him, and that his manager and his colleagues are prepared to provide him with equal opportunities.

It may be appropriate to seek the services of a specialist in working with people with disabilities for advice and more information.

All this needs to be done as soon as possible, as it may take longer to provide ancillary equipment. It may also be necessary for the disabled person to start work to ensure that they are provided with all the necessary facilities and are suitable for him/her.

Accessible architectural environment

One of the most common obstacles is office accessibility, which includes aids, adjusting office equipment and adjusting the workplace. This is to ensure that the disabled person is able to access his workplace and assist his work.

Providing an accessible architectural environment will allow you to:

- Provide aids that will be useful for all people, including those with disabilities
- Save money from renovating your office;
- builds a reputation for being a modern, welcoming disabled person, a proactive employer of your company;
- Demonstrate that engagement with disability issues is part of your company activity.

Accessibility audit

Accessibility audit is the first step in building an accessible architectural environment. It is an important tool for identifying inaccessible locations not only in the corporate building but also in the surrounding area (playgrounds, parking lots, etc.). The affordability audit provides basic guidance on which further recommendations can be made. As a result of the accessibility report, service companies are better prepared to provide their employees and managers with specific meetings to discuss what they can achieve in the short and long term in the field of human services. disability.



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The elements included in the accessibility audit depend on the type and nature of the environment to be reconstructed. Buildings and premises are different and although there are elements that are used in all types of buildings, there are no two that are exactly the same. The main elements included in an accessibility report are:

- Getting to the building - street or parking access, lighting, markings, curbs and road equipment.
- Entrance to the building - entrances, external staircases, doorsteps, doors, lobbies and reception, seating, lighting.
- Moving inside the building - corridors, doors, interior staircases, lifts, interior signage, flooring, interior layout and lighting.
- Use of the premises - toilets, bathrooms, changing rooms, bedrooms, dining areas, bars, lighting, heating, switches for lamps, handles, furniture, telephone, alarm, safety and health devices, staff and management attitude.
- Finding alternative ways to provide access to services - where physical difficulties make access to services impossible or too difficult.
- Exit the building in case of emergency - emergency exits, emergency lighting and notification system and shelter rooms;
- Communication systems - communication materials and instructions, printed and on-line, training materials, manuals and more.

A full accessibility audit involves visiting different premises, preparing an accessibility survey, taking pictures, and discussing issues with the company management. The cost of an accessibility audit depends on the nature of the company. The service is paid on an hourly basis plus the cost of travel and there are usually informal discussions that specify the requirements and the final price. It is important to make sure that people who do accessibility audits have sufficient experience in this area. It is not enough for the auditor to be an architect, engineer or building inspector.

Facilities

Facilities are technical gadgets or services, such as alphabet boards, text phones, or text-to-speech software, that help people with physical or emotional problems



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perform certain tasks and tasks. This can be crucial for the performance of job responsibilities and the performance of disabled people in the workplace. Here are examples of commonly used aids:

A) Facilities to assist people with hearing impairments

Audio-signaling system

The audio-signaling system improves communication with people with hearing impairments, isolating ambient noise and reinforcing important information. There are many different models and the options are: portable; desktop; built-in and discrete personal devices; kits that can be installed on individual computers or cover entire rooms.

Portable Speaker Amplifiers

Built-in speakers or headphones create enhanced stereo sound for the employee to hear others. The device allows you to participate in conversations, whether it is communication in cafes, small groups or larger meetings. Some models have the option to isolate sounds from an environment where an audio alarm system is installed.

B) Computer aids/ facilities

With the help of some tools and specialized software, most people with visual impairments are able to use office equipment completely on their own.

Here are the most commonly used office aids:

MAGNIFYING MAGNIFIER SCREENS

Magnifying magnifiers are plastic panels that are placed in front of a computer screen and offer different levels of magnification. Some models may be attached to the monitor. However, overall, the magnifying glass magnification quality is not as good as that of specialized software.

KEYBOARDS WITH BIGGER BUTTONS

There are two types of keyboards with larger labels on the buttons. These keyboards are standard size, but the button labels are 400% larger than standard keyboards. There are black letters on a white or yellow background or white letters on a black background.

VOICE RECOGNITION SOFTWARE



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Voice recognition software offers users an alternative to writing text on a computer. This is a possible solution for people who have difficulty using their hands or those who have dyslexia and is not a recommended option for people with partially or completely impaired vision. This is because the combination of voice recognition equipment is too expensive and requires special training.

READING SOFTWARE

A standard computer, whether it is a desktop or a laptop, can be adapted by installing reading software that allows the computer to "speak". This software speaks text and focuses on navigation, reading menus, messages, various fields, etc. The computer is controlled via a standard keyboard using keyboard shortcuts instead of a mouse.

Step 5

Inauguration

Phased/Assisted Entry

This is the best thing you can do to get a new employee in your position. Taking the position is a chance for newcomers to meet their new colleagues for the first time, get to know the premises and the company as a whole. Keep in mind that for the newly appointed staff, everything will be new and unexpected circumstances may arise.

Be alert to people who are willing to work despite their disability and make sure that all the aids necessary for this stage of the appointment process are provided. Usually this question depends heavily on the individual needs and it is good to be aware of them before the disabled person starts working.

Some people with disabilities may need more time to get used to the new job. It may be appropriate to provide them with a longer induction period than other employees. This is all the more necessary when the excipients are tested.

In some cases, it is advisable to have a team member support and train the new employee for a given period of time. For example, a person with AS, a form of autism, may have difficulty working together and communicating with others. The necessary aids (of course with the knowledge of the person himself) would be to



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acquaint his colleagues with his condition and organize a mentoring program for him in the workplace.

Several companies, with the help of specialists in the field of work with people with disabilities, manage to retain and support their employees with disabilities in the phase of their entry into office. These specialists help to identify possible problems and solve them while the disabled person is comfortable at work.

It is a good idea to encourage the independence and confidence of people with disabilities to avoid being offended by other colleagues.

Make sure your employees support their disabled colleague

Provide line managers and co-workers with the necessary training to provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities, teach them to be more tolerant of the person, their disability, and the use of aids. This is especially important when the successful use of the aids depends on the assistance of all employees. Training must be conducted at the right time so that employees do not see in the face of a colleague with a disability a potential threat or problem, and the aids - as favoritism.

Step 6

Management of work performance and disability

In some companies, the responsibility for the performance and management of people with disabilities lies with the HRM, the Disability Coordinator, or another specialist with specialist knowledge. It is therefore important to implement a standard, well-defined procedure.

Disability management must be practically applied in all aspects of recruitment, selection and recruitment, as well as in the management of employment performance. For this process to be effective, you need to be sure that all policies, procedures and practices facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

The Disability Management approach should address all factors to be considered, including:

- How employee disability manifests or may occur in the workplace;
- How the effects of disability can be eliminated by providing aids/facilities;



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- How the necessary aids/facilities will be implemented and how their effectiveness will be evaluated.

Disability management process

Stage 1

Identify employees who may need management or assistance related to disability.

Stage 2

Initiate and manage the interview, evaluation, decision-making and evaluation processes.

When managing a new employee's disability or chronic health problem, discuss with them whether they need any aids/facilities and what they need. This includes:

- Study of personal and job characteristics in order to identify the basic tasks and standards of work for the particular person in the specific workplace.
- Plan an evaluation by specialists such as accessibility consultant, ergonomics expert, specialist in hiring disabled people;
- Comparison of reports to evaluate their findings and to evaluate which aids/facilities are needed and appropriate.

Stage 3

Aids and facilities must be implemented and tested to evaluate their effectiveness for the particular person in the particular workplace.

Stage 4

Where no effective aid/facility can be found, the employee may be reassigned to another position instead of being dismissed.

Step 7

Career development

It is a common mistake to ignore a disabled person as a mid- or senior-level manager because they will not be able to cope with their disability responsibilities. It is best practice to regularly monitor performance reports and,



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if a particular person does a good job, give you the opportunity to discuss whether he or she can handle the tasks if promoted or transferred to another department.

Some people with disabilities may need help to be more confident in their own abilities to be trained as managers or other promotion opportunities offered to them. When appropriate, provide training specifically for your disabled employees, giving them, for example, the opportunity for proactive personal development if you want to encourage them to apply for management positions.

In addition, you can tailor the managerial position for the disabled person by delegating some of the lesser responsibilities to another team member. You can trade other responsibilities of the position, which seems difficult or impossible to fulfill, with the responsibilities of another team member. This flexible approach means you can capitalize on the capabilities of your employees without paying attention to minor constraints.

Mentoring

The mentor is a wise and trusted advisor. Mentoring is a useful way to encourage and support the career development of your employees, and it can be especially helpful in giving them opportunities beyond their normal job relationships, making them more confident in their own capabilities, and finding areas where they are less sure.

In some cases, it may be helpful to be mentored by another disabled employee who has already made a career. Since both are disabled, they may be more likely to build a bond between themselves and share their life experiences with non-disabled people. For this reason, all mentors, whether or not they have disabilities, must be trained.

Collegiate system

The collegiate system is a type of mentoring in which one employee must look after another.

- This includes a long-time employee of the company, working with a newcomer while he or she is studying, or just helping someone out if a problem arises.
- This is a useful type of support for disabled employees both in the short and long term. It is always helpful to know who to contact when a problem arises or to solve a problem that has been ignored or difficult to solve.



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- Support should be reviewed on a regular basis to avoid the employee's dependency on the disabled person. The withdrawal of support must be planned with the consent of the employee concerned and his mentor.

Step 8

Develop the skills of people with disabilities

The biggest problem faced by tolerance and equal opportunities for people with disabilities is the lack of appropriate skills and opportunities for people with disabilities to choose from.

The skills that today's jobs require are at odds with those offered by specialist schools, retraining courses or school practices. This lack of proper training results in fewer disabled people being able to hire employers.

Empirical method

Companies can help increase the number of disabled employees by taking actions that reveal to employees the invaluable reality, dynamics and characteristics of the work environment. An empirical method can help disabled candidates not only develop appropriate skills, but also identify positions that they may be more likely to consider in the job search process as they would be suitable for them. By helping develop potential and increasing the likelihood of disabled candidates being hired, employers are increasing the number of eligible candidates they can hire in their companies.

- Working Visits - Includes meetings with employers, which are not interviews, but just exploratory visits in order to gather more information about companies and job vacancies in them. This practice allows job seekers to have a greater choice of jobs and companies to apply for.
- Surveillance - Surveillance is about taking the time to track the work of an employee. It may last an hour, a full day or several days depending on the nature of the job and the interest of the applicant. This is a good way to increase the knowledge of job applicants in your company and also allow them to gain experience by working with employers without the pressure of deciding whether to hire them.
- Appointments aimed at gaining professional experience / Internship Program - Offering such programs for people with disabilities would give them a chance to



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be more confident, to increase their job skills and to try new roles. For employers, offering internship programs means a chance to "test" the applicant before hiring him permanently.

In order to reach the right candidates, it is a good idea to implement this scheme in collaboration with various organizations of people with disabilities, training / rehabilitation centers and specialists in the employment of people with disabilities.

Specialized training

Employers can support the development of their employees by:

- require training centers and non-governmental organizations to include programs that cover the requirements for work in the respective industries / sectors;
- Build e-learning modules for specific skills that employers themselves require. These e-modules can be provided through a dedicated corporate website;
- Work in collaboration with specialists in the employment of people with disabilities to develop training modules designed for home use.

These actions can be undertaken as normal HR processes or as an hour of corporate social responsibility policy.

Talking hands

(for hearing impaired people)

Sign language is a local language used by hearing impaired people in a specific setting. Each country has its own sign language developed spontaneously among its disabled citizens. Of all efforts to improve lifestyles, removing barriers to communication is paramount. Hearing impaired people should have the right to use sign language as a means of communication in all walks of life.

Strategies and measures to support more active inclusion of disadvantaged people in the labor market

One of the main problems facing disadvantaged people in Bulgarian society is their limited access to the labor market and to society's resources.



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In this sense, the main tasks of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), as an institution for social protection and social inclusion, are the objectives:

- Equal participation in the labor market of groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion
- Ensuring equal access to services in order to prevent social exclusion and overcome its consequences
- Social inclusion of the most vulnerable ethnic minorities

In order to achieve equal opportunities for all, without violating the principle of equality, specific rights and measures are envisaged, which improve and equalize the chances of different groups to participate fully in the life of society and the use of its resources and goods. This is mostly about people with disabilities and vulnerable ethnic minorities.

In order to achieve the objective of equal participation in the labor market, a number of measures have been put in place to increase employment, including:

- Provision of vocational training and literacy, employment programs for certain categories of disadvantaged people, including people with disabilities and Roma
- Subsidized employment
- Encouraging employers to hire people from vulnerable groups in the labor market
- Optimizing coordination between the social assistance system and active labor market measures

1. *Vulnerable ethnic minorities*

Representatives of vulnerable ethnic minority groups are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. In particular, such a group is the Roma, at least due to the fact that they are poorly represented in political life and in the government of the country. From a socio-economic point of view, the status of the Roma as a whole is lower than the regional average. The Roma population is affected by a dramatically higher than average regional unemployment rate, harsh housing conditions, poor health status and a high level of illiteracy.



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One of the main causes of the economic problems of the Roma community in the region at present is the low level of qualification due to the low educational level and the existing discriminatory attitudes of the majority towards the Roma. Particularly unenviable are young people under 29 who do not even have work habits - more than 80% of them have never worked. Many of the Roma in the region are permanently unemployed. The self-initiative of Roma families is low and the inherited culture of dependence is being strengthened, which hinders the implementation of development programs. The normative documents in the field of education in Bulgaria do not identify students by ethnicity, but it is approximate with accuracy that a significant percentage of all students who drop out of the education system in Berkovitsa municipality are of Roma origin.

1.1. Minority equality

The legal framework in Bulgaria excludes any discrimination in employment, pay and professional career on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, age, etc. (Labor Code, Anti-Discrimination Law). According to a number of reports, both in the country and in the region, there is an inter-ethnic balance and a lack of extreme forms of intolerance, as well as a lack of risk or fear of extremist and racist actions.

The Roma ethnic group makes up 16.73% of the population of Berkovitsa municipality, ranking second after the Bulgarian ethnic group. However, the problem stems from both the unfavorable characteristics of their workforce and their concentration in individual settlements. They accumulate a significant portion of the risks that lead to long-term unemployment - illiteracy, low education, low or no qualifications. It is the Roma community that make up a significant proportion of the most vulnerable labor market groups in the region.

1.2. Ethnic features of educational attainment

The educational disparities in the region have a distinct ethnic character and are a consequence of differences in low educational and training levels.

The share of those who do not even have an initial stage of primary education is worrying - it is close to zero for Bulgarians and 20.5% for Roma. The Roma school in the town of Berkovitsa is in a separate neighborhood, and recently the number of closed schools in the region has increased, especially in villages with predominantly Roma population such as Borovtsi, Berkovitsa municipality, etc.



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Obviously, serious preparation is needed for starting a school to overcome the crisis in the first and second classes, especially among minority ethnic groups before entering the first class, in order to master the Bulgarian language, mastering social habits, communication skills, etc., to put Roma children on an equal footing with other children.

In the area of integration of children from ethnic groups in the municipality, the current Strategy for the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities is being implemented. Its main priority is the full integration of Roma children and students through the desegregation of kindergartens and schools in the Roma neighborhoods and the creation of conditions for equal access to quality education beyond them. A number of schools have also introduced the position of "assistant teacher" and school psychologist, e.g. the school in the Roma district of „Rakovitsa“, municipality of Berkovitsa.

It should be noted that despite all the measures and programs adopted in recent years, the municipality of Berkovitsa is still at the beginning of developing a long-term approach to address the problems of disadvantaged ethnic minority groups.

Ensuring equal access to services for disadvantaged groups is a decisive goal for their effective social inclusion and participation in the labor market. Although the right of access to various services is legally guaranteed, its implementation for the most vulnerable groups remains virtually difficult. Access to services is also linked to the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. Low levels of education are one of the main factors determining poverty and social exclusion. In this respect, the issues in the region that need to be addressed are:

- Ensuring that vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities and children with disabilities, have access to education in mainstream settings, stimulating and developing educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups.
- Improvement of social assistance programs with a view to better targeting social assistance funds and applying a differentiated approach and promoting the employment of assisted persons.
- Providing legal, counseling, psychological, social and other support to disadvantaged groups.



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- Implementation of integrated education programs for children with special educational needs, including the development and implementation of innovative programs and specialized educational software for the education and training of persons with special educational needs, initiatives to implement the principles of intercultural education, tolerance and solidarity between participants in the educational and training process from different ethnic groups, etc.

In addition, measures need to be taken to improve the administrative support for disadvantaged people, including access to e-services and those to change public attitudes and combat discrimination, especially against the Roma community.

Based on the understanding that social inclusion is a process that depends on both the institutions responsible for disadvantaged members of society and themselves and civil society, conditions have been created in the development of the regulations governing the provision of social services. For the broad involvement of civic structures in the consultation and decision-making process, as well as in policy implementation. Non-governmental organizations and associations, institutions, social partners, service providers and experts in the field are involved in national-level processes. As a result, there are some successful models for interaction between the state and the non-governmental sector, proving that this is the right way to increase their impact capacity. Good practices are still very inadequate, they are mainly implemented in the major cities of the country and their territorial distribution is uneven, in accordance with the community needs in the region.

Equal access to basic services for disadvantaged people in Berkovitsa municipality is crucial for their effective social inclusion and for their participation in the labor market and in society.

Ensuring equal access to services is undoubtedly one of the major challenges in combating social exclusion in the municipality, with its impact and sustainability being enhanced when their approach is individual and the ultimate goal is labor market integration.

In this regard, a number of measures are being implemented in the region, which, while requiring more resources to be concentrated, can be considered successful.



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An example of this is the development of community-based social services to support children and their families, as well as support people with disabilities, ensure equal access to education - integrate children with special educational needs into a mainstream environment and support their training and reducing the number of students dropping out of school, adapting the environment to the needs of people with disabilities and providing accessible transport, creating adapted and protected jobs, qualifications and re qualification, and others.

All this said, the task of social inclusion of disadvantaged people in the region should be accompanied by the creation of conditions for poverty reduction, especially as regards the Roma community, as well as the encouragement of representatives of this group for their inclusion in the region. community life through programs to address education, retraining and employment, health and social services.

It has already been noted that one of the disadvantaged groups in the region, whose social inclusion requires the mobilization of all policies due to the multilateral nature of the problems faced, is the Roma community. Many measures have been taken for the social inclusion of the Roma in Berkovitsa municipality.

The Municipal Plan for Roma Integration in Berkovitsa Municipality (2014-2020) envisages activities to fulfill the 4 main priorities: education, health care, employment, improvement of living conditions. Berkovitsa-specific include culture and anti-discrimination priorities, and a level playing field.

Some of the specific implementing measures are improving the employability and employment integration of the Roma, conducting seminars, literacy training and qualification of representatives of the Roma community, raising awareness of formal and informal Roma leaders and the Roma community in the area of measures and programs for equal access to the labor market and social security, education, health care, seminars in settlements with compact Roma population to promote the social role of Roma antenna and responsible parenthood and reduction of early children education system, as well as return and keeping them in school; creation of labor exchanges for Roma, training of social workers and educators to work in a multi-ethnic environment, optimization of the school network; desegregation of kindergartens and schools in segregated Roma neighborhoods, development of one-year plans for the educational integration of ethnic minority children, integration of students living in the segregated Roma neighborhood, into general education schools outside the neighborhood, appointment of teacher



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assistants, support for teacher integration, integration of teachers Roma children at school, training teachers to work in a multicultural environment; introduction of the study of Ethnic Folklore - Roma Folklore, preparation and appointment of a labor mediator in the „Labor Office” Directorate to motivate inactive and discouraged persons registered at the Labor Office to use the intermediary services for employment and training, conducting health education campaigns, conducting seminars to train the Roma population on separate waste collection, organizing competitions and sporting events and creating conditions for Roma children to exercise and sport , providing support for the celebration of traditional festivals, festivals and other cultural events of different ethnicities in the municipality.

In order to implement these measures more effectively, should to:

- increase the capacity and skills of representatives of the Roma ethnic group for their full involvement in all spheres of political and public life, as well as in public institutions (state and local administration);
- Mapped the problems of Roma integration and database development;
- improve measures to increase the sensitivity of society and to overcome prejudices and stereotypes created against some of the ethnic minorities, especially Roma.

For the policy of social inclusion of the Roma in the municipality, the main source of funding is the state budget. The funds provided by the municipal budget are also important for the implementation of these policies. Additional sources of funding are various programs and projects of international organizations (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and others), most notably the EU Structural and Investment Funds, and in particular the European Social Fund. The main institutions responsible for implementing measures to ensure equal access to services at the local level are the units of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy through the Employment Agency - Labor Office Directorate Berkovitsa, Social Assistance Agency - Directorate "Social Assistance" Berkovitsa and regional structure of the Agency for People with Disabilities, as well as the Ministry of Education and Science.

1.3. Future development of social inclusion policies in the municipality of Berkovitsa

The progress made in addressing the challenges of social inclusion policies in Berkovitsa municipality clearly demonstrates the need to mobilize all policies and stakeholders for their implementation. In order to achieve a lasting and sustainable



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effect in overcoming social exclusion, it is necessary to strengthen the link, in particular, between active labor market policies, living standards and income, including social assistance policies. Permanent integration into the labor market of disadvantaged groups will not only reduce the burden on the social assistance system, but also allow for the formation of a qualitatively new culture. On the other hand, redirecting resources from passive protection to the development of social services will create qualitatively new conditions for the integration of vulnerable disadvantaged groups in all spheres of public life.

Policy decisions to accelerate employment and self-employment, as well as qualifying and retraining to mobilize the potential of Roma for social, economic and political inclusion, are among the strongest ways to promote integration. The economic and innovative potential of the Roma and disabled people in economically and socially disadvantaged positions in the municipality is not being used effectively.

Excluding information on the current situation from public institutions, the number of studies available on the state of policies and prerequisites for potential integration through employment policies in the municipality for the two target groups is scarce.

For this reason, this study will focus on the Roma community members in Berkovitsa municipality and people with disabilities in the socially and economically disadvantaged municipality, their needs, and barriers to employment from a policy perspective.

The aim is to understand and compare the barriers and opportunities for employment of Roma and people with disabilities in the Berkovitsa municipality and, as a consequence, to understand how employment policies should be designed to meet the integration needs of Roma and people with disabilities in the municipality, also taking into account economic factors.

Employment is a major factor in the integration of disadvantaged communities.

The importance of effective and targeted employment policies for these minority groups in the region is steadily increasing. In our expertise, we have come across good and bad examples of employment policies and projects, and have talked to various disadvantaged people in the Roma community and people with



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disabilities, with a wide variety of motivation and life situations, related to their access to work.

At the same time, the country is showing a clear gap between the needs of the labor market and the untapped labor potential of these disadvantaged groups.

However, few direct studies have been conducted to examine the interaction between integration, employment policies and market needs. In particular, there is a lack of research into the obstacles that do not allow the policy gap mentioned above to be overcome.

For this reason, the project examines exactly how employment and entrepreneurship policies can contribute to the social, political and economic inclusion of Roma and disadvantaged people in the region.

Roma in the municipality and people with disabilities are fundamentally different groups with very different political positions. However, when opening up the issue of integration, some similarities begin to emerge between the two groups. Particularly the integration objective of access to the labor market and empowerment, which are closely linked to factors such as education, social status and economic participation, reveal a link that is well worth exploring further.

Roma and people with disabilities face many related obstacles to access to employment and self-employment, as well as related obstacles to economic empowerment. Barriers and opportunities for employment of Roma and disadvantaged people are similar and may be subject to similar employment policies.

The main obstacle to Roma employment is the high level of illiteracy. Low literacy hinders Roma access to capacity building and vocational training measures and limits their ability to find work and earn a decent income. About 55% of the Roma aged 15-60, who are registered in the Directorate "Labor Office" - Berkovitsa, have not even completed primary education. The employment rate of Roma in the municipality of Berkovitsa is significantly influenced by the seasonal effects on the labor market. For example, in February 2018 the employment rate of Roma was approximately 25%, and in June 2018 it was 35%, or 10 percentage points more. Approximately 3% of Roma rely on domestic labor in the municipality of Berkovitsa.

2. People with disabilities



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Increasing employment and participation in active labor market measures have a positive effect on reducing the dependency of disadvantaged individuals on social assistance benefits. To this end, the funds for supporting one of the most vulnerable groups in Bulgarian society - people with disabilities have been increased since 01.01.2019.

From 15.08.2018, the Employment Agency starts collecting applications for training and employment of unemployed persons with permanent disabilities under the project "Training and employment for unemployed persons with permanent disabilities" (degree of disability 50 and over 50 percent). The project is implemented with the financial support of the European Social Fund of the European Union under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" 2014-2020. The aim of the project is to provide an additional opportunity for sustainable employment of one of the most vulnerable groups on the labor market, thus preventing it from falling into long-term unemployment, loss of work skills and social exclusion. According to the surveys conducted at the national level, the total number of unemployed with disabilities included in employment in 2017 was 8179 people, in 2018 - 10407 people, in 2019 - 10742 people.

Improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Bulgaria is organized in several directions: equal rights of people with disabilities, equal access to information, social services, education, healthcare, etc., the right to choose when solving typical problems (disability), combating discrimination and overcoming poverty. To this end, a coherent procedure of all regulations regarding people with disabilities is conducted, reviewing stakeholder relations and improving partnership and interaction paths.

The establishment of the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is in line with the main priorities set out in the Government's Governance Program. The purpose of the Strategy is to document the will and willingness of the Bulgarian society in the face of the government and organized communities of people with disabilities to make systematic efforts to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities in the country.

The strategy outlines the framework of legislative changes in order to harmonize Bulgarian legislation in the field of equal opportunities for people with disabilities with that of the European Union Member States. The National Strategy for Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities proposes a radical change in the



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philosophy of social protection and a new policy approach aimed at improving the quality of life and social inclusion of people with disabilities. Particular attention is paid to changing the model of care for children with disabilities in the direction of education, personal development and social adaptation in a family or close to family environment, rather than in specialized institutions. The Strategy provides mechanisms for monitoring and control in respect of the rights of persons with disabilities. An Equality Opportunity Action Plan for the Disabled and a Disability Employment Plan have been developed for its implementation.

The strategy is part of the National Programme "Bulgaria for All". The program contains specific measures to improve the legal framework, improve the social inclusion of people with disabilities; improving the quality of care, national cultural, educational, sporting events, providing and expanding accessible environments, and more. The essence of the program is to create the conditions for combating discrimination and to promote full social inclusion. At the end of 2018, a new Disabled Persons Act was adopted. The law aims to:

1. promote, protect and guarantee the full and equitable exercise of the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities;
2. create conditions for social inclusion of people with disabilities;
3. promotes respect for the inherent dignity of persons with disabilities;
4. provide support for people with disabilities and their families.

In accordance with international standards and traditions, the law aims to impose the following principles:

1. personal choice and independence of persons with disabilities and their families;
2. equality and non-discrimination;
3. social inclusion and full and effective participation of people with disabilities and their families in public life;
4. accessibility.

Various activities have been undertaken to improve the support system for people with disabilities and their families. Various public initiatives are also conceived to change the attitudes in society towards these people.

1.1. Strategic goals



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- Creating guarantees and incentives for equal opportunities for people with disabilities, effectively exercising their right to independent living and social inclusion.
- Creating guarantees and conditions for the social integration of children with disabilities, effectively exercising their rights and supporting their families.

1.2. Operational objectives

- Raising the level of public awareness of the problems and opportunities of people with disabilities and changing public attitudes towards them.
- Creating the necessary legal and other conditions for adapting the living, environment, institutional and communication environment to the needs of people with disabilities, increasing the mobility of people with disabilities.
- Changing the model of care for children with disabilities from their placement in specialized institutions to family care.
- Guaranteed access to quality education for people with disabilities.
- Empowerment and employment incentives for people with disabilities.
- Establish a clear mechanism for continuous monitoring and control of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities and non-discrimination based on disability.

1.3. Basic measures targeted at employers

- Encouraging employers to hire and retain people with disabilities in the ordinary work environment.
- Introducing incentives for employers to create jobs for people with disabilities, including offering preferences and tax breaks (by creating a functional system) for employers of people with disabilities.
- Introducing incentives for employers to adapt working conditions - working environment, working hours, equipment and more, to the needs of people with disabilities.
- Offering daily programs for participation in work and skills development for people with severe disabilities, for whom there were no opportunities for work integration (people with mental disabilities).



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Labor market insertion of individuals with disabilities is a great challenge, especially for developing economies. Demographic ageing of the European Union member states has led to an increasing population, and Romania is no exception. Moreover, the greying of Europe is an irreversible process that is one of the major challenges for world's political leaders considering that demographic factors have a major influence on labor force supply. Population ageing leads inevitably to workforce ageing so appropriate measures to adapt the economy, labor market and working conditions to these changes are needed. As a consequence, the labor force market is contracting so the integration of people with disabilities can be a sustainable alternative. In analyzing social exclusion and labor market integration of people with disabilities we must take into account the fact that Romania is a former communist developing country in Eastern Europe. Inequalities in income, consumption and wealth, high poverty and low living standards are quite common in Romania and vulnerable groups are currently at risk of social exclusion due to insufficient, inadequate or even absent legislative framework. Labor market discrimination is a statistical certainty in Romania, especially for vulnerable groups which also includes people with disabilities.

Romania was under communist rule from 1948 until 1989. Some researchers suggested that since 1991, within a broad based reform package, the government in Romania began to liberalize the labor market by allowing wage scales, hiring and promotion criteria to be determined by collective contracts between workers and managers.

The Romanian government tried to initiate programs, including external funding, and job creation, but compared to the massive layoffs that occurred following the restructuring of sectors, the number of new jobs created has proved insufficient. Inequality of chance among the citizens of a country such as Romania, inevitably leads to economic and social imbalances based on the inefficient allocation of resources. Governmental authorities in Romania should provide a more sustainable legislative framework for an efficient exploitation of labor market integration opportunities in the case of people with disabilities. On the other hand, the socio-professional integration of people with disabilities is a constant concern of the county agencies for employment in Romania. Moreover, the positive effect of public programs and governmental incentives is significantly diminished by the



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phenomenon of discrimination faced by people with disabilities. Unfortunately, discrimination is part of the daily routine of most employees with disabilities in Romania even if official statistics do not accurately provide the magnitude of this social phenomenon.

For a better understanding on how to combat workplace discrimination of employees with disabilities in the Romanian labor market, it is essential to have in-depth knowledge of the relevant legislation based on laws, regulations, guidance and other relevant normative acts. However, the regulatory framework is not very rigorous, effective and diversified compared to those of other countries in European Union.

Romania signed the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106) which was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. This Convention is intended as a human rights instrument and adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. This international legislative framework has made remarkable progress in order to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. Moreover, this convention established to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

The Constitution of Romania provides the main legal regulatory framework regarding protection of individuals with disabilities because citizens are equal before the law and public authorities, without any discrimination. Moreover, it is also specified that individuals with disabilities shall enjoy special protection and the State of Romania shall provide the accomplishment of a national policy of equal opportunities, and disability prevention and treatment, so that individuals with disabilities can effectively participate in community life, while observing the rights and duties of their parents or legal guardians.

According to **Law no. 448/2006** amended and completed by the Government Emergency Ordinance no.60/2017 regarding the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, starting with 1 September, 2017, public authorities and institutions, legal, public or private persons, who do not employ



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persons with disabilities will have to pay monthly to the state budget an amount representing the minimum gross monthly guaranteed in payment multiplied by the number of jobs that the company did not employ persons with disabilities. The Romanian Leu, or RON, is the official currency of Romania. At the employer's level there is an impact of raising the minimum gross salary to 1900 Lei on the disability fund contribution paid by the employer because each company having at least 50 employees and that does not hire at least 4% of the total number of employees individuals with disabilities, is obligated to pay this contribution that is used by the state to protect this social category.

As an internal legislative approach, the **National Council for Combating Discrimination** or NCCD is the Romanian competent and autonomous state authority, under parliamentary control, but it is politically independent which means it operates in the field of discrimination in accordance with the national and international legislation. The National Council for Combating Discrimination is a very important national authority in terms of sanctioning discriminatory behavior in order to combat discrimination. The legislative status of NCCD is based on the **Government Ordinance no. 137/2000** on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, which was subsequently amended in 2006. The Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination with subsequent amendments provides the legislative framework in the case of discrimination. The Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination with subsequent amendments implements the Directive no. 2000/43/CE; implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, as well as the Directive no. 2000/78/CE; establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. Practically, this normative act defines discrimination in the Romanian legislation, with direct implications for people with disabilities at risk of social exclusion, as follows: "Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social status, belief, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, non-contagious chronic disease, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) infection, membership of a disadvantaged group and any other criteria which has the purpose or the effect of restriction, elimination of recognition, use or exercise of fundamental human rights and freedoms or of rights recognized by the law in the political, economic, social or cultural field or in any other field of public life." However, the main contraventional sanctions, according to this law are very low and without major consequences to discourage relapse.



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The labor market in Romania is influenced by the economic and social, political system, as well as the environment, that is why the supply and demand of the labor market has had, at many times, different trends. Starting with 1990, Romania was marked by deep socio-economic transformations that have made their critical mark on the evolution of labor nationally and regionally. The labor market in Romania has undergone profound changes resulting from economic reforms in the last nearly two decades, with direct influence on the quality of the human factor. Some researchers argue that Romania has conducted its employment policies rather inconsistently, and therefore, the capacity of the economy to absorb the unemployment is very modest because the economy has destroyed more jobs than it created.

The concept of social exclusion was first used by René Lenoir—the French Secretary of State for Social Action in the Government of Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, in late 1974: “Saying that someone is unsuitable, marginal or asocial is simply stating that in the industrialized and urbanized society of the late twentieth century, these persons due to physical or mental, behavior or lack of psychological training, are unable to provide for needs, or require constant care, or represent a danger to others, or are segregated either by their own decision or that of the community”. Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon with significant negative impact on various areas such as: Social protection, employment, education, financial services, justice, health, housing, public administration, security, spiritual and religious support, culture, transport, information and communication. It also occurs as a result of shortcomings and failures in the systems and structures of family, community and society. Some researchers defined social exclusion as low material means and inability to participate effectively in economic, social, and cultural life, alienation and distance from the mainstream society. Other suggested that focusing on the “terms and conditions” of social exclusion and inclusion can encompass invisible phenomena, such as mental illness, and bring the concepts closer to underlying social processes.

The significant gap between employees with and without disabilities in the Romanian labor market can be explained based on certain influential factors such as: Lower productivity levels, higher training costs, differentiated work schedules, special demands, higher risk of work injuries and work-related accidents, etc. In general, people with disabilities are more exposed to the risk of social exclusion but they are also much less probable to be employed or to receive adequate social assistance. The individual adjustment capacity is impressive in the case of people



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with disabilities who integrate into the labor market, especially in developing countries such as Romania. In Romania, part-time employees with disabilities are more frequent than full-time employees with disabilities. However, the employment rate in the case of people with disabilities is considerably lower than of non-disabled people. The employment gap between people with disabilities and those without is determined by demographic and economic factors, as well as national welfare policies, but with no definitive empirical evidence on their relative strength.

Previous empirical studies suggest that other factors than demographics and injury-related variables, such as differences in the environment or psychological resources that have not been accounted for in this study, may explain a variation in labor market participation (LMP) of persons with disabilities.

As an international approach, in Article 27 of the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** it is stated that it: "Recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labor market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities". Due to the expected decline in the working-age population, particularly in the case of European countries, people with disabilities are perceived more and more frequently as a valuable resource in the labor force. Previous empirical research studies on labor market integration and equality for people with disabilities in the case of Nordic and Baltic countries, i.e., Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania which are all members states of the European Union as well as Romania, suggested that national policies make a difference, that non-discrimination policies are not enough and that a focused mix of regulatory and redistributive measures is appropriate to be implemented. However, integrating employees with disabilities into the working environment is still a great challenge in Romania.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) adopts neutral language and does not distinguish between the type and cause of disability – for instance, between "physical" and "mental" health considering that disability arises from the interaction of health conditions with contextual factors – environmental and personal factors. To our knowledge, at the national level, there is a small number of studies focused on the integration into the labor market of individuals with disabilities in Romania. Some researchers encouraged the creation



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and use of social enterprises for individuals with disabilities by emphasizing the need to use a new concept of “people with disabilities in employment” instead of classical terminology, as well as the importance of social enterprises to support them. Although the term handicap is still used in Romania, certain authors define disability as the main characteristic of a social group with limited activity and restriction of participation, secondary to a significant loss or deviation of the functions or structures of the organism.

The medical model of understanding disability plays a very important role in Romania, in which the impairment remains a solid rationale that justifies the use of patriarchal attitudes by the non-disabled towards individuals with disabilities. In most cases, the medical model and the social model are exposed as dichotomous structures, but disability should be viewed neither as purely medical nor as purely social: Individuals with disabilities can often experience problems arising from their health condition. On the other hand, resilience resources and soft skills confirmed their effectiveness in reducing perceived disability impact and improving perceived employability in the case of youth with disabilities.

Some research studies investigated the socio-professional discrimination of individuals with disabilities in Romania and stresses that Romanian employers prefer to pay state contributions to the detriment of employing individuals with disabilities considering that their socio-professional development opportunities are far below those for a person with a normal health condition. The phenomenon of unemployment among people with disabilities is unavoidable and also generates devastating consequences on living standards, wellbeing and quality of life.

Labor market insertion of individuals with disabilities implies not only hiring them and receiving a sum of money for their work, but also integrating them into the social life of their community. Currently, Romania is not involved in implementing a sustainable demographic strategy in spite of the fact that the labor force is continuously decreasing. Age, education and economic status have a significant influence on the probability of (re)employment of individuals with disabilities.

The employment barriers faced by people with disabilities include the reluctance of employers to hire them and the small number of protected workplaces and a lower pay in comparison with the able-bodied employees in the same job position. The significant implications of educational level on participation in the labor market plays an essential role within policy and research on disability



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and inclusion considering the fact that educational level has a stronger positive effect for people with disabilities than for non-disabled people. The issue regarding the transition from school to employment has become more important and actual within Romania's economic restructuring. Education is very important in preparing individuals to enter the labor market, by offering them the opportunity to improve and increase their amount of knowledge, skills and abilities. Employees with disabilities can integrate into the workplace accompanied with effective measures focused on empowerment, self-advocacy and social relations over the life span, also considering that disabled peoples' experiences enrich the cultural diversity of the workplace.

Family, training (both prior to and during the integration service), monitoring of the worker with disabilities in the workplace, and work setting are relevant and contributing aspects of the process of work integration. People with disabilities and people without disabilities respond to workplace challenges in different ways. For instance, the global financial crisis of 2008 had a greater impact on people with disabilities than on those without disabilities but in recent years, the unemployment rate among people with disabilities has grown at a faster pace, especially for women and young people.

After 1990, the market labor formation and functioning has become one of the priorities of transition and economic reform program in Romania. Understanding, supporting and integrating young specialists into the Romanian labor market transcends from microeconomic behavior to the macroeconomic level so it generates a serious national matter.

Developed countries unlike most developing countries, including Romania, implement sustainable strategies for labor market integration of people with disabilities. For instance, Italian employment policy system orientates people with disabilities and reduced work capacity towards the open labor market instead of protected employment and both environmental and socio-welfare factors which should be considered, as they are important in determining the efficiency of each region in providing employment for individuals with disabilities. The main aim of the public employment policy in Romania should focus on a sustainable approach to reducing the number of unemployed people with disabilities based on sustainable and inclusive growth.

On the other hand, in Romania, the "black labor" phenomenon is very widespread. "Black labor" involves a number of negative aspects for employees,



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such as: Employers pay low wages, mostly under minimum wage, or under what would be fair given the proper level of expertise and experience of the employee, the expertise and labor time performed by workers. These workers are not registered for retirement or disease retirement, or social aid to any illness or death, and have no right to the benefit of an unemployment allowance or health insurance.

Possible effective strategies for labor market integration of people with disabilities in the case of a developing country in the EU, such as Bulgaria (Romania's neighbor) involve the following directions stressing on the effectiveness in the talks with the employers on the open labor market; improvement of the relations with the Unions of persons with disabilities, NGOs—Non-governmental organisations and social partners around the country, using the subsidiary principle for solving this social issue, and also finding jobs on the open labor market for people with disabilities by adapting the working place for them.

Social exclusion and labor market integration of individuals with disabilities in Romania

Labor market insertion of individuals with disabilities is a great challenge for any society, and especially for developing countries. Individuals with disabilities are a vulnerable population. The main problem that individuals with disabilities from Romania have to face it is not the disability itself, but poor infrastructure, the challenges of transportation to and from the workplace, and social stigma and discrimination.

These are strong reasons why many individuals with disabilities quit searching for a job or have difficulties keeping their current job. Some Romanian employers avoid hiring people with disabilities due to the necessity to adapt their working conditions to the needs of this particular group. Inequalities in income, consumption and wealth, high poverty, social stigma and low living standards are quite common in Romania and vulnerable groups are at risk of social exclusion due to insufficient, inadequate or even absent current legislative framework.

The Romanian legislation is constantly changing and adapting because the Romanian legislator has amended the general law regarding individual and collective labor relations, reforming the legal concepts and institutions in the field in order to establish more flexible legal relations between employers and employees. Romania has already aligned its legislation to the EU policies on combating discrimination in the case of persons with disabilities, however, the



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concrete results are difficult to commensurate. Moreover, the ICF adopts neutral language to eliminate any form of discrimination regarding persons with disabilities.

The measures implemented by the Romanian Government until now are still insufficient to solve the problem of social exclusion and labor market integration for this vulnerable population. There are many companies in Romania that do not have at least one individual with a disability as a member of their staff. Implementing a sustainable strategy to combat social exclusion and to stimulate labor market integration of people with disabilities should become one of the highest priorities of governmental authorities in Romania. However, people with disabilities do not always express those individual capabilities that allow them to cope with workplace requirements. Thus, social exclusion and labor market integration of individuals with disabilities remains an insufficiently investigated topic that requires special attention from policy makers, as well as from researchers and civil society.

Employment opportunities for Roma people and disabled persons

The Roma people and disabled persons are often in vulnerability or risk situations because the group members frequently have low levels of education, lack of qualifications, reduced experience on the labour market, precarious material situation. In this context, from the point of view of occupational opportunities, they become disadvantaged people on the workforce market, because they have a low participation in education and therefore, low levels of qualification and work experience.

In case of Roma persons, they report occupational models of population, the interest is manifested towards traditional jobs, specific to Roma ethnicity. According to results of specialised studies, most of Roma people are unqualified, carry out activities which do not require any professional training.

In general, the activities carried out are on own management, mostly carried out in rural environment, in agriculture, mostly activity in own household, without receiving any economic compensation.

According to data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, in Investigation on workforce in the households of population (AMIGO) "in the year 2013, in agricultural sector worked about half of Roma men and about two thirds of Roma women. Among the non-agricultural activities, the most frequencies for



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Roma men are encountered in commerce activities (12,8%), processing industry (12,6%) and in constructions (11,0%). About 1 of ten Roma men were occupied in sanitation and water distribution activities and in activities of provision of services to the individual households of population. One of five Roma women carried out economic activity in processing industry and another 11.0% in commerce."

The disabled persons have a low employment rate. According to a report of Foundation "Pentru Voi" and Institute for Public Policies (IPP), in the year 2010, about 29,000 persons, which means 4.2% of total disabled persons at national level had a job.

The highest employment perspectives are in protected institutions whose role is to favour the integration of disabled persons on the labour market. However, the reduced legislative regulations regarding the employment of disabled persons in protected units imposed that in 2010, only 5% of total disabled persons hired at national level worked in them. In 2017, the situation was similar, being hired 6.8% (which means 33,449 disabled persons) out of total 700,000 with right of work. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (MMJS) "the 732 Authorised Protected Units hired only 1,897 disabled persons and 124 persons with disability degree III, which means 0.26% of total number of disabled people."

Also, according to the Law no. 448/2006, disabled persons should occupy 4% of total number of employees of public institution and private companies which exceed 50 employees. Although this measure for stimulation of employment creates clear opportunities for disabled persons, at national level, the number of disabled employees is low compared to the number of vacancies reported by institutions.

At national level, the employment opportunities for persons from vulnerable groups, who have a low education level or are professionally unqualified, can be known by the National Agency for the Occupation of Workforce (ANOFM). According to ANOFM, in July 2019, there were recorded 28,977 vacant jobs, out of which 4.5% are addressed to persons with higher studies, and 53.1% are for persons with secondary schools, post-secondary schools or vocational schools, while 42.4% of the jobs are for persons with primary/gymnasium studies or without studies.

Also, in July 2019, at national level, ANOFM organised 169 professional training programmes, in which 2,742 persons enrolled, about 50% of the jobs/occupations proposed were addressed to persons who do not have a professional qualification obtained from the attendance of a secondary or



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university education system. In the cross-border counties, the following data were reported:

- Dolj: 10 professional training courses carried out by ANOFM, in jobs/trades: *Coiffeur, security agent, farmer in vegetal cultures and animal breeder, Communication in Romanian language, Competences of mathematics, Inspector (Referent) in Human Resources, Maintenance Electrician in constructions.*
- Gorj: 3 professional training courses carried out by ANOFM, in jobs/trades: *Electronic computer Operator and network operator, Room Maid, Commercial Worker.*
- Calarasi: 6 professional training courses carried out by ANOFM, in jobs/trades: *Barman, key communication competences, Inspector (referent) in human resources, Inspector in occupational health and safety, Operator for introduction, validation and processing of data, Baker.*
- Olt: 6 professional training courses carried out by ANOFM, in jobs/trades: *Communication in English, Commercial Worker, Pastry Chef, Waiter, seller in nutrition units.*
- Constanta: 2 professional training courses carried out by ANOFM, in jobs/trades: *Operator for introduction, validation and processing of data, Pastry Chef.*
- Giurgiu: 2 professional training courses carried out by ANOFM, in jobs/trades: *Make-up Artist, Coiffeur, Barber, Manicurist, Pedicurist.*
- Teleorman: 1 professional training course carried out by ANOFM, in job/trades: *Electrician for low and medium voltage exploitation.*

Out of 405 thousand disabled persons who participate in economic activity, 30.0% have access to special forms of assistance which help them in carrying out the professional activity, while 64.0% of unoccupied disabled persons (1287 thousand persons) claim that they would want access to special assistance measures to integrate more easily on the workforce market.

Special assistance measures aim at:



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- Personal assistance, help/support for carrying out of professional activity (measure mentioned by 22.4% of occupied disabled persons and 43.4% of unoccupied disabled persons);
- Specific equipment or work conditions adjusted to the workplace (measure mentioned by 2.9% of occupied disabled persons and 28.9% of inactive disabled persons);
- Special conditions at workplace (for example, flexible work schedule, work without travelling, carrying out of activity at home etc.) mentioned by 14.4% of occupied disabled persons and 59.0% of unoccupied disabled persons.

Project "Combined Efforts in Support to Disadvantaged People on the Labour Market in the Cross-Border Area", project code 16.4.2.056, e-MS code ROBG - 163.

SECTION III. RESEARCH

Perceptions of people with disabilities and Roma on labor integration



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RESEARCH IN BERKOVITSA, BULGARIA

Research Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- research based on the questionnaire applied- statistical analysis of the data collected
Research toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the questionnaire for Roma people included 28 questions, with free and pre-formulated questions- the questionnaire for people with disabilities contained 28 questions, with free and pre-formulated questions
Period of complete information gathering	March 11, 2019 - June 28, 2019
The period of data acquisition,	March 22, 2019 - July 15, 2019



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processing and analysis

Excerpt

45 disadvantaged persons, 30 of whom are Roma people and 15 people with disabilities. The questionnaire was presented during trainings at the project Consultancy center in Berkovitsa, Bulgaria.

Objectives and hypotheses

Overall objective: To identify the perceptions of people with disabilities and Roma people for labor integration.

Specific objectives:

- Determining the degree of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities and the Roma people;
- Identifying how community members are related to Roma people / people with disabilities;
- Respondents' perception of social protection provided by the state;
- Determining the degree of discrimination / marginalization to which Roma people and people with disabilities have been subjected in social institutions;



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- Identification of the main barriers for the people with disabilities / Roma people in their job search;
- Highlight the factors that would help improve the situation of the people with disabilities / Roma people in the labor market;
- Determining the level of knowledge of people with disabilities about the social provisions for maintaining and promoting employment;
- Identification of their sense of belonging to their own ethnicity (in the case of Roma people).

Hypotheses

- The more respect for the rights of people with disabilities and the Roma people, the easier they are to integrate into the society;
- If there are stereotyped perceptions of the community towards people with disabilities and Roma people, then the attitude is distrustful;
- If disadvantaged groups have appropriate training, then their access to stable jobs is increased;
- If disadvantaged groups have a low level of education, then they carry out activities with low levels of competence;
- The lower the level of education, the more people with disabilities are less aware of the social provisions for maintaining and promoting employment;
- The more Roma are less socially integrated, the greater the sense of belonging to their ethnicity.

RESULTS

Question: *In the current Bulgarian society, which groups are most predisposed at risk of marginalization and social exclusion?*

Responses from persons of Roma origin:



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	Percentage
Persons with physical and sensory impairments - vision, hearing	0%
People with mental disabilities	0%
Persons of Roma origin	100%
People addicted to drugs, alcohol, or other toxic substances	0%
Elderly people (over 50 years)	0%
Women / children victims of domestic violence	
Persons belonging to a sexual minority	0%
Homeless or sheltered persons	0%
Persons suffering from incurable diseases	0%
Persons who have left prisons	0%
Total:	100.0%

Responses of people with disabilities:

	Percentage
Persons with physical and sensory impairments - vision, hearing	100%
People with mental disabilities	0%
Persons of Roma origin	0%
People addicted to drugs, alcohol, or other toxic substances	0%
Older people (over 50 years)	0%
Women / children victims of domestic violence	
Persons belonging to a sexual minority	0%
Homeless or sheltered persons	0%
Persons suffering from incurable diseases	0%
Persons who have left prisons	0%
Total:	100.0%

To the first question about the social groups most vulnerable to marginalization and social exclusion, Roma people 100% say that their group is the most vulnerable. The same applies to people with disabilities - and they are 100% responsible for the fact that people with disabilities are the most vulnerable group.



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Question: *In your opinion, how much the rights of the Roma people in Bulgaria are respected?*

	Percentage
They are fully respected	0
Rather, they are being respected	6.7%
Rather, they are not respected	73.3%
They are not respected at all	20%
Total:	100%

Over 93 percent of the Roma people surveyed believe that Roma rights are not respected in Bulgaria. Only 6.7% of respondents believe "rather they are being respected".

Question: *In your opinion, how much the rights of people with disabilities in Bulgaria are respected?*

	Percentage
They are fully respected	0%
Rather, they are being respected	50.0%
Rather, they are not respected	50.0%
They are not respected at all	0%
Total:	100%

50 percent of people with disabilities believe that their rights are "rather respected". The other 50 percent of respondents think that the rights of this vulnerable group are "rather not respected".

The second question is aimed at analyzing the respondents' opinion on respect for the rights of the Roma people or persons with disabilities, concluding that the rights of the Roma people are quite disregarded and the rights of the people with disabilities are rather respected.

Question: *In general, community members treat Roma people with:*

Percentage



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Respect	0%
Amity	6.7%
Trust	0%
Goodwill	13.3%
Despite	6.7%
Hostility	6.7%
Distrust	59.9%
Dismay	6.7%
Total:	100%

Question: *In general, community members treat people with disabilities with:*

	Percentage
Respect	30%
Amity	20%
Credence	0%
Goodwill	10%
Despite	0%
Hostility	10%
Distrust	30%
Dismay	0%
Total:	100%

Roma respondents believe that the community treats them with distrust (59.9%) on the one hand and goodwill (13.3%) on the other.

People with disabilities believe that members of this group receive, on the one hand, more respect (30%) and amity (20%), but on the other hand, treat them with distrust (30%).

Question: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements_?*

The state provides adequate social protection for the Roma people / people with disabilities

Percentage



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I totally agree	20%
Somewhat agree	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%
Disagree	36%
Total:	100%

Employers do not want to hire Roma people / people with disabilities

	Percentage
I totally agree	80%
Somewhat agree	12%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Disagree	4%
I do not agree at all	0%
Total:	100%

Roma people / people with disabilities belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment and professional opportunities

	Percentage
I totally agree	68%
Somewhat agree	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Disagree	0%
I do not agree at all	0%
Total:	100%

Most Roma people do not actually try to find a job

	Percentage
I totally agree	59.9%
Somewhat agree	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	13.4%
Disagree	6.7%
I do not agree at all	0.0%
Total:	100%

People with disabilities are unable to work (they cannot work)

	Percentage
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I totally agree	10%
Somewhat agree	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	40%
Disagree	20%
I do not agree at all	10%
Total:	100%

The above question seeks to identify views of the respondents on a number of statements:

- with regard to the adequacy of social protection provided by the state to Roma people and people with disabilities, 48% fully or somewhat agree with this statement and 36% say they do not agree;
- 92% of respondents say they agree that employers do not want to hire people with disabilities or Roma people;
- 50% of respondents disabled people consider that people with disabilities are able to work;
- Almost 80% of respondents Roma people fully agree that people of this ethnicity are not actually trying to find a job;
- 68% of respondents say that both Roma people and people with disabilities belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment opportunities.

Question: *On a personal level, how often have you felt discriminated / marginalized?*

In educational institutions

	Percentage
Very often	4%
Many times	4%
Sometimes / Occasionally	24%
Rarely	44%
Never	24%
Total:	100%



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In relations with public authorities

	Percentage
Very often	12%
Many times	16%
Sometimes / Occasionally	40%
Rarely	24%
Never	8%
Total:	100%

On social assistance and protection services

	Percentage
Many times	28%
Sometimes / Occasionally	44%
Rarely	20%
Never	8%
Total:	100%

At the hospital / family doctor

	Percentage
Many times	28%
Sometimes / Occasionally	24%
Rarely	32%
Never	16%
Total:	100%

On the work place

	Percentage
Very often	32%
Many times	40%
Sometimes / Occasionally	12%
Rarely	8%
Never	8%
Total:	100%



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When looking for a paid job

	Percentage
Very often	64%
Many times	20%
Sometimes / Occasionally	8%
Rarely	4%
Never	4%
Total:	100%

The question concerns the level of discrimination / marginalization to which Roma and people with disabilities have been subjected to certain situations in their life experiences and the results are as follows: in educational institutions and at the hospital/family doctor, these groups have rarely felt marginalized, majority of respondents felt more marginalized in their relations with public authorities and social assistance and protection services. Most often, in the looking for paid job and in the workplace, respondents felt discriminated against.

Question: How informed are you about public policies / legislation, about maintaining and increasing the employment of the Roma people / people with disabilities?

	Percentage
Fully informed	8%
Rather informed	36%
Rather uninformed	52%
I'm not at all informed	4%
Total:	100%

The majority of respondents (52 Percentage) believe that they are rather uninformed about policies / legislation to maintain and increase the employment rate for Roma people / people with disabilities.



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Question: In your opinion, what are the main obstacles faced by a person with disabilities / Roma person in finding a job?

Obstacles reported by the Roma people

	Percentage
Employers' reluctance (refusal to hire people belonging to this vulnerable group)	13.3%
High unemployment rate	79.9%
Lack of specialized job search assistance	6.7%
Low experience in the field of work	6.7%
Lack of vocational training	6.7%
Poor information on available jobs	26.6%
Small wages	6.7%
Poor development of skills and competences needed in the labor market	26.6%
Lack of workplace learning opportunities that do not require education (diplomas)	13.3%
Traditions and customs of the group (marriage of women at an early age, etc.)	6.7%
I do not know	6.7%

Obstacles signaled by people with disabilities

	Percentage
Employers' reluctance (refusal to hire people from this vulnerable group)	40%
Lack of specialized job search assistance	10%
Low experience in the field of work	10%
Lack of vocational training	20%
High poverty rate	10%
Infrastructure inaccessible for travel and integration at work	10%
Unsafe / dangerous working conditions	30%
Small wages	40%



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The next item in the questionnaire aims to identify the main obstacles faced by Roma people or people with disabilities in finding a job: for the Roma people, the main obstacles chosen by them are high unemployment (79.9 Percentage) and poor development of the necessary skills/abilities for the labor market (26.7%), while among people with disabilities, the main obstacles are the reluctance of the employers (40 Percentage) and low salaries (40 Percentage).

Question: *What are the main factors that could help to improve the situation of Roma people / people with disabilities on the labor market? (hiring, finding a better job, etc.)*

Perceptions of the Roma people

	Percentage
Changes in employers' attitudes	79.9%
Participation in activities for personal development, self-knowledge and self-confidence	6.7%
Career guidance for finding a job	13.3%
Specialized job search assistance	79.9%
Participation in free vocational training courses for Roma people	13.3%
Improvement of support services for training and employment of Roma people	6.7%
Enhanced partnerships between the various institutions involved in the integration of the Roma people into the labor market	6.7%

Perceptions of people with disabilities

	Percentage
Changes in employers' attitudes	30%
Support / guidance from the family	10%
Participation in activities for personal development, self-discovery and self-confidence	10%
Career guidance for finding a job	10%
Specialized job search assistance	40%
Improving employment policies for people with disabilities	10%
Participation in free vocational training courses for people with disabilities	10%



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Facilitating access to various activities (construction of ramps, lifts, etc.)	20%
Providing more opportunities for employers	30%
Attractive wages	30%
Flexible work schedule	10%

The question seeks to identify key factors that could help to improvement of the labor market position of Roma people and people with disabilities. Respondents from the Roma ethnic group cited the following factors as major: changes in employers' attitudes (nearly 80 percent of respondents) and specialized job search assistance (40 percent).

People with disabilities consider the following factors: specialized job search assistance (40 percent of respondents), changes in employers' attitudes (30 percent), providing more opportunities for employers (30 percent) and attractive salaries (30 percent).

Question: *In your opinion, in the current socio-economic context of Bulgaria, do you think that a Roma person / person with disabilities can easily find a job?*

The next element of the questionnaire seeks to identify the views of Roma people / people with disabilities about their ability to find a job easily in the socio-economic context of Bulgaria. All respondents - 100 Percentage answered that they did not find this fact easily.

Question: *Are you currently working?*

Currently, all (100%) of the total number of Roma respondents are without permanent employment. As 13.3 percent of them work from time to time and are paid for their work.



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Of respondents with disabilities, 40 percent are employed while 60 percent are not employed.

Question: *What is your job? (this question is for employed persons only).*

	Percentage
Maintenance	25%
Technical Assistant	50%
Assistant	25%

40 percent of people with disabilities who answered the previous question said they were hired, working in various fields such as maintenance, technical assistant, assistant.

Question: *Which of the following descriptions matches your professional status? (this question is for employed persons only).*

	Percentage
I work full time (people with disabilities)	100%
I work part-time (Roma people)	
I work from time to time and they pay me for work (Roma people)	14.3%
I work informally, without a contract	7.1%

Of the respondents people with disabilities who said they are employed, 100% said they are hired on full-time labor contract.

Question: *How did you find the job? (this question is for employed persons only).*

	Percentage
Recommendation from relatives	50%
From the Labor Exchange / The Labor Office	50%



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Total:	100%

50 percentage of employed persons say they have found a job through the Labor Office; the other 50 per cent find employment on a recommendation from relatives.

Question: *Have you ever had a job? (a question addressed only to those persons who are currently out of work).*

100 percentage of the unemployed people with disabilities stated that they had worked in the past, while 100 percentage of the Roma people claimed that they had never worked.

Question: *What year did you have your last job? (a question addressed only to those persons who are currently out of work).*

On this question: 70 percent have been working until recently - 2019 and 2018; the others - 2015, 2014.

Question: *What was the last paid activity you had? (a question addressed only to those persons who are currently out of work).*

In terms of the last paid activity which the respondents had, the results again varied: security / security officer (2), technical assistant (1 person), cleaner (1 person), employee (1 person).

Question: *What are the main reasons for not finding a job? (a question addressed only to those who have never had a job)*

	Percentage



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I'm afraid that employers will not want to work with Roma people / disabled people	26,8%
I have to take care of the children / parents	13.4%
Lack of confidence in my own strength	6,5%
Health issues	6,4%
I tried to get hired, but they didn't choose me	33,5%
There are no jobs	13,4%
Total:	100%

The main reason why the respondents did not work so far was I tried to hire, but they did not choose me (33,5 percentage) and I'm afraid that employers will not want to work with Roma people/disabled people - 26,8 percentage. Other reasons include: I have to take care of children / parents, Lack of confidence in my own strength, There are no jobs, Health issues, I'm too old to start working.

Question: *If you could hire yourself, would you take that step? (a question addressed only to those who have never had a job)*

Roma people:	Percentage
Yes	80.0%
No	20.0%
Total:	100%
People with disabilities:	Процент
Yes	20,0%
No	80,0%
Total:	100%

With regard to the desire to hire, respondents who have never worked so far, 80 percent of Roma people said that they would be hired if they could take this step, while only 20% of people with disabilities would do so.

A question addressed only to people with disabilities



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Question: *We will present a list of legal regulations / public policies to support and promote the employment of people with disabilities. Which ones do you know: _?*

Employers who employ people with disabilities benefit from tax relief, as well as other rights granted under the law.

	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	85.7%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	14.3%
Total:	100%

In order to identify the level of knowledge of people with disabilities about the social provisions for maintaining and promoting employment, the statement "Employers who employ people with disabilities benefit from tax relief, as well as other rights granted under the law" 85.7 percentage of the respondents people with disabilities were aware of the statement and it is unknown to 14.3% of them.

Free access to vocational assessment and employment orientation services, regardless of age, type and degree of disability.

	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	85,7%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	14.3%
Total:	100%

Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to work less than 8 hours per day if they benefit from the recommendation of the Committee on Performance Assessment in this respect.

	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	100%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	0%
Total:	100%

Persons with disabilities, according to the Labor Code, have an additional leave of at least 3 working days.



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	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	100%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	0%
Total:	100%

For the last two statements: "Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to work less than 8 hours per day if they benefit from the recommendation of the Committee on Performance Assessment in this respect" and "Persons with disabilities, according to the Labor Code, have an additional holiday leave of at least 3 working days", 100 Percentage of the respondents said that these provisions/ public policies are known to them. 85.7% of the respondents are aware of the legal provisions regarding "free access to vocational assessment and employment orientation services, regardless of age, type and degree of disability" and that "employers who employ people with disabilities benefit from tax relief, as well as other rights granted under the law", and 14.3% claim that they are not aware of these legal rules and norms.

Question addressed only to the Roma people

Question: *On a scale of 1 to 10, please indicate if you have a strong or weak sense of belonging to your ethnicity?*

	Percentage
2	6.7%
7	6.7%
8	6.7%
9	6.7%
10	73.2%
Total:	100%



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The question was addressed only to the Roma people, with the majority of respondents (73.2 percentage) having a very strong sense of belonging to their own ethnicity.

Question: *Have you worked in another country for at least 3 months in the last 10 years? (this question is for employees only)*

Of the total number of Roma respondents who claim to be currently working, only two people answered this question, stating that they had not been paid in another country for a minimum period of 3 months.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Gender of the respondents

The majority of respondents (80%) are women and 20% are men.

Age of the respondents

	Percentage
20 - 30 years	20%
31 - 40 years	20%
41 - 50 years	20%
51 - 60 years	32%
61- 65 years	8%
Total:	100%

The age is ranked between 20 and 65 years and the respondents are relatively evenly distributed: 20% belong to the age group of 20 - 30 years; 20% of the group are 31- 40 years old; 20% are in the age group of 41 - 50; 32% - 51- 60 years.

Marital status



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Most of the respondents said they were married (64%), 16% were not married, 4% were divorced, 12% were widowed.

Residence

The total respondents come from the urban environment.

Number of household members

	Percentage
1	12%
2	24%
3	12%
4	32%
5	8%
6	4%
8	4%
Total:	100%

Most of the respondents stated that they live in a 4-member household (32 percent). The others selected different answers from 1 to 8 household members.

Education

Almost all respondents with disabilities have completed secondary education (90 percent), and 10% of people with disabilities have higher education. While Roma people are 13.33% without education; 53.33% have elementary education and 33.33% have primary education.

Professional status

Of the respondents, 12% have employment status as worker/employee, while 20% are unemployed looking for a work, 20% are unemployed who are not



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looking for a job, the rest of the respondents (36%) are housewives; 12% are retired due to sickness.

Ethnic origin

All of the Roma people interviewed stated that they belonged to the Roma ethnic group - 100%. People with disabilities are from the Bulgarian ethnic group.

Type of disability

People with disabilities have responded that they have diseases - cancer, multiple sclerosis, angina, pulmonary disease, thrombosis, birth defects, etc.

RESEARCH IN CRAIOVA, ROMANIA

Research Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research based on the questionnaire applied - statistical analysis of the data collected
Research toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the questionnaire for Roma people included 28 questions, with free and pre-formulated questions - the questionnaire for people with disabilities contained 28 questions, with free and pre-formulated questions
Period of complete information	23 February - 3 March 2019
The period of data acquisition, processing and analysis	18 March - 15 May 2019



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Excerpt

26 disadvantaged people, 14 of whom are people with disabilities and 12 Roma.

The questionnaire was applied at the project site in the Consultancy center in Craiova, Romania before and after the trainings

Objectives and hypotheses

Overall objective: To identify the perceptions of people with disabilities and Roma people for labor integration.

Specific objectives:

- Determining the degree of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities and the Roma people;
- Identifying how community members are related to Roma people / people with disabilities;
- Respondents' perception of social protection provided by the state;
- Determining the degree of discrimination / marginalization to which Roma people and people with disabilities have been subjected in social institutions;
- Identification of the main barriers for the people with disabilities / Roma people in their job search;
- Highlight the factors that would help improve the situation of the people with disabilities / Roma people in the labor market;
- Determining the level of knowledge of people with disabilities about the social provisions for maintaining and promoting employment;
- Identification of their sense of belonging to their own ethnicity (in the case of Roma people).



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Hypotheses

The more respect for the rights of people with disabilities and the Roma people, the easier they are to integrate into the society;

If there are stereotyped perceptions of the community towards people with disabilities and Roma people, then the attitude is distrustful;

If disadvantaged groups have appropriate training, then their access to stable jobs is increased;

If disadvantaged groups have a low level of education, then they carry out activities with low levels of competence;

The lower the level of education, the more people with disabilities are less aware of the social provisions for maintaining and promoting employment;

The more Roma are less socially integrated, the greater the sense of belonging to their ethnicity.

RESULTS

Question: *In the current Romanian society, which groups are most predisposed at risk of marginalization and social exclusion?*

	Percentage
Persons with physical and sensory impairments - vision, hearing	13.7%
People with mental disabilities	15.7%
Persons of Roma origin	15.7%
People addicted to drugs, alcohol, or other toxic substances	11.8%
Elderly people (over 50 years)	2.0%
Women / children victims of domestic violence	



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Persons belonging to a sexual minority	3.9%
Homeless or sheltered persons	13.7%
Persons suffering from incurable diseases	7.8%
Persons who have left prisons	15.7%
Total:	100.0%

The first question concerns the social groups that are most vulnerable to marginalization and social exclusion, the first three options, each with 15.7%, are people with mental disabilities, Roma and people who have left prisons, followed by the homeless or sheltered persons and people with physical disabilities.

Question: *In your opinion, how much the rights of the Roma people in Romania are respected?*

	Percentage
They are fully respected	
Rather, they are being respected	16.7%
Rather, they are not respected	75.0%
They are not respected at all	8.3%
Total:	100%

Over 83% of Roma respondents believe that Roma rights are not respected in Romania. Only 16.7% of respondents believe that "they are being respected."

Question: *In your opinion, how much the rights of people with disabilities in Romania are respected?*

	Percentage
--	------------



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They are fully respected	35.7%
Rather, they are being respected	50.0%
Rather, they are not respected	14.3%
They are not respected at all	
Total:	100%

85.7 percent of people with disabilities believe that their rights are "rather" or "fully" respected. Only 14.3 percent of respondents believe that the rights of this minority are "not respected."

Question: *In your opinion, how much the rights of Roma people in Romania are respected?*

	Percentage
They are fully respected	19.2%
Rather, they are being respected	34.6%
Rather, they are not respected	42.3%
They are not respected at all	3.8%
Total:	100%



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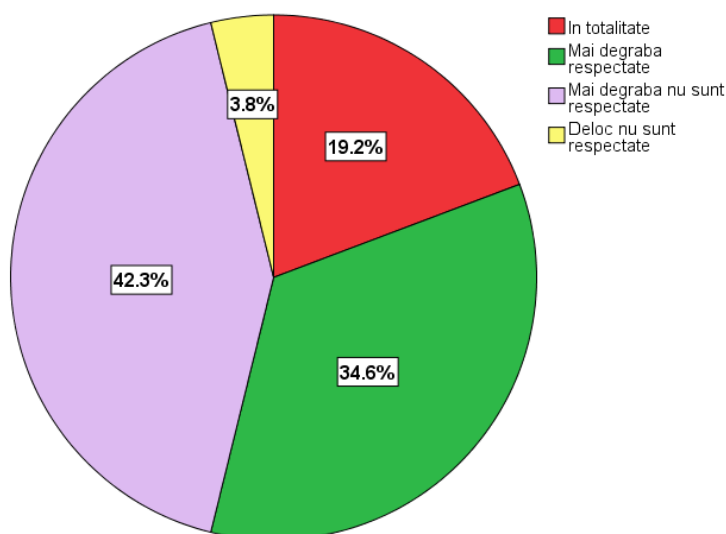
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The second question aims to analyze the respondents' views on respect for the rights of Roma or people with disabilities, concluding that the rights of Roma are rather not respected and the rights of people with disabilities are rather respected.

Question: *In general, community members treat Roma people/ people with disabilities with:*

	Percentage
Respect	39.1%
Amity	30.4%
Trust	17.4%
Goodwill	13.0%
Total:	100%

Percentage



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Despite	12.5%
Hostility	31.3%
Distrust	25.0%
Dismay	31.3%
Total:	100%

Respondents, both Roma and people with disabilities, believe that community members receive respect (39.1%) and amity (30.4%) on the one hand, but on the other hand, distrust them (25.0%) and dismay (31.3%).

Question: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements_?*

The state provides adequate social protection for the Roma people / people with disabilities

	Percentage
I totally agree	46.2%
Somewhat agree	15.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	34.6%
Disagree	3.8%
Total:	100%

Employers do not want to hire Roma people / people with disabilities

	Percentage
I totally agree	34.6%
Somewhat agree	11.5%



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Neither agree nor disagree	30.8%
Disagree	19.2%
I do not agree at all	3.8%
Total:	100%

Roma people / people with disabilities belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment and professional opportunities

	Percentage
I totally agree	19.2%
Somewhat agree	46.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	19.2%
Disagree	7.7%
I do not agree at all	7.7%
Total:	100%

Most Roma people do not actually try to find a job

	Percentage
I totally agree	33.3%
Somewhat agree	8.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	25.0%
Disagree	8.3%
I do not agree at all	25.0%
Total:	100%

People with disabilities are unable to work (they cannot work)

	Percentage
Somewhat agree	21.4%



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Disagree	64.3%
I do not agree at all	14.3%
Total:	100%

The above question aims to identify respondents' views on a number of allegations:

- Regarding the adequate social protection provided by the state for the Roma and people with disabilities, 46.3% of them state that they fully agree with this statement;
- 34.6% of respondents stated that they agree that employers do not want to hire people with disabilities or Roma;
- 64.3% of respondents with disabilities stated that Roma and people with disabilities are able to work;
- 33.3% of Roma completely agree that people of this ethnic group are not actually trying to find a job;
- 46.2% of the respondents stated that both Roma and people with disabilities belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment opportunities.

Question: *On a personal level, how often have you felt discriminated / marginalized?*

<i>In educational institutions</i>	
	Percentage
Very often	11.5%
Many times	15.4%
Sometimes / Occasionally	7.7%
Rarely	7.7%



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Never	57.7%
Total:	100%

In relations with public authorities

	Percentage
Very often	3.8%
Many times	15.4%
Sometimes / Occasionally	15.4%
Rarely	7.7%
Never	57.7%
Total:	100%

On social assistance and protection services

	Percentage
I don't know / I don't answer	11.5%
Very often	3.8%
Many times	3.8%
Sometimes / Occasionally	7.7%
Rarely	3.8%
Never	69.2%
Total:	100%

At the hospital / family doctor

	Percentage
Very often	3.8%
Many times	7.7%
Sometimes / Occasionally	11.5%
Rarely	19.2%



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Never	57.7%
Total:	100%

On the work place

	Percentage
I don't know / I don't answer	3.8%
Very often	3.8%
Many times	3.8%
Sometimes / Occasionally	7.7%
Rarely	30.8%
Never	50.0%
Total:	100%

When looking for a paid job

	Percentage
I don't know / I don't answer	7.7%
Very often	15.4%
Sometimes / Occasionally	15.4%
Rarely	23.1%
Never	38.5%
Total:	100%

The question refers to the level of discrimination / marginalization to which Roma and people with disabilities have been subjected in certain situations, and the results are as follows: in educational institutions the majority has never felt marginalized (57.7%), and in relationships with public authorities (57.7%), but also within the social assistance and protection services (69.2%). The same answer



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was given in the hospital / at the family doctor (57.7%), at the workplace (50.0%), but also in the job search (38.5%).

Question: *How informed are you about public policies / legislation, about maintaining and increasing the employment of the Roma people / people with disabilities?*

	Percentage
Fully informed	38.5%
Rather informed	30.8%
Rather uninformed	11.5%
I'm not at all informed	19.2%
Total:	100%

In addition, the majority of respondents (38.5%) believe that they are fully informed about policies/legislation to maintain and increase the employment rate for Roma / people with disabilities.

Question: In your opinion, what are the main obstacles faced by a person with disabilities / Roma person in finding a job?

<i>Obstacles reported by the Roma people</i>	
	Percentage
Employers' reluctance (refusal to hire people belonging to this vulnerable group)	19.4%
High unemployment rate	2.8%
Lack of specialized job search assistance	8.3%



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Low experience in the field of work	8.3%
Lack of vocational training	22.2%
Poor information on available jobs	11.1%
High level of poverty	5.6%
Small wages	5.6%
Poor development of skills and competences needed in the labor market	5.6%
Lack of learning opportunities in jobs that do not require education (diplomas)	5.6%
Traditions and customs of the group (marriage of women at an early age, etc.)	2.8%
Another answer	2.8%
Total:	100%

Obstacles signaled by people with disabilities

	Percentage
Lack of specialized job search assistance	7.3%
Low experience in the field of work	17.1%
Lack of vocational training	17.1%
Poor information on jobs accessible to people with disabilities	7.3%
High poverty rate	7.3%
Flexible work schedule	7.3%
Infrastructure inaccessible for travel and integration at work	7.3%
Unsafe / dangerous working conditions	2.4%
Small wages	2.4%



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Lack of learning opportunities in some jobs that do not require education (diplomas)	4.9%
Total:	100%

The next item of the questionnaire aims to identify the main obstacles faced by Roma and people with disabilities in finding a work: for Roma, the main obstacles they choose are lack of vocational training (22.2%) and reluctance to the employer (19.4%), while among people with disabilities the main obstacles are the reluctance of the employer (19.5%), reduced work experience (17.1%) and lack of vocational training (17.1%).

Question: *What are the main factors that could help to improve the situation of Roma people / people with disabilities on the labor market? (hiring, finding a better job, etc.)*

Perceptions of the Roma people	
	Percentage
Changes in employers' attitudes	19.4%
Participation in activities for personal development, self-knowledge and self-confidence	2.8%
Financial support and purchase of material goods (clothes, personal hygiene items, etc.)	2.8%
Career guidance for finding a job	8.3%
Specialized job search assistance	5.6%
Improving access to and participation in education	13.9%
Improving Roma employment policies	2.8%
Raising the level of education	16.7%
Participation in free vocational training courses for Roma	11.1%



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Improving support services for Roma education and employment	5.6%
Attractive salaries	8.3%
Enhanced partnerships between the various institutions involved in the integration of Roma into the labor market	2.8%
Total:	100%

<i>Perceptions of people with disabilities</i>	Percentage
Changes in employers' attitudes	7.1%
Support / guidance from the family	14.3%
Participation in activities for personal development, self-discovery and self-confidence	4.8%
Financial support for travel (aids, clothes and / or personal hygiene items, etc.)	2.4%
Career guidance for finding a job	2.4%
Specialized job search assistance	9.5%
Improving employment policies for people with disabilities	4.8%
Participation in free vocational training courses for people with disabilities	21.4%
Improving services to support the training and employment of people with disabilities	7.1%
Facilitating access to various activities (construction of ramps, elevators, etc.)	9.5%
Providing more opportunities for employers	16.7%
Total:	100%



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The question aims to identify the main factors that would help to improve the labor market position of Roma and people with disabilities. Respondents from the Roma ethnic group chose the following factors as the main ones: change in the attitudes of employers (19.4%), increase of the level of education (16.7%) and improvement of the access and participation in education (13.9%).

People with disabilities report the following factors: participation in free vocational training courses for people with disabilities (21.4%), providing more opportunities for employers (16.7%), support / guidance from the family (14.3%).

Question: *In your opinion, in the current socio-economic context of Romania, do you think that a Roma person / person with disabilities can easily find a job?*



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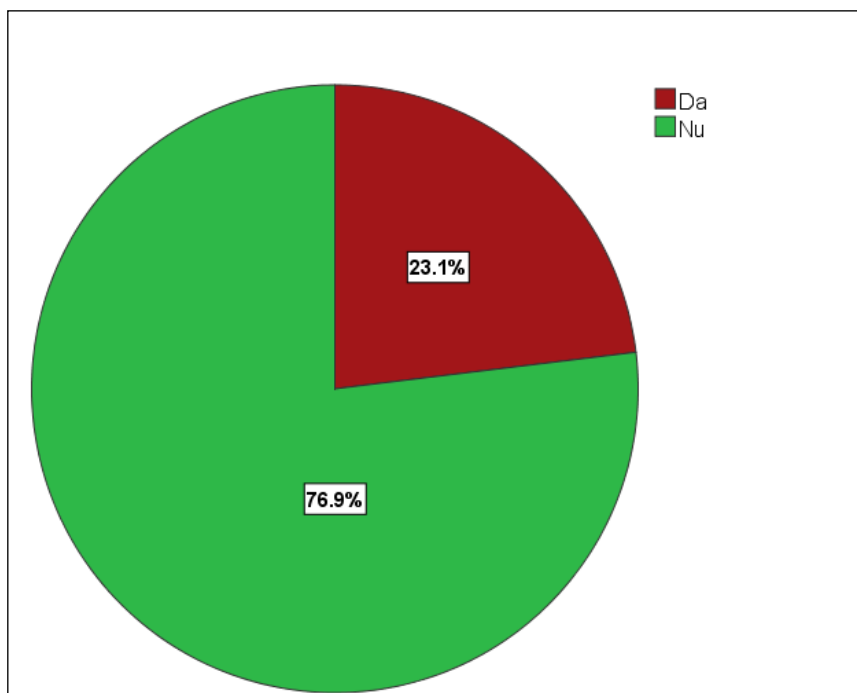
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The next element of the questionnaire seeks to identify the views of Roma/people with disabilities on their ability to easily find work in the socio-economic context of Romania. Most of the respondents, 76.9%, answered that they do not find this fact easy.

Question: *Are you currently working?*



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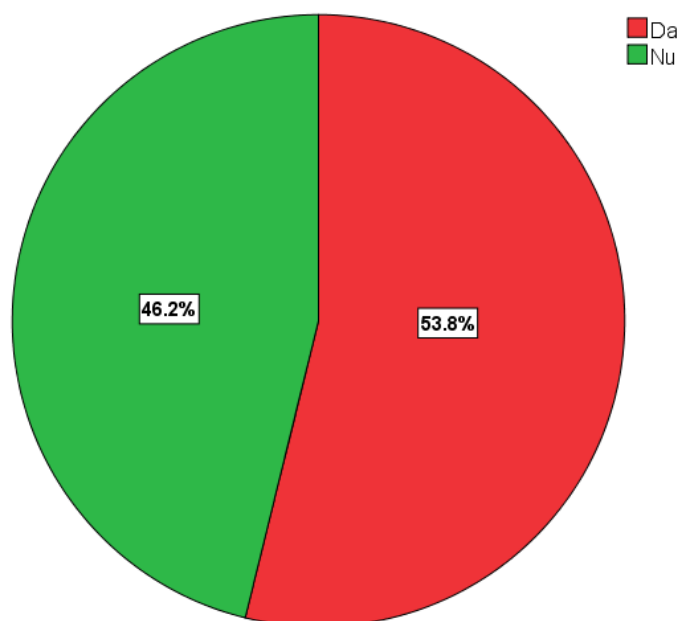
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Of the total number of Romanians surveyed, 53.8% are currently employed, while 46.2% are unemployed.

Question: *What is your job? (this question is for employed persons only)*

			Percentage
RAADDPFL	employee	(Autonomous	11.5%
Administration of the Public Property and Housing Fund)			
Maintenance			7.7%
School mediator			7.7%
Boxes			3.8%
Cleaning			3.8%
Local expert			3.8%



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Foil, cardboard	3.8%
Movers works	3.8%
Driver	3.8%
Green spaces	3.8%
Total:	100%

About 54% of people who answered the previous question said they were employed, working in various fields such as maintenance, green areas, cleaning, driver and more.

Question: Which of the following descriptions matches your professional status? (this question is for employed persons only)

	Percentage
I work full time	78.6%
I work part-time	14.3%
I work informally, without a contract	7.1%
Total:	100%

Of those who said they were employed, 78.6% said they were employed on a full-time contract, while 14.3% said they were employed on a part-time basis, the rest worked informally, i.e. without an employment contract.

Question: How did you find the job? (this question is for employed persons only)



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	Percentage
Recommendation from friends / acquaintances	35.7%
I was browsing online ads	7.1%
I watched ads in the press	7.1%
Through a social worker	50.0%
Total:	100%

Over 50% of the respondents state that they have found the relevant job through social workers, 35.7% on the other hand manage to find a job on the recommendation of friends or acquaintances.

Question: *Have you ever had a job? (a question addressed only to those persons who are currently out of work)*

	Percentage
Yes	66.7%
No	33.3%
Total:	100%

Of the 46.2% of respondents who said they did not have a job at the moment, 66.7% admitted that they had worked in the past, while 33.3% said they had never worked.

Question: *What year did you have your last job? (a question addressed only to those persons who are currently out of work)*



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To this question, of the 66.7% (representing 8 respondents) who have worked so far, 2 say they do not know which year they last worked, and the remaining 6 respondents say they last worked in the following years: 1991, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2008, 2018.

Question: *What was the last paid activity you had? (a question addressed only to those persons who are currently out of work)*

Regarding the last paid activity they had, the results again varied: locksmith (1 person), security officer (1 person), tailor (1 person), worker (1 person), driver (1 person).

Question: *What are the main reasons for not finding a job? (a question addressed only to those who have never had a job)*

	Percentage
I do not have the necessary qualifications / education	25.0%
I currently have sources of income that I prefer to keep	12.5%
I have to take care of the children / parents	12.5%
Lack of self-confidence	12.5%
Health issues	12.5%
I tried to get hired, but they didn't choose me	12.5%
I'm too old to start working	12.5%
Total:	100%

The main reason why the respondents have not worked so far is the lack of the necessary qualification / education (25%). Other reasons, each mentioned by 12.5% of respondents, are the following: sources of income at the moment that I



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prefer to keep, need to take care of children/parents, lack of self-confidence, health problems, I tried to hire but they didn't choose me, I'm too old to start working.

Question: *If you could hire yourself, would you take that step? (a question addressed only to those who have never had a job)*

	Percentage
I don't know / I don't answer	25.0%
Yes	50.0%
No	25.0%
Total:	100%

Regarding the desire to hire respondents who have not worked so far, 50.0% of these people stated that they would be hired if they could take this step, while 25% would not do so and the remaining 25% chose the option I do not know / I do not answer.

A question addressed only to people with disabilities

Question: *We will present a list of legal regulations / public policies to support and promote the employment of people with disabilities. Which ones do you know: _?*

Employers who employ people with disabilities benefit from tax relief, as well as other rights granted under the law.

Percentage



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Yes, I know the law / public policy	85.7%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	14.3%
Total:	100%

In order to identify the level of knowledge of people with disabilities about the social provisions for maintaining and promoting employment, the statement "employers of employees with disabilities enjoy tax benefits and other rights granted under the law" are familiar 85.7% of the respondents and 14.3% of them are unknown.

Free access to vocational assessment and employment orientation services, regardless of age, type and degree of disability.

	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	78.6%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	21.4%
Total:	100%

Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to work less than 8 hours per day if they benefit from the recommendation of the Committee on Performance Assessment in this respect.

	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	78.6%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	21.4%
Total:	100%



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Persons with disabilities, according to the Labor Code, have an additional leave of at least 3 working days.

	Percentage
Yes, I know the law / public policy	78.6%
No, I don't know the law / public policy	21.4%
Total:	100%

In the last three statements: "free access to vocational assessment and guidance services, regardless of age, type and degree of disability, for employment", "people with disabilities have the opportunity to work less than 8 hours a day if they benefit from the recommendation of the evaluation committee in this regard", "people with disabilities, according to the Labor Code, enjoy additional leave for rest of at least 3 working days", 78.6% of respondents answered that these provisions / public policies are known to them, while 21.4% of them said they had not heard of it.

Question addressed only to the Roma people

Question: *On a scale of 1 to 10, please indicate if you have a strong or weak sense of belonging to your ethnicity?*

	Percentage
3	8.3%
8	8.3%
9	16.7%
10	58.3%
I don't know / I don't answer	8.3%
Total:	100%

The question was addressed only to the Roma, as the majority of respondents (58.3%) have a very strong sense of belonging to their own ethnicity.





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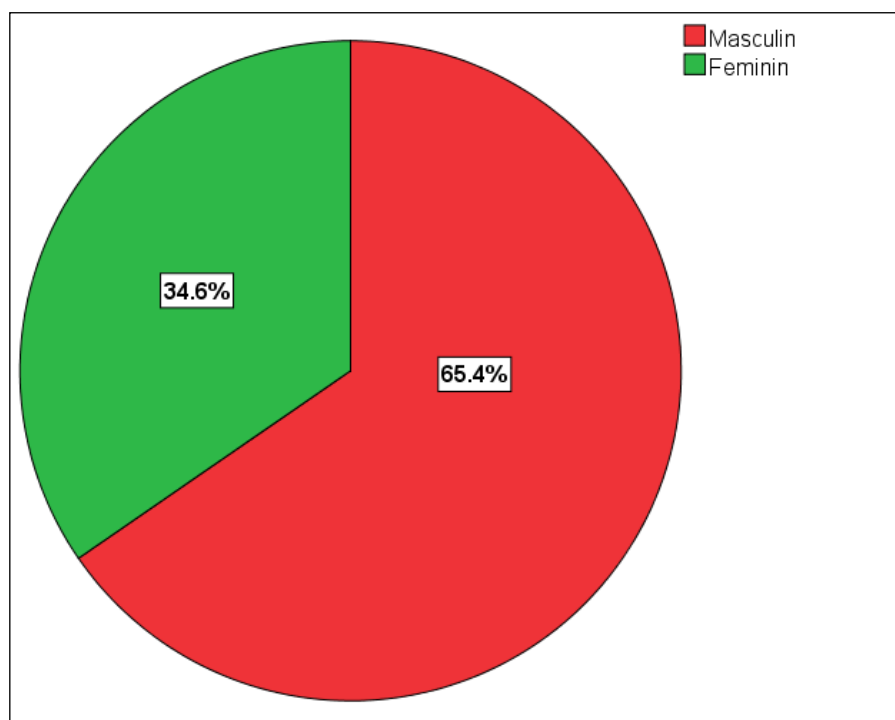
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Question: *Have you worked in another country for at least 3 months in the last 10 years? (this question is for employees only)*

Of the total number of Roma respondents who claim to be currently working, only five answered this question, stating that they had not done paid work in another country for a minimum period of 3 months.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Gender of the respondents



The majority of respondents (65.4%) are men, while 34.6% are women.

Age



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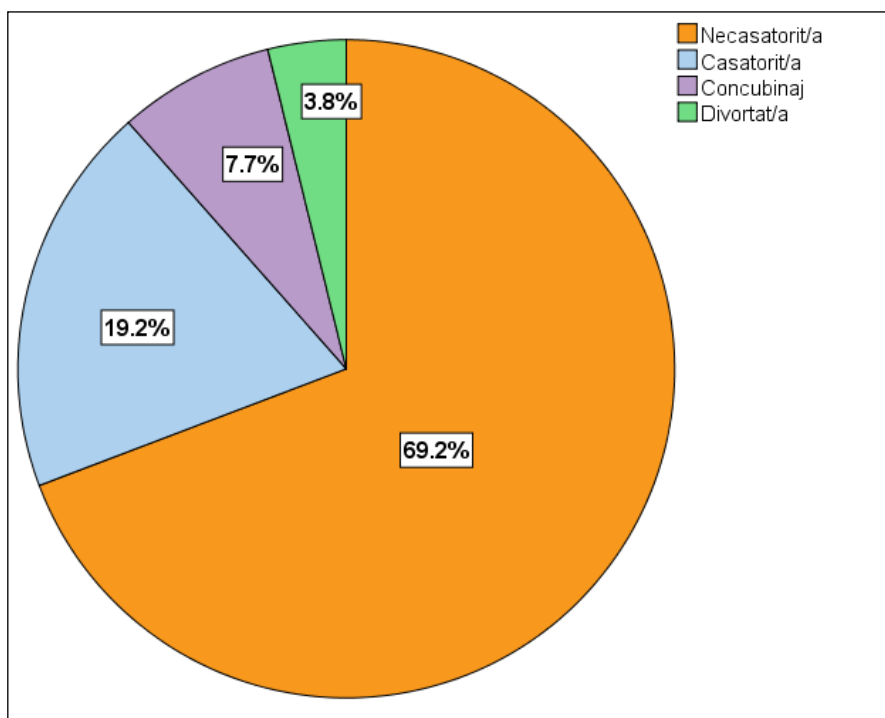


	Percentage
20 - 30 years	26.7%
31 - 40 years	34.4%
41 - 50 years	26.7%
51 - 60 years	11.4%
Total:	100%

The age of the respondents is between 20 and 57 years, as the majority of 34.4% belong to the age group 31 - 40 years.

Marital status

Most of them stated that they were not married (69.2%), while 19.2% were married, 7.7% are married and 3.8% are divorced.



Residence





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The total respondents come from the urban environment.

Number of household members

	Percentage
I don't know / I don't answer	11.5%
10	23.1%
2	3.8%
3	11.5%
4	11.5%
5	11.5%
6	3.8%
9	23.1%
Total:	100%

Most of the respondents stated that 10 members (23.1%) and 9 members (23.1%) live in households. The rest chose different answers from 2 to 6 household members, as 11.5% of them stated that they did not know/did not answer.

Education



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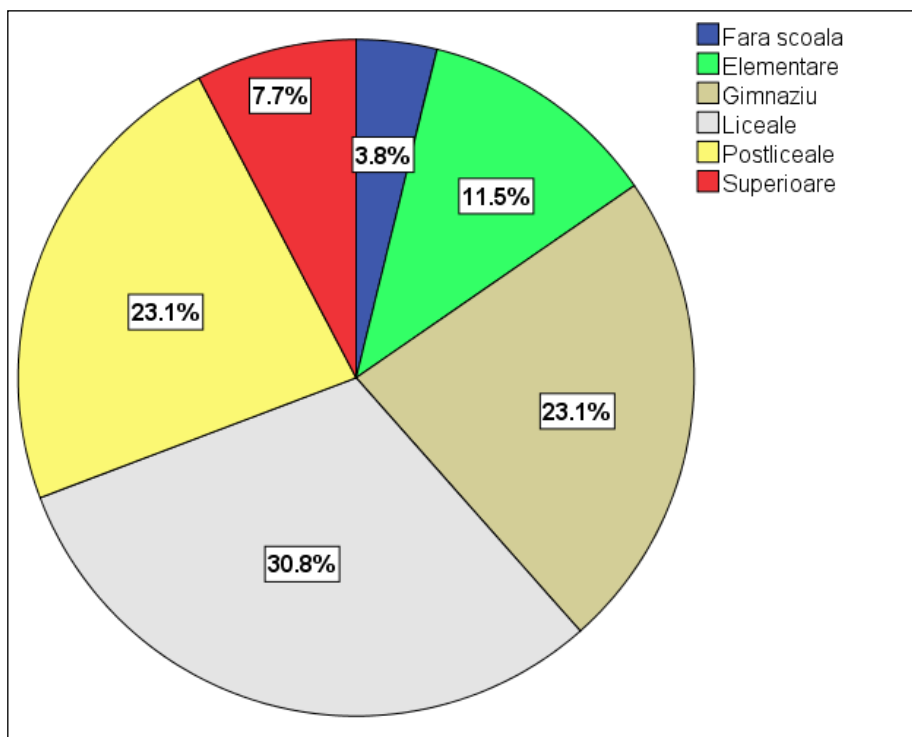
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Most respondents graduated from high school (30.8%), followed by those with secondary education (23.1%), primary (23.1%) and elementary (11.5%).

Professional status



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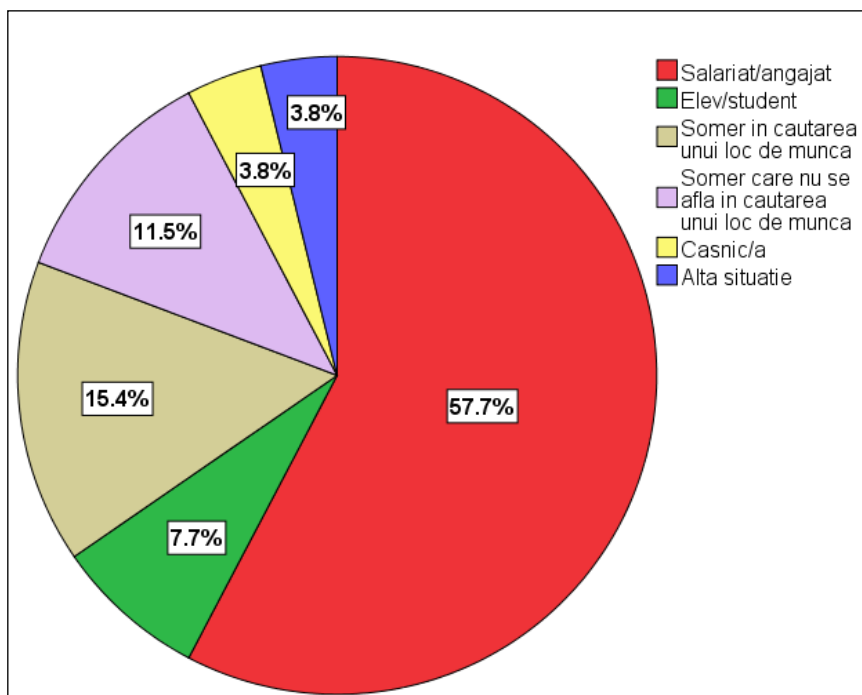
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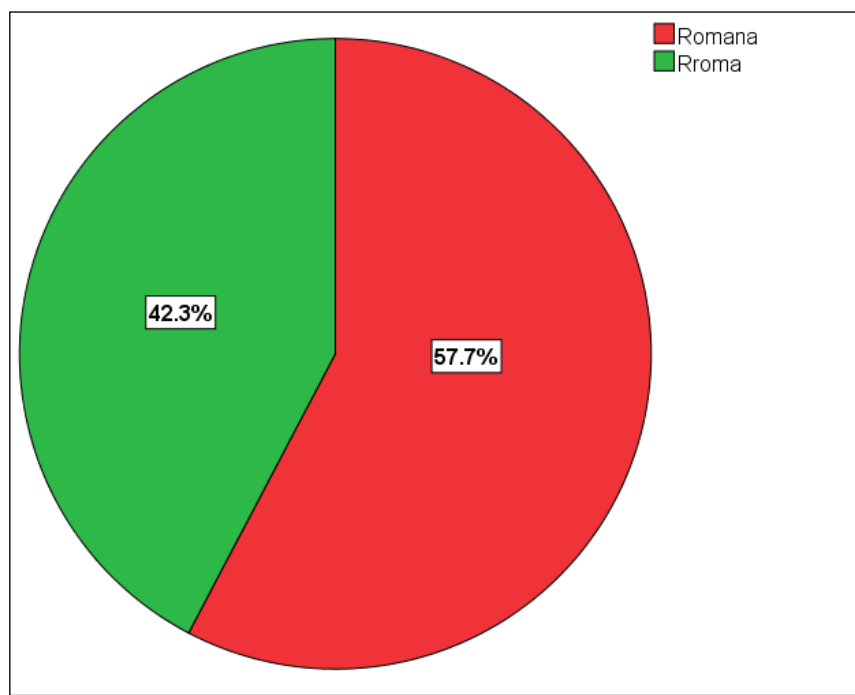
Of the respondents, 57.7% have the status of employment per employee, while 15.4% are unemployed in search of work, 11.5% are unemployed who are not looking for work, the rest of the respondents (15.4%) are students or hosts.

Ethnic origin



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The majority of respondents stated that they belonged to the Romanian ethnic group (57.7%), while 42.3% claimed that they belonged to the Roma ethnic group.

Type of disability

	Percentage
I don't know / I don't answer	78.6%
Mentally	7.1%
Eyesight	7.1%
Physically	7.1%
Total:	100%

Of the people with disabilities, 78.6% answered that they did not know / did not answer about their disability, while the rest of the respondents stated that they had visual (7.1%), mental (7.1%) and physical (7.1%) disabilities.





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Roma, as well as people with disabilities, are vulnerable groups because they "identify individuals or families at risk of losing their ability to meet their daily needs due to illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol or other situations that lead to economic and social vulnerability" (Social Assistance Act (292/2011), Article 6 (p)). In this context, vulnerable groups face a lack of material resources, low levels of education, poor access to health services, long-term unemployment, discrimination and poor participation in social life.

SECTION IV. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE LABOR MARKET IN THE CROSS-BORDER REGION DOLJ, ROMANIA - MONTANA, BULGARIA

The County of Dolj in Romania is located in the South-West of the historic region. Viewed in terms of the territorial integrity of Romania, Dolj has a South-Southwest position focused on the lower course of the Jiu River, from which it gets its name (Low Jiu or Doljiu).

Dolj is bordered by the Counties of: Mehedinti to the west, Gorj and Vâlcea to the north, Olt to the east and the Danube River to the south, about 150 km long, which is part of the natural border between Romania and Bulgaria that separates it from the Bulgarian Districts of Vidin, Montana and Vratsa.

The total area is 7 414 sq. km and represents 3.1% of the country's area. From this point of view, Dolj is situated on the 7th place among the administrative and territorial units of Romania. Similarly, this is the County with the largest area in the cross-border region.

According to the Common Classification of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS II), the County of Dolj is part of the South-West Oltenia Region, having a principal administrative center in the Municipality of Craiova, having an extremely



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important and social significance for the entire Oltenia region. In the County of Dolj there are 2 municipalities, 4 towns, 104 communes and 378 villages.

From a demographic point of view, the County of Dolj has the most pronounced population declining trend compared to the rest of the Romanian Counties - with almost 100,000 people in the last 25 years. The decrease in the number of population is due to the negative values of the natural and mechanical growth. The only settlements in which a population growth has been registered in recent years are the Municipality of Craiova and the rural areas, where the population of Roma ethnicity predominates.

The ethnic structure is, in general, homogeneous, but the proportion of the Roma population is rising steadily. Almost 47% of the population live in rural areas, but a tendency is observed towards depopulation of smaller villages in the County.

In the administrative center of Craiova there are two large Industrial Park, Craiova 1 and High-Tech Park of Craiova, but from the point of view of the research and development activity, besides the University of Craiova and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, two large centers for scientific research and development are operating. Four more large organizations are developing scientific research and development activities in the Municipality - in the field of medicine, political science, agriculture and electrical engineering.

Together with the IT Services, a development potential exists in the field of hosting services, data processing and web portals, once again the size of the sector is determined by the micro enterprises, which are 51 in number, the largest employer in the field being COMDATA SERVICE SRL, a company that employs more than 2,000 people and has increased its staff by more than 57 times since its establishment (2008) until 2017. In Craiova the production of cars is present - there the Company Ford Romania SA is operating that ensures jobs for over 2600 people.

The District of Montana in Bulgaria is located in the Western part of Northern Bulgaria and is part of the North-western region. Its territory lies between



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the Bulgarian Districts of Vidin, Sofia and Vratsa, it borders with Serbia to Southwest and with Romania to North. Two of the trans-European corridors - Corridor No. 4 and Corridor No. 7 pass through the territory of District as in the District of Vidin. A major transport link that crosses the District is the one that connects the Port of Lom and the Port of Thessaloniki. Its advantage is that it provides the shortest land connection between the two ports.

A varied relief, most of it low-planar, is characteristic of the District. Altitude rises Southwards and Southwest-wards, at its highest point is 2 016 m. Although natural resources are not of particular economic significance, their existence is a development potential for the mining industry. On the territory of the District, there are several quarries for materials for the construction industry - limestone, sand, gravel, industrial minerals, granite, diabase, deposits of ferrous, nonferrous metals and lignite coal, as well as deposits of clay and marl.

Agricultural land covers the vast part of the territory, and a significant part is covered by Forests. Forrestral lands are mostly deciduous - hornbeam, oak, beech etc., and there are natural stands of chestnut in the area of Berkovitsa.

Many tourists are attracted by the District due to the natural landmarks, among which there are protected natural sites, including a reserve, numerous dams, as well as mineral springs, waterfalls and the Marble Cave. Prerequisites for the development of hunting and fishing are the forest areas and water basins of the District of Montana.

The level of the Economic situation in the District of Montana is not satisfactory. Despite the fact that the Industry is the main structurally identifying sector of the District, the Sector of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is ranked first with the highest employment rate. As far as the production output indicator is concerned, the Processing Industry is a leader, with the highest share being the production of electrical equipment, followed by the food and beverage industry, the manufacture of metals and metal products. The manufacture of vehicle is also



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well established in the District, where the organizations „Kros” OOD and „Sprinter” OOD, manufacturers bicycle and parts thereof, are operating on the territory.

Berkovitsa municipality has about 19,000 inhabitants. The municipality is characterized by light industry and developed agriculture. There is a decrease in activity in traditional for Berkovitsa productions: wood and plastics. At the same time, the production of textiles and clothing, as well as food products, has sharply increased. The garment industry is developing in the municipality; machine building and abrasive tools, stone processing, food industry, strawberries and raspberries are grown and harvested.

Unemployment in the Dolj county of the Romanian part of the cross-border region is lower than unemployment in the respective Montana district of Bulgaria. According to the latest data (June 2019), Montana County has the highest unemployment rate in the cross-border areas (12%). The Romanian side is Dolj with the highest (6.9%). The average monthly salary in Bulgaria in June 2019 is BGN 1,253 (EUR 640.66) and in Romania - 5,127 lei (EUR 1,079) according to data from national statistical institutes. In both neighboring areas, the highest pay is in the IT sector, where there is a constant hunger for professionals and the lowest in the Hotel and Restaurant sector. Most wanted on the market in Montana, Bulgaria, and Dolj, Romania are: sales workers, drivers, tailors, engineers, welders, mechanics, construction workers, IT professionals.

The development of the labor market and the economic situation determine the obstacles to access to the labor market for Roma and disadvantaged people with disabilities and the opportunities for their integration into the economy.

Labor market demands are rapidly shifting from low skill to high skill. Almost 50% of Roma in both countries have primary or lower education. On the other hand, a large number of people with disabilities, some with unique technical skills, need to be integrated into the labor market. Creating a better culture of



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entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, especially among marginalized groups, would have several benefits. Social inclusion and economic participation are just some of the positive effects that would be encouraged. Self-employment not only promotes economic growth and stability, but also offers people the opportunity to build an independent existence. Start-ups create new job opportunities as well as competition and structural change. A good culture of entrepreneurship also encourages innovation and growth. In addition, a society that includes a wide variety of independent companies and start-ups run by different social communities and ethnic minorities contributes to the stability of a democratic society. Economic responsibility is shared among many stakeholders and the concentration of power is hindered by promoting free business.

However, the programs implemented so far have failed to reach socially and economically disadvantaged communities and especially the target groups of Roma and people with disabilities. This, in turn, is caused by the failure to develop employment and self-employment programs in a flexible way, supporting diversity and opening up to the needs of this contingent.

By 2020, 20% of the new workforce will be of Roma origin. If this extremely important share of the population is mastered for successful inclusion in the labor market, it will be a big leap for economic development.

Roma and people with disabilities have one of the highest unemployment rates and account for the largest share of unregistered work. However, employment support measures are more difficult to access and do not make it easier for people of Roma origin or people with disabilities.

A number of sectors are already facing labor shortages and will suffer in the future. Therefore, companies should not wait for policies to change, but actively participate in the creation of best practices, participate in vocational training and find access to underutilized labor.



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Qualification and retraining of Roma people and people with disabilities in order to mobilize their potential for economic participation is one of the most powerful ways to promote integration. Moreover, supporting people to become independent of well-being through employment policies, to become an active part of the economy and the workforce is a very important tool for tackling social exclusion and facilitating the country's social and economic development.

The opinions shared by employers at the two Job Fairs in Montana, Bulgaria and Craiova, Romania show that in the cross-border area of Bulgaria and Romania there is a significant shortage of suitable labor for all skill levels. Without a good workforce, economic stability and growth are hampered. On the other hand, especially foreign investors are optimistic about the potential for inclusion of Roma people and people with disabilities in their staff. Innovative approaches and opportunities for on-site training (dual training) create an opportunity to improve the qualifications and employment opportunities of these groups. The participating employers confirmed a systemic shortage of targeted and inclusive employment policies for disadvantaged people.

At this stage, the specific barriers to access and employment challenges of the two target groups can be derived from an in-depth study of their socio-economic status and situation. The identified barriers are in three dimensions:

- Political dimension;
- Individual dimension;
- Social dimension.

Each dimension contains several barriers to both Roma people and people with disabilities from accessing and participating in the labor market. In the political dimension we find the lack of opportunities for vocational training, segregation and the lack of accessible transport/adapted infrastructure. In the individual dimension are the low level of education, the lack of job search skills and health problems (caused by permanent disabilities, as well as by the



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unfavorable living conditions of the Roma people). The social dimension, on the other hand, covers factors such as the lack of social networks (outside Roma communities and people with disabilities), gender issues and the social discrimination faced by disadvantaged groups.

The two target groups, the Roma people and the disadvantaged people with disabilities, despite their main differences, do face similar barriers to employment. Employment policies can be designed to take care of the two disadvantaged groups, instead of developing several different employment measures for each group.

Obstacles to employment for disadvantaged people		Good and promising practices that can be adopted						
		Specialized Job Fairs	Connecting employers with the unemployed	Community information campaigns	Vocational training	Support for dual training	Microcredit schemes	Specialized services for support of disadvantaged people, incl. start-ups
Education	The low degree of education/ lack of access to education				X	X		
	Lack of skills for job searching	X	X	X				
Access	Segregation/ isolation	X		X			X	X
	Lack of information about open job positions	X	X	X				
	Lack of information about	X	X	X				





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	employment programs							
	Lack of liaison services between employers and the unemployed	X	X	X				
	Lack of accessible transport / adapted infrastructure	X	X	X				
	Lack of support for self-employment						X	X
	Health issues					X	X	
Social challenges	Lack of social networks (outside Roma communities and people with disabilities)		X	X		X	X	X
	Institutional discrimination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Social discrimination	X	X			X	X	X
	Gender-Based Issues: Patriarchal structures	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Potential exploitation in the			X	X	X	X	X



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	informal economy							
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Obstacles to employment for disadvantaged people		Recommendations on local level						
		Specific responsible for the target groups in the Labor Office	Improved access to the Labor Offices	Employee sensitivity trainings when working with marginalized and discriminated groups	Ensuring accessibility of Operational Programs for civil society	Schemes for cooperation between the real and the education sector	Gender Officer	Promoting support for childcare in the real sector
Education	The low degree of education/ lack of access to education				X	X		
	Lack of skills for job searching		X	X	X	X		
Access	Segregation / isolation					X		X
	Lack of information about open job positions		X	X		X		
	Lack of information about employment programs			X		X		
	Lack of liaison services between employers and the unemployed		X	X	X	X		



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	Lack of accessible transport / adapted infrastructure					X		
	Lack of support for self-employment	X			X			
	Health issues			X	X			
Social challenges	Lack of social networks (outside Roma communities and people with disabilities)		X		X	X		X
	Institutional discrimination			X		X		
	Social discrimination			X	X	X		
	Gender-Based Issues: Patriarchal structures			X		X	X	X
	Potential exploitation in the informal economy		X			X		

Roma people and disadvantaged people with disabilities share many common barriers to entering the labor market. Both Roma people and disadvantaged people with disabilities potentially suffer from related factors of exclusion from the labor market. These factors can be found in the political,



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individual and social dimensions. At the policy level, both groups share a lack of opportunities for vocational education and training, isolation and a lack of accessible transport / adapted infrastructure. At the individual level, these factors lead to a low level of education and a lack of sufficient job search skills in the traditional labor market. Additionally, both groups often suffer from health problems for various reasons. For people with disabilities, these problems are often associated with trauma or permanent disability. Among the Roma community, health problems are due to the low standard of living, lack of health insurance and discrimination in the health sector. Third, similarities can be found along the social axis, where the lack of social networks outside their community is a blemish. In addition, the gender aspect and gender inequality in the two communities is a serious problem that prevents many women from gaining access to the labor market. Finally, both disadvantaged communities sometimes experience discrimination. For the Roma people, additional obstacles are their marginalized position in society as an economically disadvantaged, weak educational system and social discrimination, as well as their encapsulated culture.

- The most pressing issue for employment policies and the integration of disadvantaged people is the implementation and interpretation at regional and local level.

- Civil society provides practices that can be scaled up and supported or adopted in regional policies.

Barriers to employment for the two target groups are grouped into the following three areas: education, access and social challenges. A number of barriers to access are largely related to factors outside the scope of employment policies. Examples are educational conditions, basic integration services and social conditions.

Employment programs based on national development programs, national employment action plans, national employment strategies and national poverty



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reduction strategies do not include sufficiently specialized and targeted activities. The commitments made by the integration strategies are poorly reflected in the employment policies and are not sufficiently implemented in specific actions or programs at the local level. Instead of addressing vulnerabilities and aspects of identity, empowerment policies and the potential for economic integration of disadvantaged groups need to be at the heart of local policies.

People of the Roma ethnic group or people with disabilities, for reasons related to their ethnicity or their connection to stereotypes about how they look or behave, consider that their rights are rather unreserved. On the other hand, people's attitudes towards these vulnerable groups are contrasting: they are treated with respect and friendship or with distrust and fear.

Although Roma and people with disabilities believe that the state largely provides adequate social protection, the lack of employment opportunities is the main problem of this vulnerable group.

Vulnerable people, both Roma people and people with disabilities, belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment opportunities. Lack of vocational training, the reluctance of the employer (especially discriminatory) who does not want to hire people from these vulnerable groups, and the reduced work experience are the main obstacles that significantly reduce the chances of Roma people and people with disabilities to find a job. Therefore, low labor market participation implies low incomes and implicitly high levels of poverty, but also marginalization and social exclusion.

Access to the labor market opportunities of the Roma people implies a change in employers' attitudes, an increase in the level of education and an improvement of access and participation in education. In this way, unemployment can be reduced by increasing the level of competence and higher incomes would increase the quality of life of the Roma.



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Also, the weak labor market presence of people with disabilities can be improved by participating in free vocational training courses, providing more relief for the employer, as well as family support or guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROBLEMS OF THE POLICY FOR TREATING INEQUALITY IN THE LABOR SECTOR

1. Employment inequalities of people with disabilities and Roma people need to be addressed through development of policies. This means that the focus on efforts must be shifted from providing assistance and temporary employment to education, qualification and permanent employment in the real sector of these vulnerable groups.

Necessary measures:

- Inclusion of ethnic minorities in secondary education and in vocational schools; provision of specialized training courses for people with disabilities in order to maintain the acquired competences at the level of labor market requirements.
- Developing advanced training programs for employees so that they can grow from general workers to skilled workers and managers;
- Support for ethnic minorities, in particular Roma minority, should be directed towards the accumulation of work experience within the framework of regulated (on employment contract) employment in the real private sector. Supporting Roma people through their inclusion in state temporary employment programs enhances their sense of dependency on the state. At the same time, these programs do not create the social and work experience necessary for working in a real work environment.

2. The incentive measures for employers who hire low-skilled workers and offer retraining in a real work environment should be expanded. However, these



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measures should be open to all ethnic and social groups, including Bulgarians and people with disabilities.

DEVELOPING BALANCED LOCAL STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

Given the diverse set of factors that affect skill levels, the benefits of investing in more comprehensive local skills development strategies, involving different local partners, are increasingly highlighted at the local level. A review of local practices shows that, in addition to investing in education at school age, such strategies often take into account three main aspects: attracting and retaining people with advanced skills and competencies; integration of disadvantaged groups into the labor market system and labor development; enhancing the skills of low-skilled workers.

Investment in education and training is a good means of linking disadvantaged groups to the labor market and building resilience to change.

There is an urgent need to change the 'first job' approach with 'first training' for the permanently unemployed in order to adequately respond to the high demands on the labor market.

However, there are many factors, including short-termism and lack of resources, that prevent communities from dealing with more difficult problems, such as low-skilled workforce or concentration of people without basic skills in some areas. Therefore, developing a sound skill development strategy may require providing incentives for local actors to work for long-term goals.

1. Build an adaptive workforce with skills

In order for our local communities in the cross-border region to be more adaptable, it is important that the workforce is "armed" with common skills so that it can move across sectors and innovate in the changing market environment. This circumstance requires investment in early age and school education. At the same time, local communities need to have access to local employment and training



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systems throughout their careers and adapt their skills through the new requirements for flexible 'lifelong learning' systems.

Building an adaptable workforce with skills is a daunting task, given the vulnerability of local communities in Berkovitsa to demographic change and increasing mobility. A unified strategy for local skills development balances the different goals and integrates education and training in creating a clear roadmap for skills building and contribution to the local economy.

Investing in common skills and competences

New technologies such as the Internet create conditions for better information exchange, which outlines the need for qualified specialists to analyze the information and turn it into valuable knowledge. Not only those who are at the top of the employment ladder need these skills. Those who are involved in routine work can benefit businesses if they can solve problems and receive feedback through customer communication. Innovation must be present for productivity.

Flexible education and training systems for lifelong learning

Everyone needs access to lifelong learning and training systems in order to acquire more specialized skills in response to the rapidly changing demand for skills in the labor market. In today's ever-changing economy, it is no longer possible to survive with a start-to-finish and skills-building model - instead, learning must be a lifelong process. Activities related to improving employability include computer literacy, basic skills, specific skills, communication skills and problem solving, teamwork, group decision making, and more. Low-skilled workers have less access to training and this situation is exacerbated especially by those with a lack of information on the labor market. Missing or drop-out students are a particular problem in Berkovitsa municipality - with an increasing number of young people without skills or with minor skills who are unable to complete their vocational training courses and gain recognized qualifications. It is necessary to offer more flexible vocational training to this target group. Those who have dropped out of



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their studies, have the opportunity to return to the learning process up to five years and to receive a recognized certificate of skills successfully acquired so far.

One problem that concerns the unemployed on both sides of the cross-border region is the lack of long-term training, which would significantly improve employment opportunities. National employment services often finance relatively short, low-intensity courses that do not lead to long-term sustainable results. Studies show that short-term training has little or no benefit to employment and pay, while more stable long-term training improves their earnings significantly. The role of the private sector in providing training for its own staff cannot be underestimated, even if not all businesses can contribute to skills development in the same way. Large companies have a base to improve their workforce skills through formal training plans and organizational training platforms, but small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are poorly involved in training and public sector support is needed to deliver individual training to be applied in different work environments and with varying degrees of sharing of experience and knowledge.

Objectives and actions within a balanced local skills development strategy

Strategic Objective	Action
Attracting people with high skills	Investing locally in quality of life, architecture, cultural development and effective city planning.
	Promoting cosmopolitan attitudes and cultural diversity.
	Participation in the activities of universities and educational institutions. Encouraging university graduates to stay in the region (professional development advice, etc.) and



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	conducting postgraduate training.
	Marketing strategies for the municipality, local sectors and clusters for attracting new workforce.
Integration of disadvantaged groups for capacity development	Creation of IT training centers, marketing of education and training opportunities in difficult-to-access environments (Roma and people with disabilities), improving education in the early years.
	Creation of alternative forms of training, including 'practice companies', internships, on-the-job mentoring, cultural, sports and music schemes for integration of disadvantaged groups.
	Supporting mechanisms to improve interest and motivation during training courses, internships and work.
	Providing career advice and synergies between basic skills courses and higher education levels.
	Specific support for ethnic minorities, immigrants, etc. (anti-discrimination, recognition of qualifications, language training, etc.).
	Adult training in basic skills (e.g. linguistic and mathematical literacy).
Improving the skills of workers	Customize training for local employers.



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	Training in leading businesses and promoting vocational training in the workplace.
	Establishment of business training centers, encouraging major industries to provide training on their territory. Make this available to other companies, including SMEs.
	Encourage companies to provide career planning and mentoring for newbies.
	Creating partnerships for the transfer of innovation and technology, as well as training in managing different areas of organizational activity.

Local level recommendations

Developing a balanced approach: it is essential to have a balanced approach to skills issues so that actions to attract or retain people with high skills are developed in conjunction with actions to build an appropriate education and training system, integrating disadvantaged groups in the workforce and upgrading the skills of those already employed.

Support for the development of common skills: investing in education that gives solid general skills, both academically and professionally. Some disadvantaged groups may require additional educational support through early school education and a better adapted education system.

Integrated service delivery: It is important that education and training at local level are well integrated in coherent systems with a clear vision for good quality employment. Educational institutions and the employment agency must work together to ensure that the unemployed people are upgraded.



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2. Improving skills and improving the quality of work.

Means of improving the quality of local jobs and improving skills utilization

Orientation, assistance and training

Support for technology transfer: facilitating investment in new technologies by employers, creating partnerships for the exchange of innovation and new technologies.

Provision of technical assistance to improve working conditions and work organization: this may mean re-professionalising positions in some sectors and reducing dependency on temporary staff, while for others it may mean applying appropriate production techniques. Provide staff with sufficient time to train and master skills.

Encouraging training for both managers and employees: Better-qualified managers tend to create a more productive work environment for their employees. At the same time, employers should be encouraged to train, create other skills development opportunities that are accessible to their employees.

Finance and procurement

Securing hard capital: to invest fully in their staff and in modernizing the production process, local employers need long-term investment. The availability of local 'hard capital' (i.e. medium- or long-term funds, typically 5 to 10 years) is relevant.

Supply chain based on quality: public procurement can be used as an incentive for longer-term planning for local businesses to invest in productivity gains. This may include, for example, longer contracts. In addition, public procurement contracts may contain clauses on working conditions and training commitments as well as the employment of disadvantaged people.

Support for social enterprises: Whereas social enterprises may avoid some of the short-term problems related to the satisfaction of private interests, in some



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cases they may have a longer-term perspective on the development and training of their employees.

3. Career development

Good jobs are important, but it is important that they are accessible to the local population. In order to prevent the separation of well-paid skilled labor and low-paid unskilled labor, employers should provide their less-skilled workers with development opportunities so that they may be retrained to occupy higher positions of employment during the period of their work activity. The problem is that local employers in Berkovitsa municipality are not particularly inclined to invest in the training of their lower-skilled staff and the staircases for in-house career development are increasingly fragmented.

In Berkovitsa settlements, public institutions can work together with employers to recreate the traditional career ladder outside. This is a useful way to bring together recruitment firms, career development consultants, educational institutions, training centers and businesses to create training and employment roadmaps for the unskilled workforce. They also contribute to the transparency of the labor market, which facilitates the balance between supply and demand.

Working with employers on skills issues is important, but it is also essential that they be encouraged to offer more training opportunities to their staff so that less skilled workers progress over time and get better job opportunities.

ANNEX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE on the perception of Roma people in employment integration



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1. In the current Bulgarian/Romanian society, which groups are most predisposed at risk of marginalization and social exclusion? You can specify up to two answer options.

1. Persons with physical and sensory impairments - vision, hearing.	7. Persons belonging to a sexual minority.
2. People with mental disabilities.	8. Homeless or sheltered persons.
3. Persons of Roma origin.	9. Persons suffering from incurable diseases.
4. People addicted to drugs, alcohol or other toxic substances.	10. Persons who have left prisons.
5. Older people (over 50 years old).	11. Another answer (which is _____?)
6. Women / children victims of domestic violence.	0. I don't know / no answer.

2. In your opinion, how much the rights of the Roma people in Bulgaria/Romania are respected?

1. Fully respected. 2. Rather respected. 3. Rather not respected. 4. Not respected at all. 0. I don't know/no answer.

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, please indicate if you have a strong or weak sense of belonging to your ethnic group? (mark from 1 to 10, where 1 represents a very weak sense of belonging and 10 a very strong sense of belonging)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

4. In general, community members treat Roma people with: ... Choose one answer for each row.

1. Respect	1. Despite
2. Amity	2. Hostility
3. Trust	3. Distrust
4. Goodwill	4. Dismay

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	<i>I totally agree</i>	<i>Somewhat agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>I do not agree at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
The state provides adequate social protection for the Roma people.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
The Roma people belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment and professional opportunities.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
Employers do not want to hire Roma people.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
Most Roma people do not actually try to find a job.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.

6. Personally, how often have you felt discriminated / marginalized: ...

	<i>Very often</i>	<i>Many times</i>	<i>Sometimes / Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>



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In educational institutions.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
In relations with public authorities.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
On social assistance and protection services.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
At the hospital / family doctor.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
On the work place.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
When looking for a paid job.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.

7. How informed are you about public policies / legislation, about maintaining and increasing the employment of the Roma people?

1. Fully informed. 2. Rather informed. 3. Rather uninformed. 4. I'm not at all informed. 0. I don't know/no answer.

8. In your opinion, what are the main obstacles faced by Roma person in finding a job? You can specify up to three answer options.

1. Employers' reluctance (refusal to hire people belonging to this vulnerable group).	8. Small wages.
2. High unemployment rate.	9. Poor development of skills and competences needed in the labor market.
3. Lack of specialized job search assistance.	10. Lack of workplace learning opportunities that do not require education (diplomas).
4. Lack of experience in the field of work.	11. Lack of identity documents.
5. Lack of vocational training.	12. Traditions and customs of the group (marriage of women at an early age, etc.).
6. Poor information on available jobs for Roma people.	13. Another answer (which is.....?)
7. High poverty rate.	0. I don't know / no answer.

9. What are the main factors that would help to improve the situation of Roma people on the labor market? (hire them, find a better job, etc.) You can specify up to three answers.

1. Changing employers' attitudes.	10. Participation in free vocational training courses for Roma people.
2. Family support / guidance.	11. Improvement of support services for training and employment of Roma people.
3. Participation in personal development, self-knowledge and self-confidence activities.	12. Providing more opportunities for employers.
4. Financial support and purchase of tangible goods (clothing, personal hygiene items, etc.).	13. Attractive wages.
5. Career guidance for finding a job.	14. Flexible working hours.
6. Job search assistance.	15. Enhanced partnerships between the various institutions involved in the integration of Roma people into the labor market.



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7. Improving access to and participation in education (reducing dropouts, reducing absenteeism, improving learning conditions, etc.).

16. Another factor (which is?)

8. Improving employment policies for Roma people.

0. I don't know / no answer.

9. Increasing the level of education.

10. In your opinion, in the current socio-economic context in Bulgaria/Romania, do you think that a Roma person can easily find a job?

1. Yes.

2. No

0. I do not know / cannot answer.

11. Are you currently working?

1. Yes.

2. No - go to the question No.16.

0. I do not know / cannot answer.

12. If so, what is do your job? 1. _____ 0. I do not know / no answer.

13. Which of the following descriptions matches your professional status?

1. I work full time.

5. I work from time to time and they pay me for the work.

2. I work part-time.

6. Another situation (which is?)

3. I work informally, without a contract.

0. I don't know / no answer.

4. I work independently (own business or carry out different income generating activities).

14. How did you find the job?

1. Recommendation from friends / acquaintances.

6. Through the Labor Office.

2. Recommendation from relatives.

7. I posted ads in newspapers, on the Internet.

3. I was browsing online listings (online newspapers, online recruitment platforms).

8. Another way (which is?)

4. I watched the press releases.

0. I don't know / no answer.

5. From the labor exchange.

15. Have you worked in another country for at least 3 months in the last 10 years?

1. Yes.

2. No.

0. I do not know / no answer.

The following questions (16, 17, 18, 19, 20) are addressed only to those who answered "No" to question No.11..

16. Have you ever had a job?

1. Yes.

2. No - go to the question No. 19

0. I do not know / no answer.

17. During which year did you have your last job? year. _____ 0. I do not know/no answer.

18. What was the last paid activity you had?

1. _____ 0. I do not know/no answer.

The following questions (19, 20) apply only to those who have never had a job.



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19. What are the main reasons why you did not find a job? You can specify up to two answer options.

1. I have current sources of income that I prefer to keep.	8. I am afraid that employers will not want to work with Roma people.
2. I do not have the required qualifications / education.	9. I tried to get hired, but they didn't choose me.
3. I have to take care of the children / parents.	10. I'm too old to start working.
4. I study and can't work.	11. There are no jobs.
5. Parents / relatives don't let me.	12. Another answer (which is.....?)
6. Lack of confidence in my own strength.	0. I do not know/no answer.
7. Health issues.	

20. If you could hire yourself, would you take that step?

1. Yes. 2. No. 0. I do not know / no answer.

Socio-demographic data:

21. Gender: 1. Male. 2. Female.

22. Age (years old): (years). 0. I do not know / no answer.

23. Residence: 1. Town. 2. The village. 0. I do not know / no answer.

24. Marital status: 1. Single. 2. Married. 3. Married without documents. 4. Divorced. 5. Widower 0. I do not know / no answer.

25. Number of household members (including you): 0. I do not know /no answer.

26. Education (completed): 1. Without education. 2. Elementary. 3. Primary. 4. Secondary education. 5. After secondary school. 6. High. 0. I do not know / no answer.

27. Your professional status:

1. Employee (including self-employed persons, small entrepreneurs and employers).	6. Retired.
2. Pupil or student.	7. Housewife (works in the household, looking after children or others).
3. Unemployed job seekers.	8. Another situation that is?)
4. Unemployed who are not looking for a job.	0. I do not know / no answer.
5. Retired due to illness or disability.	

28. Ethnic origin: 1. Bulgarian/Romanian. 2. Roma. 3. Other (which is.....?) 0. I do not know / no answer.

ANNEX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE

on the perception of persons with disabilities in employment integration



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1. In the current Bulgarian/Romanian society, which of the following groups are most likely to be at risk of marginalization and social exclusion? *You can specify up to two answer options.*

1. Persons with physical and sensory impairments - vision, hearing.	7. Persons belonging to a sexual minority.
2. People with mental disabilities.	8. Homeless or sheltered persons.
3. Persons of Roma origin.	9. Persons suffering from incurable diseases.
4. People addicted to drugs, alcohol, or other toxic substances.	10. Persons who have left prisons.
5. Older people (over 50 years old).	11. Another answer (which is _____?)
6. Women / children victims of domestic violence.	0. I don't know / no answer.

2. In your view, how much the rights of people with disabilities in Bulgaria/Romania are respected?

1. Fully respected. 2. Rather respected. 3. Rather not respected. 4. Not respected at all. 0. I don't know/no answer.

4. In general, members of the community treat people with disabilities with: ... Choose one answer for each row.

1. Respect.	1. Despite.
2. Amity.	2. Hostility.
3. Trust.	3. Distrust.
4. Goodwill.	4. Dismay.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	<i>I totally agree</i>	<i>Somewhat agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>I do not agree at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
The state provides adequate social protection for people with disabilities.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
People with disabilities belong to a disadvantaged group in terms of employment and professional opportunities.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
People with disabilities cannot work.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
Employers do not want to hire people with disabilities.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.

6. Personally, how often have you felt discriminated / marginalized: ...

	<i>Very often</i>	<i>Many times</i>	<i>Sometimes / Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
In educational institutions.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
In relations with public authorities.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.



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On social assistance and protection services.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
At the hospital / family doctor.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
On the work place.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.
When looking for a paid job.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	0.

7. How informed are you about public policies / legislation, about maintaining and increasing the employment of people with disabilities?

1. Fully informed. 2. Rather informed. 3. Rather uninformed. 4. I'm not at all informed. 0. I don't know/no answer.

8. We will show you a list of legal regulations / public policies to support and promote the employment of people with disabilities. Which ones do you know: _?

	Yes, I know the law / public policy.	No, I don't know the law / public policy.	No answer.
Free access to vocational assessment and employment orientation services, regardless of age, type and degree of disability.	1.	2.	0.
Employers who employ disabled people benefit from tax incentives, as well as other rights provided by law.	1.	2.	0.
Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to work less than 8 hours a day if they benefit from the recommendation of the Committee on Performance Assessment in this respect.	1.	2.	0.
Persons with disabilities, according to the Labor Code, have an additional leave of at least 3 working days.	1.	2.	0.

9. In your opinion, what are the main obstacles for people with disabilities to find work? You can specify up to three answer options.

1. Employers' reluctance (refusal to hire people belonging to this vulnerable group).	9. Infrastructure is inaccessible to workplace mobility and integration.
2. High unemployment rate.	10. Unsafe / dangerous working conditions.
3. Lack of specialized job search assistance.	11. Small wages.
4. Lack of experience in the field of work.	12. Poor development of skills and competences needed in the labor market.
5. Lack of vocational training.	13. Lack of learning opportunities in some jobs that do not require education.
6. Poor information on available jobs for people with disabilities.	14. Another answer (which is.....?)
7. High poverty rate.	0. I don't know / no answer.
8. Not flexible working hours.	



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10. What are the main factors that would help to improve the situation of people with disabilities on the labor market? (hire them, find a better job, etc.) *You can specify up to three answers..*

1. Changing employers' attitudes.	10. Participation in free training courses for people with disabilities.
2. Family support / guidance.	11. Improving services to support the training and employment of people with disabilities.
3. Participation in activities for personal development, self-knowledge and self-confidence.	12. Facilitating access to various activities (construction of ramps, lifts, etc.).
4. Financial support for travel (supplies, clothing and / or personal hygiene items, etc.).	13. Providing more opportunities for employers.
5. Career guidance for finding a job.	14. Attractive wages.
6. Specialized job search assistance.	15. Flexible work schedule.
7. Improving access to and participation in education (reducing dropouts, reducing absenteeism, improving learning conditions, etc.).	16. Increasing the partnership between the various institutions involved in integrating people with disabilities into the labor market.
8. Improving employment policies for people with disabilities.	17. Another factor (which is?)
9. Increasing the level of education.	0. I don't know / no answer.

11. In your opinion, in the current socio-economic context in Bulgaria/Romania, do you think that a disabled person can easily find a job?

1. Yes. 2. No 0. I do not know / cannot answer.

12. Are you currently working?

1. Yes. 2. No - go to the question No.16. 0. I do not know / cannot answer.

13. If so, what is do your job? 1. _____ 0. I do not know / no answer.

14. Which of the following descriptions matches your professional status?

1. I work full time.	5. I work from time to time and they pay me for the work.
2. I work part-time.	6. Another situation (which is?)
3. I work informally, without a contract.	0. I don't know / no answer.
4. I work independently (own business or carry out different income generating activities).	

15. How did you find the job?

1. Recommendation from friends / acquaintances.	6. Through the Labor Office.
2. Recommendation from relatives.	7. I posted ads in newspapers, on the Internet.
3. I was browsing online listings (online newspapers, online recruitment platforms).	8. Another way (which is?)
4. I watched the press releases.	0. I don't know / no answer.



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5. From the labor exchange.

The following questions (16, 17, 18, 19, 20) are addressed only to those who answered "No" to question No.12..

16. Have you ever had a job?

1. Yes. 2. No - go to the question No. 19 0. I do not know / no answer.

17. During which year did you have your last job? year. 0. I do not know/no answer.

18. What was the last paid activity you had?

1. 0. I do not know/no answer.

The following questions (19, 20) apply only to those who have never had a job.

19. What are the main reasons why you did not find a job? You can specify up to two answer options..

1. I have current sources of income that I prefer to keep.	7. I am afraid that employers will not want to work with people with disabilities.
2. I do not have the required qualifications / education.	8. I tried to get hired, but they didn't choose me.
3. I study and can't work.	9. I'm too old to start working.
4. Parents / relatives don't let me.	10. There are no jobs.
5. Lack of confidence in my own strength.	11. Another answer (which is?)
6. Health issues.	0. I do not know/no answer.

20. If you could hire yourself, would you take that step?

1. Yes. 2. No. 0. I do not know / no answer.

Socio-demographic data:

21. Gender: 1. Male. 2. Female.

22. Age (years old): (years). 0. I do not know / no answer.

23. Residence: 1. Town. 2. The village. 0. I do not know / no answer.

24. Marital status: 1. Single. 2. Married. 3. Married without documents. 4. Divorced. 5. Widower 0. I do not know / no answer.

25. Number of household members (including you): 0. I do not know /no answer.

26. Education (completed): 1. Without education. 2. Elementary. 3. Primary. 4. Secondary education. 5. After secondary school. 6. High. 0. I do not know / no answer.

27. Your professional status:

1. Employee (including self-employed persons, small entrepreneurs and employers).	6. Retired.
2. Pupil or student.	7. Housewife (works in the household, looking after children or others).
3. Unemployed job seekers.	8. Another situation that is?)
4. Unemployed who are not looking for a job.	0. I do not know / no answer.
5. Retired due to illness or disability.	



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28. Ethnic origin: 1. Bulgarian/Romanian. 2. Roma. 3. Other (which is.....?) 0. I do not know / no answer.

29. Type of disability: 0. I do not know / no answer.



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