

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



INFORMATION TEMPLATE ON SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN BULGARIA



By Petyo Kanev

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and general guidelines	2
1. The socio-economic situation of young people	4
2. Policy measures for young people at risk of social exclusion	8
2.1 Social subsistence/ protection and health cover for young people living in poverty	10
2.2 Measures to meeting the medical Care needs of Young people at risk of social exclusion.....	15
2.3 Measures to re-engage the young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)	17
2.4 Measures to ensure access to decent housing for young people at risk of social exclusion	18
2.5 Measures addressing the social integration of young people with disabilities	19
2.6 The contribution of youth work (and youth centres) to social inclusion of young people.....	23
3. Research on social inclusion.....	24
4. Examples of policy responses and practices	25

Introduction and general guidelines

In general, *social exclusion* refers to processes that prevent individuals, groups or communities from accessing the rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of society; responsible for social exclusion are often structural forces, such as: laws, public policies, institutional practices, organizational behaviours, and prevailing ideologies, values and beliefs¹. The list of young people at risk of social exclusion can be extended almost *ad infinitum*² and it includes young people with disabilities, ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, homeless youth or young offenders etc. It is important, however, to be receptive to: (i) the emergence of new groups of young people at risk of social exclusion; (ii) the local particularities of exclusion for some groups; (iii) the intersectional nature of discrimination.

The EU sees social inclusion as '*a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights*'³. Social inclusion is one of the eight policy areas underlining the cross-cutting approach of the EU Youth Strategy. It is also a key priority of the Youth in Action programme. In 2012, the Cyprus Presidency priority in the youth sector was the participation and social inclusion of young people with a migrant background.⁴ More recently, the trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) reaffirmed EU's commitment by making Social Inclusion the overall thematic priority in the youth field for the period from January 2013 to end of June 2014. This theme includes accessibility to youth services and inclusiveness and emphasizes the importance of quality in the design and delivery of youth policy and provision.

In the context of rising youth unemployment, the Irish presidency proposed a 'Youth Guarantee', a policy measure aiming to give young people (< 25) a 'good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed'. In May 2013 the EU Youth Ministers will adopt Council Conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (8575/13). A recent report by the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission (Eurydice Unit) is presenting evidence from literature and surveys about the social exclusion of young people across the European Union, and how youth work can help⁵.

¹ The Institute of Social Exclusion, Adler School of Professional Psychology.

² EU-CoE youth partnership, Research Seminar "Mobility of young people – Opportunities and obstacles for cross-border volunteering for young people, particularly with fewer opportunities" European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 11-13 December 2011 [Online] Available at: http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1405023/Final_report_Volunteering_seminar_2011.pdf/2818cf79-3230-4733-b391-bc47aae7251b

³ European Commission (2010) *The European Social Fund and social inclusion*. [Online] Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/BlobServlet?docId=166&langId=en>.

⁴ Council of the European Union (2012) *Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the participation and social inclusion of young people with emphasis on those with a migrant background*15652/1/12 REV 1 Brussels, 13.11.2012. [Online] Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st15/st15652-re01.en12.pdf>

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/20130506-eurydice-study-social-exclusion-youth-work_en.htm

For the Council of Europe, ‘social cohesion’ is the political concept considered essential for the fulfilment of its core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In 2005, the Council of Europe produced a methodological guide for the development of social cohesion indicators⁶. It defines the social cohesion as ‘*society’s ability to secure the long term well-being of all its members, including equitable access to available resources, respect for human dignity with due regard for diversity, personal and collective autonomy and responsible participation*’ (CoE, 2005: 23). This is a comprehensive instrument that: (i) defines the strategic concepts and approaches; (ii) provides practical tools for developing questions and indicators; (iii) enables the link between measurement and policy action.

Since 1997, the CoE Youth Department is running extensive evaluations of national youth policies, based on international reviews. They include topics related to social cohesion. More recently, the Enter! Project of the Council of Europe, aims to develop policy responses to exclusion, discrimination and violence affecting young people in multicultural disadvantaged neighborhoods. Its first part (2009-2012) included a two-year training course on access to social rights, besides other activities related to gender equality in youth projects and multicultural youth work.

Social cohesion is one of the three core objectives of the Council of Europe's Youth Policy. Agenda 2020 emphasises the following priorities in the area of social inclusion of young people: (i) supporting the integration of excluded young people; (ii) ensuring young people’s access to education, training and the working life, particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/ learning; (iii) supporting young people’s transition from education to the labour market; (iv) supporting young people's autonomy and well-being as well as their access to decent living conditions; (v) ensuring young people’s equal access to cultural, sporting and creative activities; (vi) encouraging intergenerational dialogue and solidarity⁷.

Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept, not reducible to economic aspects. Besides poverty, social exclusion also involves relational issues, such as inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power (Room, 1995). For instance, in the current economic climate, there are particularly worrying trends in youth unemployment and discourses on the risk of losing an entire generation are being heard⁸. But the crisis is not only economic; it is also social and political in nature, with many young people becoming increasingly disengaged or facing impediments in their access to social rights. Being migrant or of immigrant background, Roma, with an ethnic minority background, homeless, LGTB or with a disability, adds other layers of vulnerability and increases the barriers of access to services and networks of support. Social exclusion may perpetuate across generations. Tackling social exclusion often requires localised and tailored approaches.

⁶ CoE (2005) *Concerted development of social cohesion indicators. Methodological guide*. Council of Europe Publishing. Strasbourg Cedex.

⁷ Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 November 2008 at the 1042nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies.

⁸ Programme of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. 1 January - 30 June 2013, URL: http://eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/EU-Pres_Prog_A4.pdf

1. The socio-economic situation of young people

1.1 Please inform which groups of the young people are perceived as being socially excluded. What are the main factors for being socially excluded as a young person in your country?

A number of programmes and measures aimed at improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable groups in the society - individuals and groups at risk of social exclusion as well as less competitive young people in the labor market are being implemented within the framework of policy of social inclusion. The principle of compliance with the specific individual needs of those in need is the basis of the implemented measures and activities in order to ensure quality support and promotion of their full social inclusion.

The main target groups of the policy for poverty reduction and promotion of social inclusion are listed in the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020, as it follows:

- Persons who are out of the working age: children, the elderly;
- Families with children;
- Disadvantaged groups in the labor market or outside of the labor market - long-term unemployed and young unemployed people, young people with primary or lower education and no professional qualifications or lack of key competences, economically inactive persons willing to work;
- Vulnerable members belonging to the Roma community;
- Young people with disabilities;
- Homeless young people and those living in poor housing conditions;
- Poor young employed people.

Children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion are a specific vulnerable group because they are highly dependent on the adults they live with and they cannot ensure their existence by themselves. Taking into account the factors that cause poverty - unemployment, low education, low income, etc. is essential to prevent intergenerational transmission of poverty and to reduce the possibility of limited access to the labor market as well as the low educational status of parents which they can deliver to their children.

Especially vulnerable groups of children / young people at risk of social exclusion are:

- Children and young people living in institution;
- Children and young people who leave specialized institutions;

- Children and young people with disabilities;
- Children and young people dropped out from school or early school leavers;
- Children and young people from low-income families and etc.

The poverty is one of the main factors that have a significant influence on the risk of social exclusion of young people. The level of poverty is directly correlated with the levels of socio-economic inequalities which are one of the main factors behind the deepening of poverty.

Therefore, the efforts should be aimed at the prevention and reduction of the causes that generate poverty and social exclusion with a view to a permanent overcoming as it follows:

- lack of employment;
- low educational level;
- limited access to services.

The Social Assistance Agency implement policies in the field of social protection and equal opportunities, integration of people with disabilities and social inclusion aimed at:

- Individuals and families who are not able through their labour, their property or through the required support provided by the law to meet their basic needs;
- Providing heating for people with low income for the winter period of the year;
- Family support through supporting and encouraging child rising in family environment;
- Increasing the school occupation and ensuring equal opportunities for the children;
- Supporting people with disabilities for their full social integration.

The overall strategic goal of these policies is to ensure the social protection of vulnerable groups, equal access to social resources and equal participation in the creation and consumption for all disadvantaged groups regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and etc.

According to the Social Assistance Law, "Social inclusion" is the establishment of conditions and opportunities of the highest level of participation of the supported persons in public life.

The main exclusion factors for the children are the poverty, school dropout, disability, early marriages and the early childbirth, life in institutions and ethnic affiliation.

According to the Child Protection Law, „Child at Risk" is a child:

- a) whose parents have died, they are not known, deprived of parental rights or whose parental rights have been limited or the child has been left without their care;
- b) who is a victim of abuse, violence, exploitation and any other inhuman and degrading behavior or punishment in or outside the family;
- c) for which there is a risk of damage to the child's physical, mental, moral, intellectual and social development;

- d) for who there is a risk of harm to the child's physical, mental, moral, intellectual and social development;
- e) for who there is a risk for dropping out of school or who has dropped out from school.

The socially excluded children fall within the definition of a child at risk and for them and their families are taken special measures for overcoming the difficulties.

The young people with disabilities are at highest risk of social exclusion.

As whole, one of the main factors for this is that the educational level of people with disabilities is significantly lower compare to the other population of Bulgaria. The people with disabilities who are 18 years old or more, who are university or college graduates represent nearly two times smaller share compare to the average for the country. Also, the people with disabilities with secondary education are less compare to those with primary and elementary education.

1.2 Please provide the percentage representing the share of young people (18-24) who are at risk of poverty (and/or severely materially deprived and/or living in a household with very low work intensity).

Please compare it to the general population risk of poverty rate. What is the trend in your country – is the rate growing etc.?

According to the data from EU-SILC 2011 for the reference year 2010, the proportion of people at risk of poverty in Bulgaria is 22.2%, whereas the share of young people (18-24) at risk of poverty is 22.4%. The observed trend is associated with a decrease in both the number of people and the young people at risk of poverty. According to preliminary data from the EU-SILC 2012, the proportion of people at risk of poverty in 2011 was 21.2% and the share of young people (18-24) at risk of poverty is 20.1%. The final data of EU-SILC 2012 with the reference year 2011 will be published on December 15, 2013.

According to data from „Innocenti” which was published in the study "Report card 10" the level of child poverty is 17.8% and the level of deprivation is - 56.6%. The study covers all children but there is no data for those between 14-17 years old.

According to the data from the National Statistic Institute, the proportion of the poor people by sex and age groups for 2010 is 28.9% for the 0-17 years old. For comparison, the same index for the same period in the age group 18-64 is 18.2%.

The results of the "Labour Force Survey" conducted by Eurostat in 2012 show that the share of early school leavers between 18-24 years old in Bulgaria is 12.5% compared to 12.8% for the EU-27. The annual EUROSTAT data show that 21.9% of young people between 20-24 years old are unemployed. Actually this is the group of young people (18-24) who are at risk of poverty.

The Social Assistance Agency provides a monthly allowance for social integration of 556 450 people with disabilities regardless of age and for this reason there cannot be retrieved the percentage of young people (18-24). The trend is for increasing of people with disabilities with 5% compared to 2012.

1.3 Has an impact of the current financial crisis on young people been observed in your country?

The financial crisis has had a profound impact on the standard of living in Bulgaria, which naturally affected the children and young people. For this reason key strategic documents such as the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020 and the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2020 have been developed. In order to tackle the poverty and social exclusion and their consequences it is necessary to be taken joint efforts by the responsible authorities and stakeholders.

The measures in this area of intervention are aimed at improving of the provision of the information policy for poverty reduction and social exclusion through capacity building, conduction of public events and research and conducting studies and exchanging of good practice between EU Member States and stakeholders at national and local level for overcoming the poverty and social exclusion through peer review, conferences, seminars as well as strengthening the dialogue and consultations with stakeholders on the issues of poverty and social exclusion and introduction of social impact assessment in all policy areas, including a regularly carrying out an independent evaluations of the social impact.

In 2009, the National Council on Social Inclusion Issues whose activities are related to discussion and giving proposals for the development of draft strategies, programmes, action plans and other strategic documents in the field of social inclusion was created under the Council of Bulgarian Ministers. As a body for coordination, cooperation and consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the government policy in the field of social inclusion, the Council includes representatives of all involved stakeholders in this area such as institutions and organizations, ministries, social partners, agencies, NGOs, working in the field of social inclusion, etc. The composition of National Council on Social Inclusion Issues under the Council of Bulgarian Ministers also includes representatives of NGOs working with children. Thereby, the aims are to achieve a broad public support for the conduction not only in the process of developing of the policy on poverty but also in the stages of its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. An important activity of the National Council on Social Inclusion Issues is the participation of its members in the discussion of the national target for the reduction of number of

people living in poverty by 260 thousand by 2020 whereas 76,000 children and its four subgoals according to the implementation of the "Europe 2020".

The problem of poverty and social exclusion of young people became especially important in the context of the global financial and economic crisis and its expressions. A similar trend is being observed in the most member states which endangers the overall objective of the Union for the reduction of the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU by 20 million people, including children and young people. The crisis has put even more strongly the question of the need to implement comprehensive measures that could have a significant impact in limiting the spread of poverty and social exclusion. Under the existing legislation in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian citizens, families and cohabiting individuals, including young people who due to health, age, social or other reasons beyond their control cannot provide satisfaction to their basic needs by themselves have the rights to receive social benefits. The young people have the right of access to social services after an assessment of the needs in order to ensure social inclusion and independent living. In the provision of social benefits and social services should be not allowed any direct or indirect discrimination of persons based on gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, human genome, citizenship, origin, religion or belief, education, political affiliation, personal or social status, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, property status or any other grounds established by law or an international treaty to which Bulgaria is a party.

In pursuance of the objectives of the "Europe 2020" and taking into account the higher levels of poverty among certain groups, including young people the main focus for the Government are the policies aimed at social inclusion. The poverty reduction and the promotion of social inclusion are related to the provision of employment opportunities through active involvement in the labor market, providing access to quality education and health care, elimination of the institutional model of care and the development of cross-sectoral services for social inclusion and etc.

2. Policy measures for young people at risk of social exclusion

The draft "Strategy for Reduction of the Share of Early School Leavers 2013-2020" is consistent with the objective of "The Strategic Framework of the National Programme for the Development of the Republic of Bulgaria: Bulgaria 2020" aiming at raising living standards through competitive education and training as well as creating conditions for quality employment and social inclusion and ensuring affordable and quality health care. The draft strategy is oriented towards the implementation of policies and measures for achieving the objective of "the share of early school leavers should not to exceed 11% by 2020" which is set out as a national goal (№ 4) in the National Reform Programme (2012-2020). The strategy is linked to policies and objectives set out in key European documents and initiatives aiming at reduction of the share of early school leavers

such as "Youth in Action Programme", "Agenda for new Skills and Jobs" and "European Platform against Poverty". The strategy takes into account the need for comprehensive policies and measures aimed at ensuring a successful transition between different levels of education, flexible and successful opportunities for early school leavers to continue their education in order to acquire key competences, various forms of training, recognition and validation of results non-formal learning and informal learning.

The strategy expands and specifies the listed strategic documents in three main areas: 1) prevention of early school leaving, 2) intervention against early school leaving, and 3) compensation of early school leaving.

In the context of the high levels of youth unemployment in Bulgaria some of the main policy measures aimed at prevention the risk of social exclusion of young people and reduction of early school leaving are:

1. Ensuring an easier access to services for career guidance and counseling in the school system. Through the project "System for career guidance in school education" under the Operational Programme Development of Human Resources, the needs for access to quality information, methodological and diagnostic resources on career guidance for all students from I to XII grade, accordance with their capabilities and needs of the professional development and implementation will be satisfied during the period 2012 - 2014 the project includes 82,201 students as of 30/09/2013.
2. Through the project "Student and school practices" module "Students practice" under the Operational Programme Development of Human Resources opportunities for practice in a real working environment have been provided. The project is aimed at provision of quality professional training for students in real working conditions in order to facilitate the transition from education to the labour market as well as to increase the successful implementation of students who have completed their education in the VET system into the labor market and to build strong partnerships between the educational institutions and the business. The project supports the establishment of a sustainable mechanism for cooperation between VET and Bulgarian business in order to provide practical training to students in VET as well as for construction of sectoral networks of teachers and mentors for practical training.
3. One of the objectives of the project BG051PO001-4.3.03-0001 under the Operational Programme Development of Human Resources - "New chance for my future" is the establishment of a national system for validation and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal education or informal learning. One of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science is the recognition of the results acquired in non-formal and informal contexts which are related to the acquisition of professional qualification that is acquired in

secondary education. The project objectives are aimed at increasing the opportunities for vocational training in order to enhance the employability by establishing and testing of a system for the identification and recognition of non-formally acquired knowledge, skills and competencies as well as legislative regulation of the process and certification of individuals who have acquired their professional knowledge, skills and competences in non-formal or informal way.

2.1 Social subsistence/ protection and health cover for young people living in poverty

In Republic of Bulgaria, in the field of social protection for children and adults (including young people), the following provisions are applying:

- Social Assistance Law and the Regulations for its implementation;
- Law on Integration of People with Disabilities and the Regulations for its implementation;
- Law o Social Benefits for Children and the Regulations for its implementation;
- Child Protection Law and the Regulations for its implementation.

An important element of the support for vulnerable groups in society as well as of the policy for poverty reduction and promotion of social inclusion is the ensuring of adequate and sustainable social benefits.

The provision of material support is related to social protection and social inclusion through a better targeting of the social benefits and the assistance for the people with disabilities as well as assistance to families with children and increasing the efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and implementation of differentiated approached depending on the specific needs of the individuals and the families.

The young people are not a separate risk group for social assistance and they are included in social assistance programmes under the general terms.

The Social Assistance Agency and its territorial units are involved and provide assistance to young people at risk in case of need under the Social Assistance Act and the Regulations for its implementation through:

- A monthly social assistance under the Article 9 of the Regulation for the implementation of the Social Assistance Law and a single social assistance under the Article 16 of the sane Regulations which are entitled to meet an ad hoc healthy, educational, utilities and other basic needs of individuals and families. In case that the individuals are registered within a month of the completion of Social Vocational-Training Center or specialized schools they do not need a 6 months registration in the Directorates "Labour Force".

- A targeted assistance for payment of a rent for municipal housing under Article 14 of Regulation for the implementation of the Social Assistance Law which is entitled to a monthly targeted assistance for payment of a rent for municipal housing for individuals if they have a settlement order on their name and whose income from the previous month is up to 25 percent of the differentiated minimum income as well as if they are orphans up to the age of 25 who have completed Social Vocational-Training Center.

- A targeted assistance for heating, according to the terms and conditions of Ordinance № RD-07-5/16.05.2008 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Individuals and families whose monthly average income for six months before the month of the application is lower or equal to a differentiated minimum income for heating and meet the Regulation for the implementation of the Social Assistance Law are entitled to social assistance for heating. Applications to grant aid must be submitted in the "Social Assistance Directorate" from 1 July to 31 October according to the permanent address of living. The targeted assistance is granted for a period of five months, which covers the period from November of the current year to March next year.

Social benefits are granted by permanent address of living of the individuals. The employees of the regional offices of the Social Assistance Agency provide information and consultation to these individuals about the opportunities for their support, social integration and the types of social services that they could benefit from.

Under the Law on Family Allowances, the children and young people as well as their families at risk of poverty, including also children with disabilities receive financial support in the means of monthly child allowances to complete their secondary education but not more than the age of 20 years and a monthly allowance for children with disabilities under the age of 18 years till completion of secondary education but not later than the age of 20. The Law regulates the legal possibility for receiving monthly benefits to be provided in the form of social investment for children up to the completion of secondary education but not more than the age of 20 years. However, depending on the particular case, the children and young people who are at risk can benefit from the financial support for the child and family provided under the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Child Protection which is designed for prevention and reintegration for parenting a child with relatives and with foster families. The children and young people who are placed in specialized institutions do need much greater protection and support because many of them have difficulties in adapting to the real life after leaving the institution – they do not have homes, social skills as well as there is a lack of supportive environment for their social inclusion.

In this context, particular attention is focused to taking measures to ensure the support to children and young people upon leaving specialized institutions as well as for the transition to independent life. A key role is played by the social services in the community. At the end of September 2013, a total of 780 social based services in the community services have been

delegated by the state. In terms of social exclusion, the social services for every child and young person have a preventive nature.

At present, social services are being provided in the community for the expansion of the opportunities for social inclusion of children and young people at risk. The Centers for Social Rehabilitation and Integration are holding social and legal counseling, educational and vocational training and guidance, preparation and implementation of individual programmes which are tailored to the individual circumstances of each young person in order to convenient realization to the labor market after the use of the services. An increasingly large proportion of them inculcate a successful model for supporting and promotion of the social inclusion of young people from specialized institutions. The number of Centers for Social Rehabilitation and Integration for adults is 71 with a capacity of 2277 seats.

The Public Support Centers are providing counseling support, training in independent living skills for social integration of children and young people from institutions. The number of the Public Support Centers is 94 with a capacity of 4037 seats as of September 2013. Social services aimed at vocational training of persons with a certain degree of reduced working capacity aged 16 years and children at risk aged 16 years are being provided at the Social-Educational Centers. A good practice in some Social-Educational Centers is the implementation of vocational training in special separate units regarding the Law on Vocational Education and Training of Children who are at the aged of 16 years under the framework programmes of different specialties.

All the trainings have ended with issuing of a certificate for professional qualification. The number of the Social-Educational Centers is 7 with a capacity of 447 seats as of September 2013. The residential care social services in the community which priority is to provide to young people who leave specialized institutions are - "Center for Temporary Accommodation", "Center for Family Type Accommodation", "Transitional Housing", "Sheltered Housing" and "Observed Housing". As of the end of September 2013, the following residential care social services are functioning:

- 13 "Centers for Temporary Accommodation" for individuals with a capacity of 625 seats;
- 104 "Centers for Family Type Accommodation" for children with a capacity of 1201 seats;
- 26 "Transitional Housing" (15 "Transitional Housing" for children and "Transitional Housing" for 11 individuals) with a capacity of 226 seats;
- 119 "Sheltered housing" with a capacity of 1061 seats;
- 17 "Observed Housing" with a capacity of 104 seats.

The "Centers for Temporary Accommodation" is a complex of social services for homeless people aimed at satisfying their daily needs, for a period of three months within a year. The "Centers for Family Type Accommodation" provides a complex of social services in an environment

close to the family for a limited number of persons - no more than 15. The “Transitional Housing” is a form of social service in which people can lead an independent life and are being assisted by professionals who prepare them for their departure from the institution.

The services provided at the “Transitional Housing” are designed for children and young people who are from 16 to 18 years old or until their completion of secondary education but not more than 20 years of age. The “Transitional Housing” accommodates individuals from institutions who need to be supported for their social inclusion and professional development in the transition to independent life without family support. The aim is to help the young people to develop skills and to stimulate their willingness for leaving the institution.

The removal of individuals from the institutions in “Transitional Housing” is done after an assessment made by an Interdepartmental Committee which observes the opportunities for reintegration of the person. The other two types of services - "Sheltered Housing" and "Observed Housing" are intended for persons over 18 years of age and there is no age restriction on their use.

The "Sheltered Housing" is a form of social service in which people lead an independent life assisted by professionals. The services provided at the "Sheltered Housing" must meet the criteria and standards set out in the Regulations for the Implementation of the Social Assistance Law for location and facilities, for feeding, health care, educational services and information, organization of the leisure time and personal contacts, qualified personnel. The services are based on social work in the implementation of individual approach and are tailored to the specific needs of each person accepted on service.

The “Observed Housing” is a form of social service providing support and counseling to persons who are 18 years old and who leave specialized institutions, “Transitional Housing” or "Sheltered Housing" and are up to lead an independent life.

The main activities aimed at the young people using this service are such as counseling in the formation of confidence and personal growth, developing skills for vital for planning, development of skills for self-understanding and adequate self-assessment, full understanding of leisure time through the development of self-knowledge, career guidance, research

And updating of the vocational guidance, motivation for proper career choices, career counseling on demand and supply in the labor market, development of skills for finding jobs, developing for skills self-supplying on the labor market, individual preparation for job interview – preparation of CV and cover letter, information and mediation for educational and training programmes for vocational training in the country and abroad, establishing contacts with the "Labour Office", employers and employers' organizations.

The reduction of child poverty and creating conditions for social inclusion of children has laid down under Operational Objective 1 in the National Child Strategy 2008-2018. Every year a

National Programme for Child Protection has been drafted and adopted where specific measures for overcoming the child poverty are being planned.

The state undertakes measures in support of parents with low incomes. According to the Law on Family Allowances for Children, the Social Assistance Law, the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities and the Child Protection Law and their regulations different types of aid can be granted.

The families are also supported and through the system of social services. Income support for families whose children are at risk of social exclusion is granted through the development of economic aid or so-called "income support" for poverty reduction among the vulnerable families, single parents, parents and children with disabilities large families, families with unemployed parents and others as well as through updating of the amount of aid, the application of more favorable conditions for the access to financial support for children from low-income families, the increasing of the amount of social assistance for children who regularly attend school and social assistance for responsible parenthood, reconciliation of financial support and services such as the package of measures offered by the "Social Assistance Directorates" in order to successful inclusion of children as well as the updating of existing the legislation on the determination and payment of child support by the parents in the child's interest.

Support for parents to reconcile their professional and family life through the promotion of the role of fathers including the creation of incentives legislation for the father to take parental leave and to continue the systemic policies for ensuring the gender equality in the labor market and in political, social and family life as well as the development of the use of flexible employment (part-time work, half-position, work at home, etc..) and the occupational mobility of the labor force and the improvement of the efficiency of supervising compliance with the labor legislation.

Increasing the access to quality day care services for children through a systematic examination and planning according to the needs of the municipalities and offering of the day care services as well as the development of a system of incentives for local authorities by the government in collaboration with employers' organizations as an expression of their corporate social responsibility for the development of day care services including alternatives to the nurseries and kindergartens and the development of a system of incentives for parents to enroll their children in preschool education and kindergarten attendance in order to increase the scope of pre-school children through a social assistance for conditional abolition of the fees for nurseries or kindergartens, etc as well as the creation of opportunities for early involvement of children with special needs and disabilities in kindergartens by creating of a supportive architectural and social environment, personnel training and training materials and promotion of the provision of services for parents of children with disabilities for supporting the growing of a child in the family by day care services, daycare centers, rehabilitation centers, counseling centers, etc and increasing the

investment in the childcare services through training in working with children with disabilities, children from vulnerable ethnic minorities, children with gifts as well as the optimization of the ratio between the number of staff and number of children in day care.

2.2 Measures to meeting the medical Care needs of Young people at risk of social exclusion

All the children in Bulgaria, younger than 18 years have health insurance and they can use free medical services. There are series of measures for so called “groups at risk”, health mediators in the community for example, or planning of health services etc.

Free access to primary and specialized medical aid is ensured for all the children in the Republic of Bulgaria – in hospital or out-of-hospital (in accordance with Art. 40, par. 3 of Social Insurance Code), through their health insurance on the republican budget account. The state insures all the children up to 18 years old and after completing this age – till graduating of their secondary education, if they study on regular basis. The state ensures also full-time students in higher schools till completing of their 26 years as well as full-time PhDs on state expenditure.

A wide range of medical activities is determined by Regulation N 40 of the Ministry of Health for specification of basic package of health activities, guaranteed by the budget of National Health-Insurance Fund and Children’ Health Programme of the Fund, so children have free access to use them. The Ministry of Health implements activities for children’ health safety under the National Programme for Children’ Safety and its plan, connected with prevention of children’ abandonment in the maternity hospitals, early prenatal diagnostics, complex medical rehabilitation of children with disabilities, prevention of children with risk behavior and use of drug substances etc.

The work of health mediators continues. The position “health mediator” is included in the National Classification of Professions in Bulgaria. A programme for training of health mediators is being developed and the Medical Universities in Sofia and Plovdiv are accredited for their training. According to the needs of the municipalities where Roma population holds significant number, the respective mayors plan and implement trainings for health mediators. Health mediators support the Roma population as well as medical specialists that serve this population. Supporting and extending the network of health mediators is priority of the Ministry of Health in the sphere of Roma health care. The introduction of new profession contributes to overcoming of cultural barriers in the communication between Roma population and medical staff in places. In 2008 the number of health mediators is 111, in 2009 it is 106, in 2010 – 105, in 2011 – 105, and in 2012 they are 109. It is expected their number to increase to 130 in 2013. The health mediators also have experience with families at risk of children’ abandonment. The knowledge of medical staff for specific health

problems of Roma people is periodically raised through improving medical syllabus in the medical universities and colleges.

In 2011 a National Health Card is introduced in order to be overcome the disproportionate access to basic medical services. In the period 2010-2012 legislative changes are performed for reorganization of primary out-of-hospital medical aid and for establishment of “medical consultation rooms on duty” in remote rural and mountain regions inclusively. Reorganization of hospital aid is done also through introduction of quality criteria and levels of competency. On this ground, all the hospitals have re-registered and the map of the hospital aid has changed as financing of hospitals in difficult for reaching regions is planned also. Measures are undertaken for early warning from the side of G.P.-s and health institutions for under-age and minor pregnant women and young mothers.

In the recent years, the Ministry of Health allocates funds for prophylactic examinations and check-up in small towns and villages with predominantly Roma population as it uses mobile devices received under Phare programme. In the period 2008-2012, 13 230 gynecological examinations by 4 in number gynecological consultation rooms are being conducted. Conducting of examinations in target spheres is preceded and pursued by lectures, talks, discussions in place etc., where specially developed health-information materials are presented by specialists of Regional Health Inspectorates. The themes discussed and materials developed are in the sphere of contraception, sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health, breast cancer, uterine cancer etc. Talks are conducted with growing up and young people and their parents for the ways of prevention of unwished and early pregnancy, for dangers for mothers and babies coming from early pregnancy, for the risk of bearing babies with congenital abnormalities and inherited diseases and the ways of making prophylactics.

The Ministry of Health implements a National Programme for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control in the Republic of Bulgaria (2008-2015). The Programme corresponds to the Common comment N 3 of the Committee (CRC/GC/2003/3) and the International HIV and AIDS Guidelines and human rights as well as to Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Programme financed by the Global fund for combating AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The activities and services for groups at highest risk are implemented both on national and local level, in cooperation with 28 in number Regional Health Inspectorates, the National Center for infectious and parasitical diseases and over than 50 Non-governmental organizations. One of the main target groups are young people at risk and the specific activities which are directed to raising the information about HIV/AIDS. The following activities and measures are undertaken in pursuance of the programme.

In the framework of component 7 “Decreasing the vulnerability of young people at highest risk (15-24 years) to HIV through widening the range of services and programmes directed to young people” of HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Programme, a network is built of 18 NGOs

which provide free services through outreach activities among young people at highest risk in the biggest municipalities in the country. As of 31st of December 2012 activities were implemented in 18 district towns: Blagoevgrad, Bourgas, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Gabrovo, Dobrich, Kustendil, Haskovo, Pazardjik, Pernik, Pleven, Plovdiv, Rousse, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Sofia, Shoumen. All the organizations disseminate condoms and health-educational materials around 271 areas. Over 590 volunteers – members of the organizations, take active part in organizing summer anti-AIDS campaigns on the territory of the country. The mission of these 18 NGOs is to establish and maintain municipal clubs of peers' trainers and in the framework of this approach to reach young people at risk through "outreaching" and specialized trainings "peers to peers" as well as to reach young people in the regions through campaigns for raising the information, change in behavior and safe behavior choice, an including the usage of condoms.

2.3 Measures to re-engage the young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Since 2013 and after appointment of psychologists and case managers in the Labor offices, the services for activating of not active persons were enriched. Psychologists and case managers work with part of the young people not in employment and education – unemployed young people registered in the Labor offices, as they provide early active support in the form of psychological help, motivation and orientation.

The mediators' job will continue and their capacity will be developed, Roma mediators, psychologists and case managers also, dealing with vulnerable groups.

Policies and key measures for prevention of prematurely school leaving are set up in the Strategy for Prevention and Decreasing the Share of Drop Outs and Early School Leavers (2013-2020). Measures are set up also in the development and implementation of Coordination mechanism for improving control mechanisms over all sector policies, connected with the detention of pupils in schools till their graduation.

The National Youth Programme (2011-2015) is directed to all young people in the country at the age of 15 to 29. It is not specialized towards the pointed target group but it gives the opportunity for participation with no discriminatory character or any other restrictions.

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) have equal access to participation in activities, which are realized under projects financed by the programme.

2.4 Measures to ensure access to decent housing for young people at risk of social exclusion

The lack of housing is the same time reason and consequence of poverty and social exclusion. It is a result of interaction between different factors, some of them being: a lack of houses on reasonable prices, low labor remunerations, insufficient attention of society towards this problem, physical and mental diseases, home violence, unemployment etc. In this connection, providing of suitable house conditions for vulnerable risk groups is an important priority, which requires combining of numerous measures directed both to prevention and to restraint of this extreme form of poverty and social exclusion.

On this background, providing of accessible housing to bigger part of the vulnerable groups is still a significant challenge. It is necessary better access to housing to be guaranteed for households with low incomes by means of increasing the number of residential buildings, built for non-profit purposes and by establishment of new system for financing and specialized system for house saving and giving credits.

In this regard, a key priority of the policy for combating homelessness is providing of suitable house accommodation and infrastructure as well as effective and quality services for homeless people. The nature of the problem - consisting of many factors - supposes the focus to be put on application of complex and integrated approach by developing of integrated inter-sectorial services which include social, health and educational services, employment services and mainly access to housing.

One of the priorities of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020 is the improvement of house conditions of vulnerable groups and support to homeless people. The following measures are set up in this priority: providing access to house accommodation, establishment of integrated inter-sectorial services for homeless people, begging children and adults inclusive.

As it was mentioned already in point 1.1., the residential services providing accommodation to young people, leaving specialized institutions for children are as follows: "Centers for Temporary Accommodation", "Centers for Family Type Accommodation", "Transitional Housing", "Sheltered housing" and "Observed Housing". The "Transitional Housing", are designed for children and young people at the age of 16 to 18 years or till their graduation of secondary education but not later than 20 years of age. The "Observed Housing" is designed for persons over 18 years and there is no age restriction for its use. The services are based on social work with individual approach and they comply with the concrete necessities of every consumer.

In addition, those young people that have graduated Social Vocational-Training Center and who are orphans, up to 25 years of age, can receive monthly subsidy for paying rent of municipal

house, if their accommodation order is on their name and their income is up to 25% of the differentiated minimal income.

2.5 Measures addressing the social integration of young people with disabilities

The mission of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is to guarantee the right of well-deserved labour, social realization, adequate social protection as well as opportunities for growth of all Bulgarian citizens. And the National Social Policy is based on the principles of European social model and social solidarity.

The vision of developing the policy for integration of people with disabilities is closely connected with application of integrated approach in governing and establishment of equivalent cooperation with social partners and all stakeholders.

The partnership in the national policy for people with disabilities is implemented by the National Council for Integration of People with Disabilities which represents the “civil arena” for discussion of topics concerning their rights and where the national trade-union organizations participate also.

An important step in our country was made with the factual ratification of the Convention for Human Rights of People with Disabilities of United Nations, which is one of the highest internationally recognized standards for ensuring equal opportunities for exercising of main human rights of people with disabilities and ensuring their effective protection. On 26th of January 2012 the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria has ratified the Convention for Human Rights of People with Disabilities adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations on 13th of December 2006 in New York and into force from 3rd of May 2008.

The main objective of the Convention is the equal treating of people with disabilities to be ensured in all the aspects of social life as any kind of discrimination concerning disability should be eliminated. The Convention doesn't foresee new human rights different than those which are declared in number of international acts where Bulgaria is a party. The Convention concretizes the obligations of the countries with a view to ensuring their equal in rights exercising and foreseeing of additional guarantees for protection from discrimination regarding disability in all the spheres of social life.

People with disabilities, including the young people with disabilities have equal rights to employment and remuneration. The States should prohibit discrimination concerning employment, self-dependent economic activities, entrepreneurship, hiring of people with disabilities in the social

sector. They should encourage their hiring in private sector and ensuring of proper working conditions (Art. 27).

The employment is key element of social inclusion and economic independence of every citizen in active age. In the sphere of rights to work of people with disabilities, measures should be undertaken not that legislative as encouraging for “free choice” of work etc. Among the main objectives set up in the Strategy for Ensuring Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities 2008-2015 are: guaranteeing of equal access to education (vocational training etc.), providing of a comprehensive medical and social rehabilitation and medical devices as well as raising the opportunities for employment of people with disabilities and their involvement in different programmes.

For ensuring social protection, in the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, the right of people with disabilities to receive monthly allowances for social integration is regulated (for transport services, information and telecommunication services, trainings, rehabilitation services, accessible information, rent of municipal housing, dietetic nutrition and medicines). The right to subsidies for purchase and adaptation of personal vehicles is regulated too, for import of such vehicle, for reconstruction of house, for companions of blind people or people hard to move unattended, people with intellectual and mental disabilities etc.).

One of the most important instruments for integration of young people is their employment. In the Law for Promotion of the Employment an incentive measure for encouraging of employers to open vacancies for marginalized young people, part of them having strong injuries is being provided (Art. 36, par.2). In accordance with this measure, for each new vacancy where unemployed person with strong injury up to 29 years is hired, including disabled soldiers as well as young people from social institutions which have graduated their education and were orientated by the Employment Agency, amounts are provided to the employer for: labor remuneration and the payments due on the account of the employer according to the Labor Code and the Code for Social Insurance.

The Law on Integration of People with Disabilities and the Regulation for its implementation has the purpose to create guarantees and incentives for integration and equality in rights of people with specific capabilities. The Law outlines the parameters of social-economic protection of people with hard disabilities.

For the first nine months of 2013, support is given to average 507 163 persons with disabilities, including the monthly average of the number of children with disabilities which is 19 970.

The Social Assistance Agency provides a monthly allowance for children with permanent disabilities up to 18 years of age and until their graduation of secondary education, but no later than the age of 20 years (70% of the minimum wage), according to the Law on Family Allowances

for children. In 2013 the monthly allowance by the procedure of Art. 8 of the law increased from 189 to 217 leva. The Agency provides monthly average support to 23 495 children on this normative basis.

In 2012 Bulgaria decisively stated its intention to improve the care for people with disabilities through signing and ratification of the Convention on Human Rights of People with Disabilities. The signing of the annex thereto is taken into consideration. The main strategic documents and plans adopted are as follows: the Strategy for Ensuring Equal Opportunities of People with Disabilities 2008-2015, the National Child Strategy 2008-2018, the National Programme for Ensuring the Rights of Children with Disabilities 2010-2013, the National Programme for Development of School Education and Preschool Education and Preparation (2006-2015), the National Plan for Integration of Children with Specific Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the Public Educational System.

A process of operating is going on in several directions – establishment of accessible environment (in 2009 the Ministry of Regional Development adopted a new Regulation No 4 of 1.07.2009 for design, implementation and maintenance of buildings in accordance with the requirements for accessible environment for the population, including people with disabilities), financial and intangible support (described in details in the cluster family environment and alternative care), expansion of social and medical services, improved access to education.

The efforts have increased as regards children with disabilities to be integrated in the general educational system. A National Programme for Ensuring the Rights of Children with Disabilities 2010-2013 is adopted and the Regulation No. 1 of 2009 is the basic tool for implementation of training of children and students with specific educational needs and/or chronic diseases.

This Regulation determines the State educational requirements for education of children and students with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases. Each child and pupil with specific educational needs and/or with chronic diseases has been provided to access to training under the curricula of the respective kindergarten and school, and if necessary, training is ensured according to individual educational program and resource support. The parents participate in working out of the individual educational programme of the child (Art. 26, par. 2, p.6 and 10 of Regulation No. 1/23.01.2009). In this way the purpose is to be found the most appropriate form of education for every child, and to be ensured its best interests. This Regulation provides control over admittance in auxiliary schools in order to be ensured that children without disabilities cannot be allowed in them.

Significant place in the system for protection of children with disabilities occupy the social services, regulated in the Regulations for the implementation of the Social Assistance Law. Currently, the following social services are regulated and disabled children have access to them: Day care center for children with disabilities, Day care center for children and adults with

disabilities, Center for social rehabilitation and integration, Centre for Family Type Accommodation, Center for public support, personal assistant, social assistant.

With the amendment of the Child Protection Law in 2009, a new Article 8a was introduced, which regulates the rights and obligations of the management boards of specialized institutions, of social services-residential type, and of social services within the community in respect of children - users of social services in case the child is accommodated out of the family because of permanent incapability of the parents, guardians or trustees to grow it up. These authorities are imposed to notify parents, guardians and trustees of each child in writing for upcoming evaluations of educational needs and for directing the child for training in a special school or for integrated learning. On the other hand, they also have the obligation to ensure the implementation of the decision of the teams for complex pedagogical assessment, to guide the children or students to a specific kind of training in cases when parents, guardians or trustees of the child do not fulfill their obligations under the National Education Law and the Rules for its implementation.

In Art.38 of the Regulation on the Criteria and Standards for Social Services for Children, it is set up as an obligation of the provider of social services for children in specialized institution to ensure participation of the child in the educational process and to assist its preparation. According to another standard of the service, the provider shall evaluate the needs of the child, including the training needs and shall work out an individual care plan. The implementation of this standard in the provision of the service is monitored as checks are conducted by experts of the State Agency for child protection, on the basis of chairman' order.

In Art. 36, par.1 of the National Education Law, it is delegated to the Communities to provide and control the compulsory pre-school training of children and compulsory school education of pupils up to 16 years. This power covers children with mental and other disabilities that are accommodated in specialized institutions on the territory of the municipality.

The Agency for People with Disabilities has proposed in the Plan of measures for implementation of Youth Guarantee 2014-2015, the following measures to be included for social integration of young people with disabilities:

1. Purposive funding of young people with permanent disabilities up to 25 years for establishing private business.
2. Purposive funding of employers from specialized working environment for ensuring employment of young people with disabilities up to 25 years.
3. Purposive funding of employers from common working environment for ensuring employment of young people with disabilities up to 25 years.

The National Youth Programme (2011-2015) is directed to all young people in the country from the age of 15 to 29 years and it is not specialized for a specific target group pointed out but allows participation without any discrimination nature or other restrictions.

Young people with disabilities have equal access to participation in activities that are realized under projects funded by the programme. The participation of young people with disabilities is supported with special attention and it gives preference to applicant organizations in the quality assessment of project proposals.

2.6 The contribution of youth work (and youth centres) to social inclusion of young people

The opening of social services in the community for children and adults is in accordance with what is provided in the district strategies for development of social services as well as in accordance with the process of deinstitutionalization for children. But it cannot still meet the real needs of children and youth at risk, due to the lack of alternative services in some municipalities. In most of the municipalities, the services are directed towards particular group at risk but they do not solve the real needs of social services of individuals and families in need.

The deinstitutionalization and structural changes in the system for social services leads to release of funds which is a prerequisite for increasing the number of opened centers for social inclusion. The total number of social services for the first nine months of 2013 is 1 018 with capacity of 32 607 and employment of 31 466 and they can benefit young people in that age group.

Through the National Youth Programme (2011-2015), sub-programme 1, "Development of network of Youth Information-Counseling Centers", minimum resources for implementation of activities aimed at social inclusion of young people are ensured at national level. This is carried out on a project basis. Mandatory requirement is the proof of partner contribution by local administration (local self-government bodies) – provision of basis for conducting activities, financial contributions etc.

The main services that are provided to young people are related to:

- free and up-to-date information on issues concerning the lives of young people - education, employment, leisure time, opportunities for involvement (participation) in competitions, festivals and other activities for personal development and realization;
- free and anonymous consultation services directed primarily to mental health, sexual and reproductive health, prevention of risky behavior, motivation and active search of employment, legal and administrative literacy and etc.
- participation in trainings on topics related to the acquisition of personal and social skills.

Services are provided by non-governmental organizations specialized in the sphere of youth activities and they should also meet the specific requirements for experience in this sphere.

There are 31 Youth Information-Counseling Centers established and operating on the territory of district cities in the country. The centers implement activities in small towns and villages located also in the relevant administrative area.

3. Research on social inclusion

3.1 Is there any national report/ national survey investigating the social exclusion of young people in your country, including issues of discrimination?

The Ministry of Youth and Sport works out "Youth Report" where one of the studied priorities is the social exclusion of young people. The document takes into account the main activities in the field of youth carried out at national and local level as well as the measures planned for the next period. The structure of the report is consistent with the main priorities of youth policy in the country which are set up in the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020), namely: promotion of economic activity and career development of the young people, improving the access to information and quality services, promotion of the healthy lifestyle, prevention of social exclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, development of youth volunteering, raising the civil activity, development of young people in small towns and rural areas, development of international and intercultural dialogue and enhancing the role of the young people in crime prevention.

The document provides opportunity for predictability in the development of youth sector as well as reporting of measurable results in the youth status.

3.2 Is there any longitudinal research focused on the cumulative nature of disadvantage (taking place across generations of the same family).

In connection with working out of youth reports, nationally representative longitudinal researches are conducted, namely:

- In 2009 – “Youth in the country – position, problems, changes, trends and possible parameters and guidelines for youth policy”;
- In 2010 – "The status of the young people in the country”;
- In 2011 - " Ascertaining of the impact of youth policy on young people”;
- In 2012 - " Ascertaining of the impact of youth policy on young people”.

One of the priority areas and spheres studied is "Prevention of social exclusion of young people with fewer opportunities" as the following indicators are studied:

- access to social services in the relevant area;
- access to specialized services for social and professional integration;
- awareness of policies for social inclusion;

3.3 Apart from national reports and surveys, are you aware of other research that is valuable for understanding the situation of young people (esp. those with fewer opportunities) in the current crisis?

Other national reports and studies that are valuable for understanding the situation of young can be defined as follows:

- Study of the Institute for Economics and International Affairs and Friedrich Ebert Foundation on the theme "Combating poverty in Bulgaria: macroeconomics, fiscal policy, human capital, European integration".
- Study of ESTAT on "Entrepreneurship among young people and the conditions for its development."
- Study of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria under a project "Twinning between European cities – a bridge between young people."

4. Examples of policy responses and practices

4.1 What are the relevant initiatives/projects at regional/ national level promoting the social inclusion of young people?

The promotion of the social inclusion of young people and the improvement of their quality of life is one of the key priorities of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. In this connection, efforts are directed to implementation of integrated approach, involving the provision of comprehensive support for the young people as a specific target group, namely - creation of employment opportunities and professional realization, providing quality and affordable services for young people at risk, providing financial support etc.

In March 2012, by Resolution of the Council of Ministers, the National initiative "Work for young people in Bulgaria" 2012-2013 has been adopted. It is included in the National Action Plan on Employment in 2012 and 2013. The national initiative mobilizes the efforts of state institutions, social partners and local authorities to reduce youth unemployment in Bulgaria. High unemployment among young people is one of the most serious results of the economic crisis. The National initiative "Work for young people in Bulgaria" 2012-2013 addressed measures for integration of young people on the labor market who are in conformity on one hand with their needs and, on the other hand, with the leading initiatives of the European Commission "Youth on the move" and " Youth Opportunities " along with their key messages.

The main directions of the national initiative include a complex of measures and actions directed at activating of unemployed young people, increasing their competitiveness and ensuring

more rapid transition from education to employment. Young people receive information and consultation services, vocational guidance and access to various channels of information. The efforts are mobilized for their activation, for increasing their competitiveness in the labor market, as the high level of education and qualification is a precondition for holding of qualitative workplace. For young people who are in need of knowledge and skills, opportunities are provided for involvement in literacy courses, vocational trainings, trainings on key competences. The support in the transition from education to employment, ensuring the first job and increasing of employment is carried out through a variety of measures for increase of subsidized jobs, increased supply of learning opportunities at the workplace, promoting entrepreneurship etc.

Conducting an effective policy on deinstitutionalization supports the social inclusion of young people and the improvement of the quality of their life. This policy provides long-term and sustainable solutions of the problem with children and youngsters, accommodated in specialized institutions. The closure of all of the specialized institutions for children under 15 is set up in the adopted in 2010 a National Strategy "Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria " and its Action plan. For this purpose, the implementation of five projects for deinstitutionalization of childcare is ongoing (Project for deinstitutionalization of children from institutions for children with disabilities, Project for deinstitutionalization of children from institutions for medical-social care of children, Project for deinstitutionalization of children from institutions for children deprived of parental care, Project for development of adoptive care and Project for career growth of social workers).

In terms of improving the quality of life of young people, accommodated in specialized institutions, the project "Childhood for all" should be taken into consideration, as it is directed to deinstitutionalization of the care for children and young people with disabilities. Its purpose is the current houses for children with disabilities to be closed till 2014 and 149 new centers of family type accommodation to be built, 1 Day care center for children with disabilities, 8 new centers for Social Rehabilitation and Integration and 36 Sheltered Housing. A total of 2 797 children and young people were estimated under the project. Currently, 66 municipalities are in process of housing construction, 8 municipalities have contracts concluded but they have not yet started concrete activities, 6 municipalities have started a procedure for public procurement and in 14 municipalities the construction activities have finished. On the territory of Karnobat municipality, two new Centers for family type accommodation of children are built where 24 derived consumers from specialized institutions are accommodated. Under the Project "Direction: Family" estimates were done on 190 children from pilot houses. At the present moment 188 children from 8 pilot houses for medical-social care for children are brought out. Under the project "I have a family too" till the end of September 2013 are being approved 730 foster families and a total of 797 children are already grown in family environment. Under the project "Strengthening the capacity of the

Social Support Agency to enhance the quality and effectiveness of social work" by the end of September 2013, 370 social workers are being appointed in all Directorates "Social support" in the country. Under the project "Development of the system for planning and provision of social services at regional level", 91 settlements are identified where there is necessary for social services to be opened for persons leaving their houses, for children deprived of parental care, persons with physical disabilities and mental disorders, persons waiting for their accommodation. Opening of 120 new social services is recommended. 39 of them will be "Observed Housing" for young people, leaving social institutions. The total number of social services in the community which are to be opened under the procedure of projects is 29 services of which: 7 "Observed Housing"; 11 Centers for family-type accommodation; 4 Centers for Social Rehabilitation and Integration, and 2 Day Centers for elderly people with disabilities.

The provision of special support to young people leaving the specialized institutions is of utmost importance during their transition from institutional care to similar to the family environment care or community care. They need the knowledge and social skills to continue the training, finding home and job, managing with the daily life tasks. Therefore, in parallel with the process of deinstitutionalization, special attention is directed to the adoption of measures for provision of support to children and young people when leaving specialized institutions and the transition to independent life.

In this regard, the project "Life in the community" is in process of implementation, as part of the process of deinstitutionalization. The main objective of the operation is to ensure the right to life of young people in the community, staying in homes for children deprived of parental care and adults with physical disabilities, mental disorders and retardation. The specific objectives are: opening of new forms of social services in the community, imposition of new kind of social work, including social protection, real integration, rehabilitation, consultation, mediation, training for complete inclusion in the life of the community of the persons who are being housed in specialized homes, also for children deprived of parental care and people with physical disabilities, psychiatric disorders and mental retardation. The operation is implemented in two components: social services to support the social inclusion of persons housed in homes for children deprived of parental care; social services for persons with physical disabilities, mental disorders and mental retardation, housed in homes for children deprived of parental care or waiting in a specialized institution. As of November 2013, 21 contracts are concluded under the operation. 25 social services are foreseen in the community under these contracts as follows: 5 Observed Housing, 4 Sheltered Housing, 10 Centers for Family Type Accommodation; 4 Centres for Social Rehabilitation and Integration; 2 Day Care Centers.

The Social Support Agency performs policies in the sphere of social protection and equal opportunities through nationally significant projects and programmes, such as: the project "Support

for dignified life" (under the operational program "Human resources development") and the National programme "Assistants for people with disabilities". These initiatives promote social inclusion and provide work to young people.

Concerning the children, the access to housing is considered in the context of family and alternative care. In the case of marginalized groups, studies have identified the real needs and the planning of measures and their implementation.

For young people, leaving the institutions under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, special measures are worked out for each youngster – where to be accommodated, how to continue his/her education. Employment Agency is engaged for better access to the labour market as well as the municipalities are engaged in respect of the accommodation.

4.2 Have young people and civil society organizations been given political and financial support to be involved in the policy making process on social inclusion?

A Council of Children operates at the State Agency for Children' Safety since 2003. It performs basic principles of the Convention on Children Rights and the Child Protection Law. The idea for its establishment is to promote children's participation in the process of making policies for children and taking decisions in the context of Art. 12, par.1 of the Convention on Children Rights as well as Art.12 of the Child Protection Law. The Council of Children submits to the Chairman of the Agency for Child's Safety opinions and positions on issues that affect the right to protection, progress and participation of children in social-political life. The Council of children gives the children the opportunity to exchange knowledge, moral and intellectual values and to interact with state and non-governmental organizations.

In addition, since the end of 2011, the Agency supports a project "Promotion of children' participation by strengthening the role of children/ youth councils at school, municipal, district and national level".

The basis of the model lays the notion that children' participation can be well implemented at school, local, regional and national level in order to give the kids an access to decision-making process on issues that affect their lives. In the framework of the pilot project, guidelines were developed for promotion of children' participation which form the operational framework and the principles underlying in the relevant policies for children' participation at different levels. The programme provides the conduction of meetings and discussions with key stakeholders as well as enhances the understanding, knowledge and skills of professionals who work with children and the children themselves. The topics will be focused on the application of the approach for children' participation and support of school children at municipal and district level.

The children will learn how to express their position, how to speak in public and to communicate with representatives of institutions. This model will include a 4-stage mechanism and will set up standards for children' participation at each of the levels. Using the "peers to peers" approach participants in the trainings will transfer the knowledge to their classmates. The trainings will include at least 400 children and 60 professionals.

In long-term perspective it is expected through creating or maintaining an existing children' councils, the knowledge and skills of children to be enhanced so that adults can effectively use the mechanisms of children' participation. The opportunity for children to share their points of view, to develop and stand their ground and to work together is a precondition for existence of solid and democratic society.

4.3 Have youth organisations and other civil society organizations been involved in the development of the policies related to social inclusion of young people

The approach used in working out and implementing the policies in the sphere of social inclusion which is followed in Bulgaria, allows to the stakeholders to participate not only in consultation and monitoring of their performance, but in their formation. An example in this direction is the National Council on the issues of social inclusion at the Council of Ministers, founded in 2009. Its activity is connected with discussions and giving proposals for working out draft strategies, programmes, action plans and other strategic documents in the field of social inclusion etc. Being a state body for coordination, cooperation and consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the state policy in the sphere of social inclusion, the Council consists of representatives of all involved in this area institutions and organizations: ministries, social partners, agencies etc. In the structure of the National Council on the Issues of Social Inclusion at the Bulgarian Council of Ministers participate also representatives of member-organizations of European networks which work on issues of social inclusion as well as non-governmental organizations with proven experience in the sphere of social inclusion, policy of vulnerable groups, including children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Another example is the National Youth Advisory Council at the Minister of Youth and Sport, founded in 2013. Its activity is connected with giving positions on draft regulations and strategic documents related to youth policy, proposing measures for achieving the objectives of the state youth policy and discussing issues related with implementation of youth policy.

Elaborating strategic and normative documents, the Ministry of Youth and Sports conducts public consultations with representatives of all stakeholders, including youth organizations and other civil society organizations. For this purpose, A Public Council for Youth Affairs at the Minister

of Youth and Sports is founded in 2013 where only representatives of youth organizations can take part in and to discuss issues concerning the implementation of state youth policy.