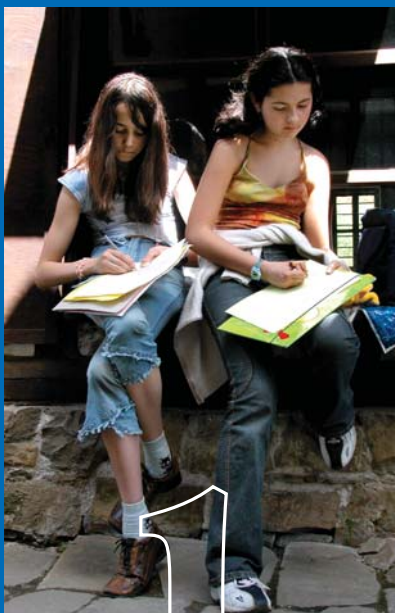




Millennium Development Goals – 2008



Bulgaria



**Millennium
Development Goals – 2008
Bulgaria**

Sofia, 2008

Partnership for the report

This report materialized from the collaborative effort of a broad range of institutions and experts who discussed the draft report in six thematic discussions and one general meeting in the course of nearly six months. The report would have been impossible without the valuable inputs and participation of the following institutions and their representatives:

GOAL 1 – Income and unemployment

Antoaneta Gancheva (National Social Security Institute), Vasil Tzanov (Economic Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), Desislava Stoyanova (Employment Agency), Zina Andreeva (Employment Agency), Lena Russinova (Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria), Lyubomir Dimitrov (Agency for Economic Analyses and Forecasts), Margarita Shivergeva (New Bulgarian University), Maria Metodieva (Open Society), Nachko Radev (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy), Neli Shtonova (Balkan Institute for Labor and Social Policy), Rady Futekov (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy), Sergei Tzvetarski (National Statistical Institute)

GOAL 2 – Education

Dimitar Denkov (Sofia University St. Kliment Okhridski), Maria Donkova (Paideia Foundation), Milka Kodzhabasheva (Ministry of Education and Science), Neda Kristanova (Center for Control and Assessment of the Quality of Education)

GOAL 3 – Gender equality

Zoya Slavova (National Social Security Institute), Krasimira Daskalova (Sofia University St. Kliment Okhridski, Bulgarian Association of Academic Women), Stefka Blazheva (National Statistical Institute), Lili Abadzheva (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy), Mariana Bancheva (Ministry of Education and Science), Sergei Magdichev (Ministry of Education and Science), Ophelia Krumova (Ministry of Education and Science)

GOAL 4 – 5 – Child mortality and maternal health

Bozhidar Tulevski (National Public Health Center), Glinka Komitov (National Health Insurance Fund), Elena Shipkovenska (Sofia Medical University), Ivan Bukarev (Ministry of Health), Miroslav Popov (International Healthcare and Health Insurance Institute), Svetla Spassova (Ministry of Health), Tatyana Cholakova (National Health Information Center), Tzecomir Vodenicharov (Sofia Medical University)

GOAL 6 – HIV/AIDS

Hristo Taskov (National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases), Donka Stefanova (Expert Council on Pulmonary Diseases and Tuberculosis at the Ministry of Health), Vladimir Milanov (Ministry of Health), Nikolai Tzankov (Sofia Medical University), Tonka Vurleva (Ministry of Health)

GOAL 7 – Environment

Gerasim Gerasimov (Swiss Development and Cooperation Office), Velislava Abadzheva (Small Grants Program, Global Environmental Facility/UNDP), Rossen Vasilev (Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation), Boryana Kamenova (Ministry of Environment and Waters), Assya Dobrudzhaliyeva (Kurdzhali Municipality), Georgi Kostov (Sofia Forestry Technical University), Nikolai Yonov (National Forestry Management Office)

GOAL 8 – Partnership for development

Stefan Sotirov (Ministry of Finance), Zakhari Radukov (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Maria Stefanova (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Yuliana Nikolova (European Institute)

UN Agencies

1. Henry Jackelen, UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative,
2. Lene Jespersen, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative,
3. Florian Fichtl, Resident Representative, the World Bank,
4. Maria Zlatareva, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP,
5. Andrey Ivanov, Adviser, UNDP Regional Center – Bratislava,
6. Maya Nyagolova, Public Advocacy Officer, UNDP,
7. Octavian Bivol, Representative, UNICEF,
8. Elena Yanakieva, Programme Specialist, UNICEF,
9. Diana Vakarelska, Programme Analyst, UNICEF,
10. Catherine Hamon Sharpe, Representative, UN High Commissioner for the Refugees,
11. Tanya Vulchanova, Programme and Administration Coordinator, UN High Commissioner for the Refugees,
12. Manoela Grozdanova, Programme Analyst, UNAIDS,
13. Marta Dyavolova, Assistant Resident Representative, UNFPA,
14. Emilia Toncheva, Head of Office, World Health Organization,
15. Emiliana Zhivkova, Programme Analyst, UNDP,
16. Plamenka Markova, Correspondent, International Labor Organization,
17. Carla Chiavarella, Regional Coordinator, UNDCa,
18. Galina Samaras, Programme Specialist, UNDCa

Team of authors

Docho Mikhailov (team leader), Chapter 1 (Lyuben Tomev), Chapter 2 (Petya Kabakchieva), Chapter 3 (Zhivka Marinova), Chapter 4 (Nikola Vasilev), Chapter 5 (Nikola Vasilev), Chapter 6 (Tzvetana Yakimova, Hristo Taskov), Chapter 7 (Atanaska Nikolova), Chapter 8 (Borislav Mavrov, Yuliana Nikolova, Docho Mikhailov), Conclusion (Docho Mikhailov), Box 2.1, Chapter 2 (Maria Donkova), Box 2.3, Chapter 2 (Neda Kristanova), Box 8.2, Chapter 8 (Maya Nyagolova)

Statistical team, National Statistical Institute: Sergei Tzvetarski (leader), Bogdan Bogdanov, Stefan Tzonev

UNDP: Maya Nyagolova, Svetla Panova

ISBN 978-954-335-060-5

© United Nations Development Programme, Sofia, 2008

Translation and editing: Dimana Ilieva

Pre-print and print: NIBA Consult

INTRODUCTION

by President Georgi Parvanov

Millennium Development Goals Report – Bulgaria 2008

Bulgaria's second Millennium Development Goals Report – 2008 accurately and justly reflects the contribution of the Republic of Bulgaria towards global development goals. The report outlines our country's achievements for raising the living standards of Bulgarian people, for education and healthcare, for protecting the environment, for strengthening democracy and building a more effective international system of development assistance. The analyses of progress against the specific targets and indicators under each of the eight global goals formulated in 2003 in the country's National Millennium Development Goals Report, give grounds for judging the practical actions of several Bulgarian governments in the respective areas on their merits, for getting a clear picture about the extent of cooperation and interaction between the Bulgarian state and the UN agencies operating in the country as well as the quality of dialogue and partnership with business, trade unions, local governments and non-governmental organizations.

The Republic of Bulgaria successfully completed transition to democracy and a market economy and gained full membership in the European Union, while the process of reform became a powerful factor for achieving the global Millennium Development Goals. The country reports a steady and high pace of economic growth; it is becoming an auspicious place for investment, living and tourism as incomes are growing fast and unemployment is rapidly decreasing.

In this report Bulgaria sets itself more ambitious goals comparable to those in the other European Union member states. The country's transformation from a beneficiary into a donor of international aid will make our contribution to the international system of development assistance all the more significant. Furthermore, Bulgaria is ready to share its experience from the transition to democracy and a market economy, from building democratic institutions and establishing civil society and market structures with other countries in Southeast Europe as well as other regions, thereby enabling faster achievement of the global Millennium Development Goals.

The policies, approaches and measures proposed in the country's Millennium Development Goals Report – 2008 provide a good basis for accelerated implementation of the planned targets by 2015, for ensuring higher living standards and quality of life, for more competitive education and more effective healthcare, for a sustainable environment and for a greater contribution of the Republic of Bulgaria towards the global goals of international development assistance.

Our joint effort, will and action can create a better life for all!



Georgi Parvanov
President of the Republic of Bulgaria

FOREWARD

Heads of state and government of the UN member states will come together at a high-level event in New York in September 2008 to review the status of the Millennium Development Goals. On the brink of the summit – and in preparation for it – the Bulgarian Government and the UN agencies in Bulgaria have put together this report in collaboration with civil society organizations, members of the academia and business.

For the world the year 2008 is a midway point in the global effort to reach the Millennium Development Goals. For Bulgaria this report is the last that covers its achievement prior to joining the European Union. As such it is a social baseline in the universal language of MDGs which celebrates the significant accomplishments of the country. In the future, Bulgaria's progress will be assessed in a different way according to its status of a EU member state. Accordingly, the country will have the potential to participate in shaping the EU common development policy and to contribute to the achievement of the Global Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals – 2008 is the second report Bulgaria has produced to honor the country's commitment as a signatory of the **Millennium Declaration**, whereby all UN member states pledged to make global efforts until 2015 to reduce poverty, respect human rights, promote peace, strengthen democracy, and ensure environmental sustainability. In addition, Bulgaria offers this report as a new donor of development assistance who can share with other regions of the world a wealth of experience the country has gained during the transition to market economy and democratic institutions. Now Bulgaria is willing to contribute even more actively to the achievement of the global development agenda.

Bulgaria's first report on the Millennium Development Goals was published in March 2003. The report adapted the eight global goals to the country's development levels at the time of preparation for accession to the European Union and formulated progress monitoring indicators and targets corresponding to the respective development levels in the EU member states. This report reviews progress made against the goals defined in 2003 in the context of Bulgaria's membership in the European Union and redefines some national goals and indicators.

New progress monitoring indicators have been introduced to track Bulgaria's progress under Goal 8: *Develop a Global Partnership for Development*. Whereas in 2003 that goal was interpreted from Bulgaria's position as a beneficiary of international aid, the current report looks at it from the position of a donor country. Therefore new targets have been formulated under this goal: 1) Complete the transition from a recipient of international aid to a donor of official development assistance (ODA); and 2) Ensure Bulgaria's active and effective participation in the common EU development cooperation policy. Bulgaria has already elaborated its national policy and will soon have in place institutions and rules for provision of official development assistance. Along with the other new EU members, Bulgaria has set itself the ambitious aim to be part of EU development policies by contributing ODA funds at 0.17% of GNI (gross national income) until 2010 and 0.33% of GNI until 2015.

Today, Bulgaria can be optimistic about its efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The country is on track to achieve a number of Millennium Development Goals targets, or even deliver better than expected results on some of them. For instance, Bulgaria aspired to reach average monthly income levels of 280 euros in 2015 compared to a 91 euro benchmark in 2001. The average monthly income in the country in 2007 was already gaining on 165 euros. The planned target for long-term unemployment by 2015 was 7 per cent, but

unemployment levels fell down to 3.9 per cent already in June 2007. The numbers of long-term unemployed people halved from 513,700 in December 2001 to 208,200 in June 2007.

While most of the indicators for education and unemployment are close to the EU average, other indicators are significantly lower. Such are the indicators for average and minimum monthly income, child mortality, maternal mortality, incidence of tuberculosis and syphilis. At the same time Bulgaria continues to set a successful example for effective government policies and efficient measures at the national and the local level to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. In June 2008 it received excellent appraisal for the implementation of the National Program for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and was able to secure continued financing of 32.4 million euros for 2009 – 2014 from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Although the indicators under the educational targets are comparable to the EU levels, the report notes that the quality of education is declining and urgent reforms are needed to support the adjustment of the educational system in an economy that must be innovative and competitive within the EU single market. Major issues are still persistent in the healthcare sector where the management, efficiency and effectiveness of health services fail to meet the needs and expectations of the people. Access to healthcare is not universal and – when coupled with poor income and educational levels among some groups of the population – it leads to social, regional and ethnic disparities.

By highlighting certain drawbacks of the implemented approaches and institutional solutions, and by recognizing accomplishments in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the report identifies policies and measures that can accelerate Bulgaria's progress and can bring the country closer to its targets for 2015. Furthermore, with this report Bulgaria declares its firm commitment to undertake its new responsibility: to help overcome global poverty and contrasts in the world by acting as a 'creative donor' of development assistance.

Although there has been progress against poverty, illiteracy, epidemics, disease and malnourishment in many regions of the world, development challenges will remain intractable without joint efforts and partnership between national governments, business, the non-governmental sector and international organizations. These challenges can now be met with the participation of Bulgaria and with the remarkable resources available through the EU membership.

I hope the report will incite stronger public interest in Bulgaria towards the global development agenda, and will encourage civic action and institutional commitments to participate more actively and more productively in the joint effort to create a better world for all.



Henry R. Jackelen
UN Resident Coordinator
UNDP Resident Representative

CONTENTS

ERADICATE POVERTY	9
1. DESCRIPTION	10
2. STATUS AND TRENDS	10
3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES	12
4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	13
5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	15
IMPROVE EDUCATION	17
1. DESCRIPTION	18
2. STATUS AND TRENDS	18
3. DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	21
4. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	24
PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN	29
1. DESCRIPTION	30
2. STATUS AND TRENDS	31
3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES – REGIONAL DISPARITIES AND DISPARITIES BY ECONOMIC SECTOR	32
4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	32
5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	34
REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY	37
1. DESCRIPTION	38
2. STATUS AND TRENDS	38
3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES	39
4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	40
5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	41
IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH	43
1. DESCRIPTION	44
2. STATUS AND TRENDS	45
3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES	46
4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	46
5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	47
LIMIT THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS, SYPHILIS AND TUBERCULOSIS	49
1. DESCRIPTION	50
2. STATUS AND TRENDS, DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	50
3. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	53
ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	57
1. DESCRIPTION	58
2. STATUS AND TRENDS	58
3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES	59
4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES	60
5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES	61
INCLUDE BULGARIA IN THE SYSTEM OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE	63
1. DESCRIPTION	64
2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	66
3. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOAL ACHIEVEMENT	67
CONCLUSION	71
ANNEX: TABLES	75

FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

CM	- Council of Ministers
EU	- European Union
FDP	- Fine dust particles
GDP	- Gross domestic product
GNI	- Gross national income
GSS	- General secondary school
ILO	- International Labor Organization
MDGs	- Millennium Development Goals
MES	- Ministry of Education and Science
MH	- Ministry of Health
MLSP	- Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
MoFA	- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NA	- National Assembly
NGOs	- Non-governmental organizations
NHIC	- National Health Information Center
NSI	- National Statistical Institute
ODA	- Official development assistance
PEA	- Popular Education Act
PPP	- Purchasing power parity
RES	- Renewable energy sources
SEN	- Special educational needs
STI	- Sexually transmitted infections
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
WHO	- World Health Organization
WWTF	- Waste water treatment facilities



goal 1



Eradicate Poverty

1. DESCRIPTION

By signing the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, Bulgaria made a commitment to halve extreme poverty by 2015. That commitment was detailed in the 2003 report, where Bulgaria set the goal to increase 3 times the average income at the time and to reduce by one-third youth and long-term unemployment.¹ In 2003 it was not envisaged to decrease relative poverty (15%), which was then comparable to the EU average.

The current good results in fulfilling the set goals show that some of the target indicators can and should be updated (Table 1.1). Furthermore, Bulgaria's membership in the EU and especially the Lisbon Agenda for increasing competitiveness and workforce quality, call for supplementing these goals. The first goal for reducing unemployment and poverty needs to be extended with a new target, namely: „Full and productive employment, decent work for all“. The possible indicators for meeting that target include:

- Employment ratio (active population, 15–64 years old)²;
- Employment ratio for people over 55 years (55–64 years old)³;
- Labor productivity per person employed⁴;
- Relative share of employee compensation in GDP⁵

2. STATUS AND TRENDS

The average nominal household income has marked a steady growth from 88.35 euros in 2001 to 164.90 euros in 2007 (Table 1.1). The overall growth is 86.6%, but due to high inflation during almost all years of the period, the real growth is 33.1%. The average annual rate of nominal growth is 11.1%. If it is sustained in

the coming years, the target of 280 euros can be reached already in 2012–2013. That provides grounds to revise the target average income by 2015 to 380 euros. That in turn will require adjusting the target poverty line (threshold)⁶, the method of whose calculation is tied to the average (median) income. Therefore the expected poverty line in 2015 should be set to 228 euros.

The proportion of the poor (people living under the poverty line) has dropped from 15.6 % in 2001 to 14.1% in 2007. Comparative analysis indicates that the years showing the highest nominal growth of income also reported the lowest relative shares of poor people (2002, 2003, 2006 and 2007). Poverty can realistically fall under the 15% target, if a targeted policy is pursued to raise incomes. Therefore this report suggests revising the relative poverty target for 2015 from 15% to 13%.

The dynamics of the indicator „Proportion of under-weight newborns under 2,500 grams per 1,000 live births“ in 2001–2006 were contradictory. In addition to poverty and malnutrition, that indicator is affected by many other factors which are discussed in detail under Goal 4, item 2.

The efforts to reduce unemployment have produced good results. The unemployment rate has decreased almost threefold from 19.5% in 2001 to 6.9% in 2007⁷. Its quality characteristics have improved. This is evidenced by the decline of youth and long-term unemployment, respectively down to 15.1% and 4%. Both indicators dropped under the set targets already in 2006 and must be revised. Important factors for these positive changes include an increased demand for labor (as a result of consistent and comparatively high economic growth) and the implemented active measures in the labor market. There remains, however, a significant group of „dis-

¹ Millennium Development Goals, Bulgaria 2003, UNDP, <http://www.undp.bg/publications.php?id=1161>

² Correlation between the number of employed people aged 15-64 and the total number of the population in that age group.

³ Correlation between the number of employed people aged 55-64 and the total number of the population in that age group.

⁴ Gross domestic product per person employed in PPS (purchasing power standard) as a percentage of EU-27 (EU-27 = 100). The PPS is an artificial currency unit, which equals the purchasing power of different national currencies, i.e. 1 PPS buys the same quantity of goods and services in all countries.

⁵ Employee compensation covers all employer costs for the benefit of employees and includes wages in value and in kind, all additional payments, and social security contributions payable by the employer.

⁶ Calculated according to the Eurostat method placing the relative poverty line at 60% of the equivalized median disposable income (for EC-27 mean, weighted with national population data).

⁷ NSI, Employment and unemployment, 2006; Eurostat.

Table 1.1: Targets and indicators for Goal 1 – Halve extreme poverty and malnutrition

Goal 1: Halve Extreme Poverty and Malnutrition										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	EU-27 (2006)	2015 current goal	2015 revised goal
Target 1: Reduce poverty										
1. Average monthly income (in euros) ⁸	88,35	106,23	116,96	121,19	129,62	141,96	164,90	1073 (2005)	280	380
2. Proportion of the poor (%) ⁹	15,6	13,5	14,1	15,3	14,2	13,9	14,1	16 (2005)	15	13
3. Poverty line (in euros)	53,01	63,74	70,18	72,71	77,77	85,17	98,94	644 (2005)	170	228
4. Proportion of underweight newborns under 2,500 grams per 1,000 live births ¹⁰	8,6	8,7	8,9	8,6	8,8	9,3	8,8	7,1 (2005)	6	6
Target 2: Reduce unemployment										
5. Youth unemployment (people aged 15-24) – %	38,8	37,0	28,2	25,8	22,3	19,5	15,1	15,4	25	10
6. Long-term unemployment – %	12,1	12,0	8,9	7,2	6,0	5,0	4,0	3,0	7	3
Target 3: Full and productive employment, decent work for all										
7. Employment ratio (people aged 15-64) – %	49,7	50,6	52,5	54,2	55,8	58,6	61,7	65,4	-	70
8. Employment ratio (people aged 55-64) – %	24,0	27,0	30,0	32,5	34,7	39,6	42,6	44,7	-	50
9. GDP per 1 employee in PPS (EC-27 = 100)	31,4	33,1	33,5	33,8	34,3	34,8	35,6	100,0	-	45
10. Relative share of employee compensation in GDP (%)	34,9	34,1	34,7	33,4	33,3	32,3	34,5	48,4	-	40

Source of data for 2001-2007: National Statistical Institute; Eurostat; National Health Information Center; World Health Organization (HEA-Data)

couraged people“, who are roughly equal to the number of registered unemployed people in the labor offices.¹¹ They are willing to work, but are not actively searching for jobs because they assume it will be impossible for them to get hired. Their status in the job market is unclear: they are regarded as being unemployed, but they can have jobs, thereby contributing to the expansion of the grey economy.

Although employment is rising, Bulgaria is far behind from the goals laid down in the Lisbon strategy. As an EU member state, Bulgaria must attain 70% employment by 2010. The situation is identical with respect to employment of ageing people (where the Lisbon target is 50%). As employment growth rates in the coming years will be difficult to sustain, the achievement of the Lisbon targets will most likely be postponed until 2015.

Labor productivity in Bulgaria is unfavorably low compared to the other EU countries. At EU-27 = 100, the highest labor productivity in 2007 was reported by Luxembourg (182.4), Ireland (135.4) and Belgium

(131.3). The leaders among the new member states are Malta (90.1), Slovenia (85.8) and Cyprus (84.7). Bulgaria (35.6) stands closest with Romania (40.6), Latvia (53.7) and Lithuania (60.2).¹² One reason for the lagging growth of labor efficiency was the rapid growth of employment (as more people are employed per 1 unit of production). Poor employment quality, however, cannot ensure the required increase in labor productivity and by extension, the desired welfare of Bulgarian households. **Therefore a realistic target for Bulgaria will be to reach about 45% of EU-27 labor productivity by 2015.**

At the same time the increase in the average real wage systematically lagged behind the increase in labor productivity. The gap between these two indicators in 2000-2007 persisted, reaching 4.6 percentage points at the end of the period (Graph 1.1). Although the minimal wage in the country has significantly increased since 2000 both in nominal and in real terms, it started approaching the poverty line only in the past three years, and as yet is still unable to overtake it.

⁸ Equivalized average monthly median income (for EC-27 mean, weighted with national population data).

⁹ Share of households with equivalized income under the poverty line.

¹⁰ Data for this indicator for the previous years was recalculated by the NSI. The source of the data in the previous report was the NHIC.

¹¹ NSI, Employment and unemployment, 2006.

¹² Eurostat (estimated forecast for 2007).

Graph 1.1. Labor productivity and real monthly and average wages (2000 levels = 100)



Source: National Statistical Institute; own calculations

Another indicator showing that incomes fall behind the general economic progress of the country, is the relative share of employee compensation in GDP, which has been consistently falling since 1991. Instead of bringing up the share of wages in GDP, even the recent years of growth have seen a declining proportion from 34.9% in 2001 down to 32.2% in 2006. Only 2007 marked a more tangible increase up to 34.5% (Table 1.1). That is the lowest value in the EU and the second lowest in Europe, where only Turkey ranks behind Bulgaria at 20.1%. At the opposite end of the spectrum are two other countries outside the EU: Switzerland at 62.5% and Iceland at 58.7%.¹³

The compensation of hired labor in the years of transition and economic reform became a central issue of discussions and arguments between the social partners about the possibilities for more socially aligned growth. The academia and the political elites have been trying to answer the following questions:

- Is wider participation of hired labor in the distribution of income supported by economic logic?
- Does the achieved labor productivity correspond in analogous terms to the growth of real wages?
- How useful in the long run is the call for competitiveness based on the low cost of labor?
- Why alerting signals about an acute shortage of skilled labor have appeared only now, after it was available and underappreciated in Bulgaria's job

market for many years and was finally forced to find employment prospects abroad?

The answers can be explored along different lines by upholding one or another set of economic interests, principles or value systems. The impartial Eurostat data indicate that **labor productivity in Bulgaria, measured in PPP¹⁴, is about 35% of EU average, while earned income (again in PPP) is about 20% of EU average.** Bulgaria has certain reserves for increasing the compensation of employees. The growth of incomes, however, is sacrificed in the name of minimizing macroeconomic risks under the currency board arrangement. A solution should be sought by strengthening work motivation through higher remunerations, investments in skills and new technologies.

3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES

The leverage of different social systems and instruments to impact poverty reduction reveals poignant contrasts. Despite their low nominal size, pensions are a key social transfer and a major contributor to poverty reduction in Bulgaria due to their comparatively high share in total household income – 22.1% against a relative weight of wages at 47.7%.¹⁵ Other social transfers have an insignificant impact on poverty reduction. According to 2007 data, the poverty level before social transfers (40.5%) drops dramatically to 17.2% when pensions are included, with a minimal further drop down to 14.1% when all other social transfers are considered.¹⁶ That betrays both the negligible size of social compensations, assistance and family benefits, and the ineffective steering of funds towards the poor. Unemployed people face an extreme risk of poverty. Hired people whose income was under the poverty line („the working poor“) decreased from 6.3% in 2001 to 5% in 2007. The reverse happened with respect to unemployed people, where the share of those living under the poverty line grew from 33.3% in 2001 to 37.9% in 2006.¹⁷

¹³ Eurostat (the 2007 data for Turkey and Switzerland are estimated forecasts).

¹⁴ Purchasing power parity.

¹⁵ NSI, Household budgets in the period 1999–2007.

¹⁶ NSI, Laeken indicators: Results of the 3rd Round, 2007.

¹⁷ NSI, Laeken indicators: Results of the 3rd Round, 2007.

Roma people in Bulgaria continue to face several combined poverty risks stemming from low education, unemployment, poor housing and living conditions, life in underdeveloped rural regions, and large households shared by 3 or 4 generations.¹⁸ At the same time there are indications of albeit slow improvement in their educational status and convergence of birth norms (desired number of children) with those among ethnic Bulgarians.¹⁹ These educational and cultural changes can be a positive sign for the economic inclusion of Roma people. Yet many among them still choose passive dependence on social benefits over active economic behavior. An indication of that is smaller poverty among Roma households with more children (i.e. receiving more benefits).²⁰

Territorial disparities continue to hold up Bulgaria's overall economic growth. A poverty map of the country outlines territorial disparities in Table 1.2.

The share of the poor by municipalities varies from 1.8% in the capital Sofia to 53.8% in the municipality of Boynitza, Vidin district. There are salient differences between urban and rural poverty. Urban poverty has to do with money, whereas rural poverty is about no jobs, poor or inaccessible healthcare, education and social services. Natural consumption in the villages continues to account for a significant share of total consumption at the expense of income from wages or entrepreneurship.

Despite the general drop of unemployment over the past 6 years, there remain substantial regional disparities.

At the district level, the most beneficial situation (in terms of low unemployment) is reported in the capital Sofia (1.8%), Burgas (3.9%) and Gabrovo (4%). At the opposite end (with the highest unemployment) are: Vidin (14%), Montana (14.7%), Shumen (14.1%) and Targovishte (16.7%). The contrast at the municipal level is even more striking, with a 53.5 percentage point difference between the lowest and highest unemployment levels in 2007²¹ (respectively in Burgas at 1.6% and in Nikola Kozlevo at 55.1%).

Regarding labor remuneration, the available data at the district level do not indicate major deviations from the country's average (BGN 484 in the 1st quarter of 2008). In the city of Sofia, however, the average wage (BGN 639) is significantly higher compared to the district-based wages in Blagoevgrad (BGN 369) and Vidin (BGN 368).

4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

International comparison indicates that the proportion of the poor in Bulgaria is not significantly different from that in the EU member states and the newly acceded countries²²: EU-25 – 16%, Sweden – 9%, Luxembourg – 13%, Belgium – 15%, Estonia – 18%, Greece – 20%, Poland – 21%, Bulgaria – 14% in 2005. However, the differences in the poverty thresholds are obvious. For instance, the poverty line in Bulgaria (in euros) is 2.8 times lower than that in the 10 new member countries and 13 times lower compared to EU-15.²³

Table 1.2: *Distribution of municipalities by poverty levels*

Poverty level %	Number of municipalities in this group	Population (thousands)	Proportion of the population – %
Under 10	19	2,250.8	28,8
10–15	82	2,148.1	27,6
15–20	91	2,371.6	30,4
20–25	40	633.1	8,1
Above 25	30	397.6	5,1
Total	262	7,801.3	100,0

Source: Bulgaria – poverty challenges, NSI, 2003

¹⁸ Bulgaria – poverty challenges, NSI, 2003.

¹⁹ „Family models“, a study of the Agency for Socio-Economic Analyses for UNFPA and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2007.

²⁰ Bulgaria – poverty challenges, NSI, 2003.

²¹ Labor market 2007 – annual survey, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Employment Agency, 2008.

²² Eurostat.

²³ NSI, Households budgets in the Republic of Bulgaria, 2004.

Disparities decrease significantly when measured in PPS, but the poverty line in Bulgaria remains twice lower compared to the newly acceded countries and about five times lower compared to the old EU member states. Therefore, under equal price conditions, incomes in Bulgaria are times lower and correspond to equally lower living standards. Failing to account for that often leads to inaccurate conclusions and interpretations about the relative poverty line. The risk of inaccuracy is even greater in view of the high share of the grey economy which affects all monetary indicators (Table 1.3). Data from a European Commission survey²⁴ show that Bulgaria has the largest black labor market in the Community. Overall, 35% of Bulgaria's GDP is generated from informal labor relations and incomes, for which no taxes and social security contributions have been paid.

One of the main non-monetary indicators regarding the access to the labor market is the share of long-term unemployed (out of work for more than 1 year). While in 2001 Bulgaria held the record for that indicator in Europe at 12.1%, in 2007 (with a standing of 4%) it was outstripped by Germany (4.7%), Poland (4.9%) and Slovakia (8.3%). Despite that favorable trend, Bulgaria still exceeds the EU average values of 3% for EU-27 and 2.8% for EU-15. In countries like Cyprus, Denmark and Sweden the share of long-term unemployed is under 1%. All that indicates a poorly competitive labor market in Bulgaria, especially bearing in mind that long-term unemployed people

most often combine more than one unfavorable characteristic such as poor education, lack of profession, qualification and job skills, a weak tendency for mobility, etc.

Against the context of global poverty, Bulgaria has quite different problems to solve. With less than 1% of the population having consumption levels below \$1 US (PPP²⁸) a day, the question of eradicating extreme poverty according to this indicator is virtually irrelevant for Bulgaria. Problematic areas in the Black Sea region still include Georgia (6.5%) and Turkey (3.4%)²⁹ with incomes less than \$1 (PPS) per day. Yet there are enormous concentrations of poor populations in the world. Such regions of extreme poverty are found in Asia (Bangladesh – 41.3% of the population, India – 34.3%) and in Africa (Nigeria – 70.8%, Zambia – 63.8%, Mali – 36.1%, Burkina Faso – 27.2%).

The latest ILO³⁰ data indicate that the total number of working poor in the world (earning less than \$2 a day) has been decreasing, from 1.365 billion people in 2002 to 1.287 billion in 2006. Their share remains extremely high in Sub-Saharan Africa (86.2%), South Asia (80.5%), South East Asia and the Pacific (51%).

As an EU member and a new donor country who is taking active part in the international partnership for development, Bulgaria undertook to direct its development assistance towards overcoming poverty and economic failure in underdeveloped countries.

Table 1.3: Monetary indicators for income inequality

	Bulgaria 2001	Bulgaria 2007	EU-25 2003	Minimal value (country)	Maximum value (country)
Quintile ratio S80/S20 ²⁵	3.8	3.7	4.6	3.0 (HU)	7.4 (PT)
Gini coefficient ²⁶	25.7	25.3	29	22 (SL)	35 (UK, GR)
Poverty depth ²⁷	20.9	20.7	22	15 (CZ, DK, FI)	37 (SK)

Source: NSI. *Laeken Indicators: Results of the 3rd Round, 2007; Income poverty and social exclusion in the EU 25. In: Statistics in focus 13/2005, Eurostat.*

²⁴ Source: European Commission survey cited in the Bulgarian newspaper *Trud* on 25 October 2007. Data about some other EU member states are: 18% in Slovenia, 14% in Poland, 2% in the Netherlands, and 1.5% in Austria.

²⁵ Indicator characterizing income polarization between the poorest and wealthiest 20% of the population.

²⁶ Indicator characterizing income differentiation of all surveyed households at an interpretation interval between 0 and 100%.

²⁷ Indicator measuring income difference between the poverty line and the equalized median income of the poor, showing essentially „how poor are the poor“. The difference is expressed as a percentage with respect to the poverty line.

²⁸ The purchasing power parity measures price correlations in different countries and is used to convert value indicators into an artificial currency unit called the „purchasing power standard“ (PPS). The difference between PPP and PPS is that the former is an exchange rate, while the latter is a currency, albeit tentative.

²⁹ MDG Monitor data (www.undp.org).

³⁰ Key Indicators of the Labor Market, Fifth Edition, ILO, Geneva, 2007.

Overcoming poverty and the set of associated challenges which undermine the quality of life in developing countries, was declared the principal goal of Bulgaria's development policies. Based on specific principles and priorities, as well as involvement in multilateral and bilateral development assistance mechanisms, Bulgaria will be able to pass on positive experience, to share good practices and to participate in joint projects and initiatives which could directly or indirectly contribute to reducing global poverty.

5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

In October 2003 the Bulgarian Government adopted a Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2003–2006, followed by two National Plans for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2004 and 2005–2006. The general goal formulated in the strategy was „to reduce poverty and to prevent the risk of social exclusion“.

The first step in implementing the strategy was to adopt an official poverty line (BGN 152 in 2007 and BGN 166 effective 1 January 2008) according to a methodology approved under a Decree of the Council of Ministers. That, however, was not followed by a second and equally important step – accepting a methodology/mechanism linking minimal payments and social benefits to the official poverty line, although expert solutions to that effect were developed and suggested for approval. A third logical and subsequent step would be to minimize the risk of „secondary poverty“. Hence, the three most important social spheres (healthcare, education and social security) should be reformed and developed in such a way as to ensure greater safety.

Any successful policy against poverty is underpinned by macroeconomic stability and sustainable economic growth. The coming years, however, should also see an emphasis on effective distribution and comprehensive public sector reform. Economic growth could be used much more strongly towards social goals like overcoming poverty and wider participation of low-income groups in distribution.

Macroeconomic policies to reduce poverty involve the use of clear and sustainable rules and mechanisms, which have predictable (direct or indirect) effects on goal achievement.

- Bulgaria's economy is expected to continue its dynamic development until 2010 at GDP growth rates of about 6–7%, settling at about 4–5% thereafter.
- The achievement of full employment in the labor market should go hand in hand with the predominant creation of quality jobs and with overcoming the current vast regional disparities.
- In order to forestall realistic risks for changes in the currency regime and to sustain the positive impacts achieved until now, Bulgaria should keep the currency board until the country's accession to the Eurozone.
- With regard to budget policy, the government should engage to create solid structures and fundamentals for social and economic development by supporting reform and priority financing for education and healthcare instead of „overinsuring“ revenues.
- The gradual convergence of price levels between Bulgaria and the EU at around 55% of EU-27 (from the current level of 44.8%) and the creation of a competitive domestic environment can ensure Bulgaria's meeting the Maastricht inflation criterion for entering the Eurozone by 2012.
- The use of resources for tourism development, promotion of exports and foreign direct investment, and enabling more active financial inflows from the emigrant community and the Bulgarian diaspora are all important instruments for improving Bulgaria's payment balance.

Concrete anti-poverty policies should focus in four strategic sub-areas:

- Actions and measures enabling the poor to accumulate productive qualities (education, qualification, health) that will facilitate their access to the labor market and public services.
- Creating new opportunities for social inclusion by building skills and conditions for active participation of the poor in inclusive practices, including

through promotion of self-help initiatives, social financing for self-employment, etc.

- The National Employment Plans should place far greater weight on the creation of quality jobs ensuring long-term employment, career development and fruitful personal accomplishment by preventing the risk of poverty and overcoming the working poor syndrome.
- Increasing labor market flexibility calls for adequate advancements in safety systems that will open up local labor markets for unemployed people and the poor.

Box 1.1

IN FOCUS: DEMAND FOR LUXURY GOODS IS INCREASING

Against the backdrop of low incomes, which place Bulgaria at the bottom of EU rankings, the pace and scale of luxury consumption is stunning. Is this the logical outcome of redistribution of ownership, or the natural need of a newborn „upper class“ to assert itself? **The Poorest Country in the European Union is Starving for Luxury.** Under that headline *Business Week Bulgaria*³¹ presented facts that are in stark contrast with the general feeling of poverty.

- In the first 6 months of 2006 one leasing company, specializing in client financing for high class cars, yachts and boats, credited the purchase of more than 2,000 luxury cars, 30 yachts and 4 planes in Bulgaria.
- Luxury Maybach limousines reported 10 sales in Bulgaria starting from 440,000 euros. Three tuned Mercedes CL 65 AMG models were sold in Bulgaria, prices starting at 250,000 euros. The first sale was „on paper“ even before the very first car of the series was assembled.³²
- As soon as the new collections of Versace and Escada arrive in Sofia, the local offices phone their regular customers and the latest models sell out in days.
- The new elite is set on „value for money“. Its members are ready to pay 3,500 euros for a LVMH bag, they strive for unique brands which don't make an appearance in Bulgaria, and their preferred spots are Relais&Chateaux hotels and restaurants.
- The real estate market has hit a deficit of luxury properties. There are plenty of buyers and no offers, luxury realtors admit.

Who are these people, how many are they? According to some connoisseurs traditional luxury customers in Bulgaria share three characteristic features. They make an annual income of at least 60–100,000 euros, they are confident in their success, and they are self-made people, for instance, top managers in large multinationals, successful entrepreneurs, actors, artists, athletes and politicians. They are young, top educated cosmopolitans who feel they are „citizens of the world“ – they spend the morning in Sofia, schedule a business lunch in London and go to the opera in Vienna, to a fashion show in Paris or to a biennale in Venice in the evening. Wealthy Bulgarians account for about 1% of the population, that is, no more than 65,000 – 75,000 people, but other estimates place real top brand consumers at 4%. The contrast is not always obvious. The trend for discrete luxury is increasingly gaining ground over the showy behavior of another „well-to-do class“ engaged in less legitimate business dealings and betting on quantities rather than unique consumption. It is apparent, however, that neither category has been captured by the official income differentiation indicators (Table 1.3).

Source: The report team.

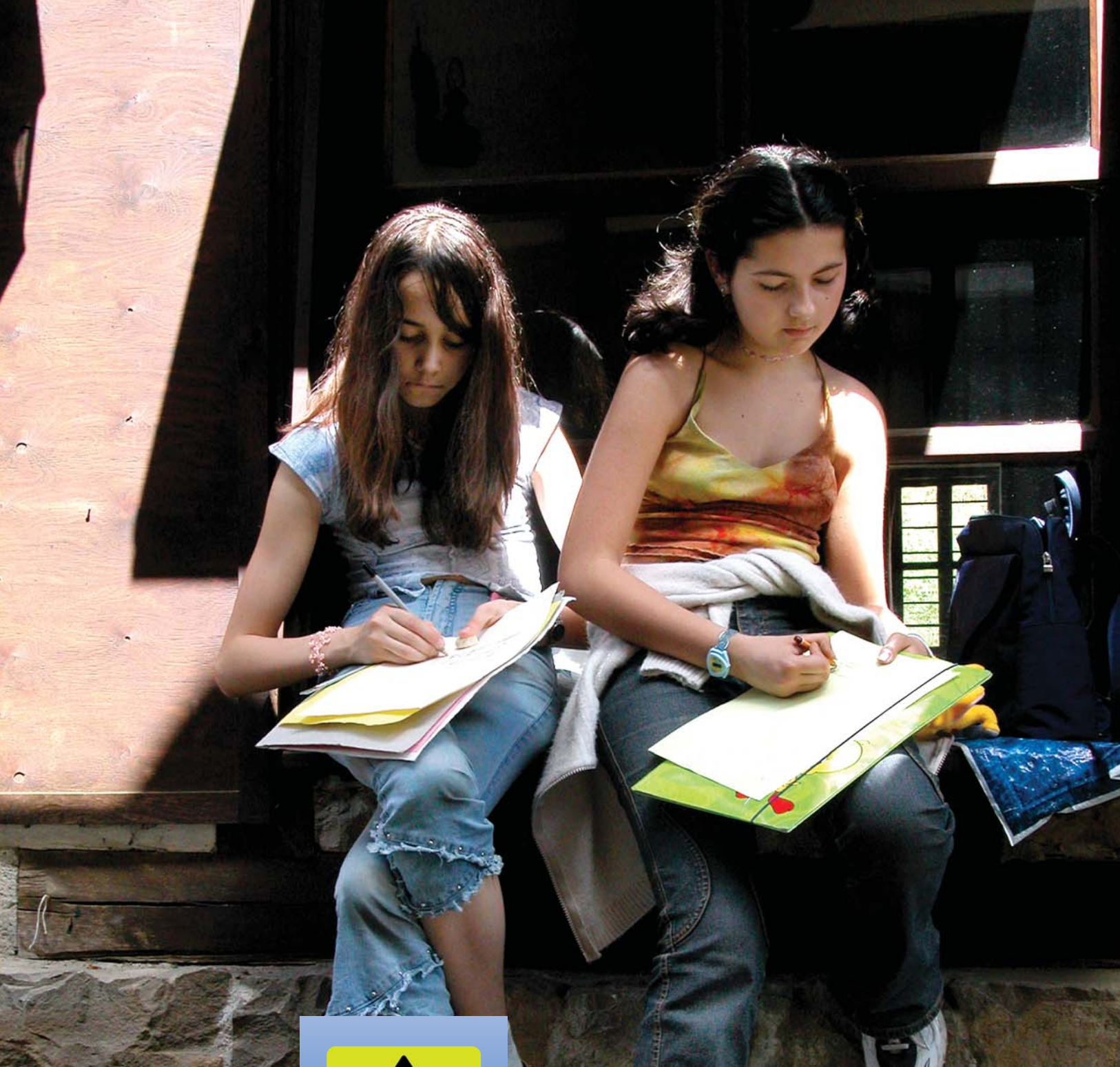
Over the covered period Bulgaria has made significant progress against most of the indicators for Goal 1. Unemployment has been virtually overcome and there has been progress in incomes. At the same time social disparities are broadening not only with respect to incomes but also in education and

healthcare, impeding Bulgaria's harmonious economic development. The small proportion of labor compensations in GDP and wages failing to catch up with labor productivity indicate employers have an outstanding debt with respect to the income of their employees.

³¹ Business Week Bulgaria, 30 July 2007.

³² Trud Daily, 15 November 2007.

³³ Dnevnik Daily, 4 December 2007.



goal 2



Improve Education

1. DESCRIPTION

Bulgaria modified the global millennium goal in education, „Achieving primary education for all“, to „Improving primary and secondary education“ because the real issue for the country is not simply access to education, but access to quality education. That goal was defined in the Lisbon strategy and was discussed at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000.³⁴ The forum envisaged ensuring primary education of good quality for children of inequitable social standing and ethnic minorities, halving illiteracy, and guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for boys and girls by 2015. Access to education is also seen as providing opportunities for all to achieve measurable and valid educational outcomes and to meet their personal educational needs throughout their lives. An additional question raised by the World Economic Forum is what education do we need in the new global economy? Are elementary literacy and subject knowledge sufficient?

**This report looks at the quality of education.
Equal access to educational grades is not equal, if
it fails to provide education of good quality and**

chances for professional fulfillment. Therefore the discussion will center on access to quality education – the theme that brought together all stakeholders and political powers in Bulgaria.

2. STATUS AND TRENDS

2.1. The general situation

Table 2.1 presents Bulgaria's achievements against the indicators for Goal 2, „Improve primary and secondary education“. ³⁵ The data indicate that enrollment rates are still comparatively high, especially at the two initial stages making up primary education in Bulgaria (97.8% for elementary school and 83.7% for junior high school). The proportion of elementary school graduates is also quite high and is close to the desired goal by 2015 at 94.7%. The challenge comes with the higher educational grades, particularly for students failing to complete compulsory educational level. Junior high schools report the greatest number of dropouts.

An extensive survey of dropout reasons in Bulgaria³⁶ shows that the parents of dropout children, the children

Table 2.1: Indicators for Goal 2 - Improve primary and secondary education

	2002	2006	2007	2015
1. Net enrollment rate in the initial stage of primary education ³⁷	99.8	98.5	97.8	100.0
2. Net completion rate in the initial stage of primary education ³⁸	93.3	93.0	94.7	100.0
3. Net enrollment rate in the junior high stage of primary education	83.9	85.1	83.7	97.0
4. Net completion rate in the junior high stage of primary education ³⁹	85.0	88.6	86.5	95.0
5. Net dropout rate in the junior high stage of primary education	3.2	4.2	-	2.0
6. Net enrollment rate in secondary education	74.9	78.0	78.3	86.0
7. Net completion rate in secondary education ⁴⁰	51.3	74.0	76.3	90.0
8. Net dropout rate in secondary education ⁴¹	3.0	2.7	-	1.0

³⁵The number of graduates in 2002 was smaller as a result of the extended overall length of education by one year.

Source: National Statistical Institute⁴²

³⁴ The Dakar Framework for Action: <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf>>

³⁵ The educational system in Bulgaria is structured in three tiers. The first tier is primary education comprising two stages: elementary (grades 1 through 4) and junior high (grades 5 through 8). The second tier is secondary education (grades 9 through 13), and the third tier is higher education. Compulsory education is required until 16 years and in reality covers the first educational tier (primary education).

³⁶ Reasons for children dropping out of school in Bulgaria. Analysis of the results of a sociological survey. 2007, Sofia: East-West. The survey was conducted by a team at the Ministry of Education and Science (Dr. Andrey Nonchev et al.) and was financed by UNICEF. Discussion of dropout reasons in this report is based on the analyses in the survey.

³⁷ Enrollment rates are calculated as a correlation between school goers in three age groups (7-10; 11-14; 15-19 year olds) and total populations in the respective age groups (as of 31 December of the current year).

³⁸ Proportion of children enrolled in grade 5 compared to the number of first graders 4 years ago.

³⁹ Number of primary school graduates divided by total population aged 15 (the most typical graduation age).

⁴⁰ Number of secondary school graduates divided by total population aged 19 (the most typical graduation age).

⁴¹ The ratio between dropouts and students enrolled in secondary school.

⁴² The indicators used by the information systems of the Ministry of Education and Science (ADMIN) and the NSI have not yet been unified.

Table 2.2: Dropout students

School year	Number of enrolled students in the beginning of the school year (grades 1 through 13)	Dropouts
2004–2005	963,051	19,193 (2%)
2006–2007	917,067	19,639 (2.14%)

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Coordination and Control of Secondary Education Directorate

themselves, teachers and social workers assess differently the factors leading to dropout. Parents, social workers and teachers pointed out poverty as the chief factor. Teachers believed that disinterested parents also play a significant role for dropout. Children stated educational difficulties, too. Having in mind that dropout children are mostly from the Roma minority, efforts should concentrate on ensuring better adaptation of Roma children to the school environment. That will require dedicating greater attention and resources to preschool education.

A key reason for Roma girl dropouts between grades 5 and 8 was claimed to be early marriages and the fear of being stolen. A new group of children has appeared whose parents work abroad. Left under the supervision of elderly grandparents or distant relatives, they also drop out of school. According to the survey re-

Table 2.3: Dropout students by educational grades for the school year 2006/2007

Educational grade	Number of dropouts	Share in total number of dropouts
Grades 1–4	5,361	27%
Grades 5–8	8,733	45%
Grades 9–13	5,545	28%

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Coordination and Control of Secondary Education Directorate

Table 2.4: Main reasons for dropout for the school year 2006/2007

Reason	Share in all dropouts
Social and family reasons	63,3%
Absences	35,1%
Low grades	1,6%

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Coordination and Control of Secondary Education Directorate

sults, that was a concern primarily for social workers. In addition to dropouts, special notice should be given to the no small number of children who are completely beyond the reach of the educational system, mostly in Roma neighborhoods and in homes without any address registration.

Table 2.5: Public resources for education, 2004

	Public spending on education, % of GDP	Public spending on education (except higher education), % of GDP	Public spending on education, % of total government spending	Public spending on education (except higher education), % of total government spending	Spending on public schools per student, % of per capita GDP	Share of wages in total public spending on education
BULGARIA	4.6	3.0	11.6	7.6	19.2	77.1
EU-27	5.1	3.5	10.8	7.4	23.7	84.2
EU12						
(„New Europe“)	5.0	3.4	12.6	8.5	21.5	79.6
Estonia	5.1	3.8	14.9	11.2	22.2	n.a.
Cyprus	6.7	4.9	15.6	11.4	32.1	99.9
Latvia	5.1	3.7	14.2	10.4	22.3	83.0
Lithuania	5.2	3.5	15.6	10.4	22.3	83.8
Malta	5.0	3.0	10.9	6.6	17.8	89.6
Poland	5.4	3.7	12.7	8.7	n.a.	70.4
Romania	3.3	1.9	10.1	5.9	13.7	75.6
Slovakia	4.2	2.7	11.1	7.1	16.4	63.6
Slovenia	6.0	4.1	12.8	8.9	28.5	84.8
Hungary	5.4	3.5	11.1	7.1	22.9	81.5
Czech Republic	4.4	3.0	10.1	6.8	19.2	66.5

Source: Eurostat

Where is Bulgaria in terms of public spending for education and the effectiveness of the educational system compared to the new EU member states?

Tables 2.5 and 2.6 indicate that although Bulgaria's spending on education as a percentage of GDP is close to the average for the new EU members, it is one of the lowest appropriations in „New Europe“. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Bulgaria's GDP is lower than the EU average, which further deteriorates the physical infrastructure for education and undermines the social prestige of Bulgarian teachers. That has direct repercussions on the quality of education.

The second table shows that the students per teacher ratio across school education in the „New Europe“ countries varies from 9.4 to 15.2, while in Bulgaria it

is a little above the average compared to the surveyed countries. That indicator can be interpreted twofold – it is good in terms of education quality, but in a situation of scarce financial resources it indicates there are possibilities for improving the system's efficiency, especially in secondary education, where the students per teacher ratio in Bulgaria is one of the lowest in „New Europe“.

That has to do with the major issue of the yet unreformed educational system in Bulgaria and its efficiency. A school network that has not been streamlined (too many schools serving fewer and fewer children); a lacking independent system to evaluate the quality of education; and an ineffective teacher qualification and career development system, all have a direct bearing on the quality of education.

Table 2.6: Students per teacher ratio in the "New Europe" countries

	School education total	Elementary education	Primary education	Secondary education
Bulgaria	13.2	16.3	12.6	11.9
Czech Republic	14.4	17.5	13.5	12.8
Estonia
Cyprus	14.1	17.9	11.9	11.5
Latvia	11.7	12.2	11.2	12.1
Lithuania	9.4	11.3	8.8	:
Hungary	11	10.6	10.4	12.2
Malta	10.6	12.1	8.4	17.4
Poland	12.3	11.7	12.7	12.9
Romania	14.9	17.4	12.4	16
Slovenia	13.5	15	11.1	14.5
Slovakia	15.2	18.9	14.1	14.3
EC12 average	12.8	14.6	11.6	13.6

Source: Eurostat

Box 2.1

MATRICULATION EXAMS 2008

In 1998 the Public Education Act introduced mandatory matriculation exams as a condition for earning secondary education degree. Until 2008 the exams were postponed four times due to various reasons. The first matriculation exam took place in June 2008 and covered all outgoing students graduating grade 12.

Out of 79,334 last-year students, 72,951 took an examination in Bulgarian Language and Literature (BLL). Overall, 8% of all graduates did not take the exam: 4% did not file an examination request, 3% were not admitted due to failing school grades, and 1% did not turn up on the examination date.

Last-year students must take 2 mandatory exams: the BLL and a second examination with an optional choice between 8 subjects that are part of the general secondary school curriculum. Certain universities and specialties recognize the grades from the final exams as an admission test. Secondary school graduates who have not passed their matriculation exams are not allowed to continue their education in universities and don't get a diploma of secondary education.

The BLL universal examination results revealed several things:

A) A lower average attainment score, falling from 4.60 in 2007 to 4.41 in 2008.

B) Substantial attainment differences between different types of schools:

<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Average score</i>
Special profile schools	12,858	5.30
Art schools	1,038	4.81
General education schools	24,254	4.49
Vocational schools	33,911	4.03

C) Districts have smaller average score differences than different types of schools. The table below gives the average score of six districts (the 3 districts at the top of the chart and the 3 lowest rankings):

<i>District</i>	<i>Average BLL score</i>
Sofia – capital	4.67
Yambol	4.56
Varna	4.52
Kyustendil	4.21
Razgrad	4.09
Targovishte	4.06

D) There are no distinct population-based differences by type and size of localities. The same place may have schools with high and low average scores. A case in point are 3 schools in the town of Gotse Delchev, where 2 vocational schools have an average score of 3.33 and 4.31 respectively, while the school of mathematics reports an average score of 5.14. The top performer in the town of Vidin was the foreign language school „Yordan Radichkov“ (5.27) and the poorest score came from the vocational technical school „Vasil Levski“ (3.26).

E) The best and worst performers are almost 3 score points apart. An interesting detail is that the 2 top schools are only 0.001 score point apart, although one is a public school and the other is a paid private school.

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Average BLL score</i>
Sofia	general school	American College in Sofia	5.80
Sofia	general school	73 General Education School	5.79
Plovdiv	general school	Plovdiv Language School	5.76
Kuklen, Plovdiv district	vocational school	Vocational Agricultural School	2.97
Benkovski, Kurdzhali district	vocational school	Nikola Vaptzarov School	2.96
Sofia	vocational school	Vocational School for Lifting, Building and Transportation Equipment	2.89

F) Roughly 35% of students did not make the creative writing assignment due to 2 possible reasons – either they were unable to argue an opinion about a given text, or they did not wish to pursue a higher educational degree and did not strive to get the maximum matriculation score.

That corroborates the existence of great differentiation between schools. Special measures need to be developed with respect to vocational schools since 42% of students who took the exams were vocational school graduates. More in-depth analyses are required by specific districts and localities to identify the reasons for their success or underachievement. Reasons should be examined in greater depth and measures should be undertaken with respect to the 8% of last-year students who did not take final matriculation exams.

The results from the matriculation exams will support educational policy both at the Ministry of Education and at the local level.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Center for Control and Assessment of the Quality of Education

3. DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

3.1. Ethnic and regional disparities

First and foremost is the issue of including Roma children in mainstream education. The highest numbers of children outside the educational system and the highest percentage of dropouts belong to the Roma ethnic minority.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that there are still segregated schools and preschool forms, where Roma children account for more than 50% of all students. According to a recent survey, in 2005 there were 524 such schools and kindergartens (predominantly schools) out of 5,085 educational institutions covered. Segregation itself is a major issue, but no less important is that these schools give education of poor quality.

Certain data⁴³ indicate a growing inclusion of Roma

⁴³ Changes in the birth rate among Roma people in this age group also point in that direction. The average number of children in young Roma couples has dropped from 2.64 in 2001 to 1.33 in 2007 due to diminishing incidence of births at a very late or very early age. Nevertheless, the average number of children in Roma families is twice higher compared to ethnic Bulgarians (1.33 and 0.52, respectively). See the *Family Models and Migration* studies, UNFPA / Ministry of Labor and Social Policy / Agency for Socio-Economic Analyses / Center for Comparative Studies, 2007.

Table 2.7: *Share of enrolled children in 2005*

Educational level	Population neighboring Roma households	Roma children
Elementary and primary education (7–15 years old)	99%	77%
Secondary education (16–19 years old)	81%	12%

Source: UNDP

minority members in mainstream education over the past couple of years. In 2007, 75.2% of Roma people aged 15–35 had primary education and only 6.4% had no formal schooling. In comparison, uneducated Roma (not having completed primary school or without any formal training) accounted for 37.1% in 2001, when 42.9% had primary education. Possibly, albeit slowly, we are witnessing a process of convergence between the life models of Roma and ethnic Bulgarians, especially among young people under 35 years.

Secondly, there are still significant disparities in terms of school attendance and quality of education for children living in the cities and in rural regions. The issue is particularly valid for children from high-mountain villages, who study in mixed classes where first to fourth graders learn together. When they study in central schools serving several settlements, children cannot attend regularly in winter due to poor infrastructure.

Another issue is that Bulgaria is becoming a desired destination for foreign settlers, but little thought is given to integrating their children in mainstream education. The problem is particularly acute for the children of refugees.

Vocational education is another problematic area because it is separated from the needs of the labor market and is rarely tied with specific job prospects and placements.

One piece of good news in this challenging context is that the studies of the quality of education do not report gender inequalities in Bulgaria, where girls even demonstrate better educational achievements.

3.2. Disparities in the quality of education

The report will discuss data from three international studies on the quality of education: PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA.

- PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy) for 2001 and 2006. The survey covers students aged 9–10 at the end of elementary education (grade 4).
- TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) is an assessment of 15-year-old students in mathematics and natural sciences conducted in a 4-year cycle. To date three TIMSS cycles have been completed in 1995, 1999 and 2003. The latest assessment took place in 2007.
- PISA (Program for International Students Assessment) looks at the achievements of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and natural sciences. Assessments were carried out in 2000, 2003 and 2006, and the next phase is scheduled for 2009. Bulgaria took part in the first assessment exercise in 2003 with a focus on reading and in the program in 2006 which focused on mathematics and natural sciences.

PIRLS and TIMSS are conducted by the International Association for Assessment and Measurement in Education. PISA is carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and participation in the program is seen as a commitment for OECD member states.

Who are the top runners and where is Bulgaria?

PIRLS

The 2006 survey covered 49 countries. The top three performers were Russia, Hong Kong (now Hong Kong – China) and Singapore.

Bulgaria

The PIRLS–2001 data showed high literacy levels in elementary school and Bulgaria ranked 4th out of 35 countries. It retained the same level in 2006 with a score of 547 points, the same as in 2001. The average

score was 500 points and the highest score (Russia) was 565 points.

TIMSS

The 2003 assessment covered 46 countries. The top rankings in mathematics achievements belonged to Singapore with 605 points, Korea, Hong Kong (now Hong Kong - China), Taiwan (now Chinese Taipei) and Japan. At the end of the ranking were Saudi Arabia, Ghana and South Africa.

Bulgaria

1995 – 9th place in mathematics and 5th place in natural sciences

1999 – 17th place in mathematics and 16th place in natural sciences

2003 – 26th place in mathematics and 25th place in natural sciences

Bulgaria had a mathematics score of 527 points in 1995, 511 points in 1999, and 476 points in 2003. In 2003 it was still one point above the average score, but had registered **a 51 point drop in mathematics and a 66 point drop in natural sciences between 1995 and 2003. No other country has slipped so far down.**

Achievements are measured according to a four-level scale: very high, high, low and very low. Data indicate that only a small part of Bulgarian eighth graders showed very high achievements. Most Bulgarian students ranked in the lowest bracket.

The school principals covered by the survey pointed out two chief reasons for the dramatic drop in quality: excessive absences and extremely poor school facilities. Only 3% of students go to schools where appropriately equipped natural science labs are not an issue. No other country reports such indicators.

PISA 2006

The 2006 assessment covered 57 countries. The best achievements in natural sciences came from students from Finland (average score of 563 points) followed by Hong Kong - China (542 points), Canada (534 points), Chinese Taipei and Estonia. Azerbaijan, Qatar and Kyrgyzstan closed the list.

The best achievements in mathematics were again from Finland followed by Korea, Hong Kong - China, Azerbaijan and Canada. Brazil, Qatar and Kyrgyzstan ranked last.

Bulgaria

Among the 57 countries that took part in PISA 2006⁴⁴, Bulgaria ranked 46th in mathematics and 42nd in natural sciences with an average score of 434 points. According to that indicator, it stood in the same group with Chile, Serbia, Uruguay, Turkey, Jordan, Thailand and Romania.

Girls had an average score of 426 points, by 17 points higher than the average score of boys at 443 points.

Students from special profile high schools in Bulgaria scored an average of 531 points, by 31 points higher than the average score in OECD countries (500 points). Their standing at the top of the general ranking in natural sciences is comparable with the best achievements in PISA 2006.

Students from general secondary schools had lower average scores than their peers from vocational schools (respectively 414 and 420 points).

The average score of students from general secondary schools, vocational high schools and vocational schools in Bulgaria was much lower than the average achievement of students from special profile high schools.

⁴⁴ Information about PISA scores and ranking was provided by the Center for Control and Assessment of the Quality of Education.

Conclusions:

Bulgaria still has very good elementary education, but the quality of junior high education is deteriorating compared with 10 years ago.

A logical question is what is causing the difference between the two stages of primary education in Bulgaria (elementary and junior high)?

Elementary schooling is provided mainly by one teacher who knows the children, probably dedicates greater responsibility and attention to the class, and keeps up some systematic training. Free textbooks are provided. Perhaps there is greater attention from the family because the child is small and there is greater family control.

Junior high school is the start of dropouts, there are more absences and the more complex subjects require better physical facilities, which the schools are lacking. Such explanations are not sufficient, however, and a more serious analysis is required.

The most serious and alarming finding is the huge difference between elite schools like the special profile high schools, and other schools. They were more than 100 points apart in PISA 2006, but TIMSS data also indicate drastic disparities in student achievements. Formally, all these children have completed the same grade of primary education. In reality, their knowledge is incomparable. Formally, all Bulgarian children have equal access to primary and secondary education. In reality, there is no such thing like „Bulgarian children“ in general. There are different groups with different chances in the labor market, different opportunities for participation in the global economy, and different prospects of finding prestigious, qualified and well-paid jobs. Many Bulgarian students have already been excluded from the global running. And a very small part has vast chances to be among the winners.

That is the situation with mainstream education. If we add children excluded from the educational system altogether, dropouts, segregated Roma schools, and children with special educational needs outside the mainstream establishments, a rather unpleasant trend

is shaping up for having secluded elite schools giving good education, and all other schools, where acquiring the next educational degree is a challenge.

If this trend continues, it will engender acute differentiation in Bulgarian society. PISA 2006 data indicate that the students' achievements directly depend on the social status of their parents – educational and financial. The educational system cannot bridge social divides and after grade 4 it effectively fails to provide equal access to quality education in terms of equal access to the higher educational grades. That is the clearest indicator of a crisis in mainstream education and the „success“ of „alternative“ education disguised behind the mainstream educational system in the form of private lessons. Admission in special profile high schools comes after an intensive course of private lessons. Enrollment in an elite school is a challenge intellectually as well as financially.

Data from international comparative studies show that high quality of education exists where it is a government priority and where there are no major disparities between different types of schools. This is not the case in Bulgaria. Therefore, the educational system really needs urgent reform. Education needs to become a priority, if Bulgaria wants to have good positions in the global competition called the global economy.

4. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

The crisis in mainstream education has been recognized and educational issues have received special attention over the past couple of years. Several strategic documents were adopted on educational development and prevention of dropouts.

1. In 2004 the 39th National Assembly passed a National Program for Better Coverage of Students in Mandatory School Age. Under that program, free textbooks are provided for grades 1 through 4, all children get snacks and warm milk in school, and school buses take students to central schools serving several localities. The good quality of elementary education is probably due to that program. A study of the Open

Society Institute in 2006, however, found that provision of free textbooks was regarded as the most positive impact, while giving buns and milk was approved only by the poorest families.⁴⁵ Since the most massive dropouts take place in junior high school (grades 5–8), efforts should concentrate at that educational level. The government intends to provide free textbooks for the junior high curriculum as well. A National Plan for Prevention and Reduction of Dropouts (2007–2010) was drafted in 2007 and is pending ratification by the Council of Ministers.

2. A National Program for Development of School Education and Preschool Education and Training (2006–2015) was adopted with a primary focus on the welfare and personal development of students. The program aims to achieve two main goals: to provide equal access to education to all children and to ensure a high quality of education. It is a comprehensive strategic document and systematically outlines the necessary elements for achieving the two goals formulated in the program, which will ultimately reform Bulgarian education.

Two further documents were adopted in order to provide equal access to education to all children: a National Plan for Integrating Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the Public Educational System, and a Strategy for Educational Inclusion of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities.

To improve the quality of education, a National Strategy was approved for Introducing Information and Communication Technology in Bulgarian Schools. School computers were installed on a large scale, a national educational portal was created and electronic textbooks were introduced, using predominantly interactive methods. A National Strategy for Ongoing Vocational Education (2005–2010) was also approved.

3. The Family Benefits for Children Act (passed in 2002) was amended to provide for student assistance as well as target benefits, for example, a one-time

benefit for first graders. The social policy combines sanctions and stimuli – benefits are provided, but they are cut off, if the child does not attend school. The idea is to link the money with the student. A further amendment in 2005 delegated rights to the Social Assistance Directorates to substitute the monthly monetary benefits for children with social investments, mostly to support the child's education, if the parents do not use the money for the intended purpose.

All these documents indicate there is good will for improving the quality of education in Bulgaria, but many more concrete steps will be required for the actual achievement of that goal both in terms of regulations and resources.

Box 2.2:

COMPARABLE INDICATORS FOR MEASURING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The European Report on Quality of School Education mentions 16 indicators divided in four areas, as follows:⁴⁶

- **Achievements** – mathematics, reading, science, information and communication technology, foreign languages, learning skills, civic education;
- **Student progress** – dropouts, secondary education graduates, university admittance;
- **School education monitoring** – school education assessment and management;
- **Resources and structures** – education and training of teachers, children covered in preschool education, number of students per computer, educational expenditure per student.

Source: The report team.

According to a recently published study of the World Bank, the restructuring of Bulgarian education should continue along the following lines:

- Encouraging competitiveness between schools (so that demand from parents should create more incentives for individual schools);
- Introducing a knowledge assessment system, which will allow identification of good quality schools

⁴⁵ www.osi.bg.

⁴⁶ The report was published in 2000. For more information: European Report on Quality of School Education: <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/indic/rapinen.pdf>>

- and teachers;
- Ensuring greater independence of schools (which was partially achieved by the introduction of delegated budgets).

Educational development, like incomes, is threatened by disparities – disparities between the poor and the rich, between children from villages and from the cities, between Bulgarian, Roma and Turkish children, between healthy children and chil-

Box 2.3:

IN FOCUS: INTEGRATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Abbreviations

CPAT – Complex Pedagogical Assessment Team

PEA – Public Education Act

REI – Regional Educational Inspectorate

SEN – Special Educational Needs

MCC – Medical Consultation Commission

RIPEA – Rules for Implementation of the Public Education Act

RC – Resource Center

After three years of integrated education of children and students with special educational needs, the system still hasn't placed the children first. According to government data, by July 2007 one in four schools in Bulgaria provided mainstream education to children with special educational needs and almost one in five children with such needs known to the institutions was educated in the mainstream system. While 1,593 children with SEN were integrated in 2006, in 2007⁴⁷ their number was already 4,380 and a growth of 175% was reported to the European Commission. Beyond statistics, however, the functioning of the mainstream education system meets with serious difficulties. Two cases from the National School Network „European Lessons“ illustrate that.

Successful integration

The place is a large municipal secondary school with 1,453 students. A physically disabled student (who moves about in a wheelchair because his legs are paralyzed) joined the mainstream school 3 years ago. He was admitted in the third grade, leaving behind one-on-one education at home. The boy was received really well by the other children in class. In time the teachers noticed that his presence even caused greater solidarity between children. His educational achievements oscillated between very good and excellent. In grade 4 the progress of the boy's disease required a more sophisticated wheelchair, which the family could not afford and which was not readily available in the Bulgarian market. His classmates launched a fund-raising campaign (for 6 months). The school management helped them to get in touch with the Danish manufacturer and to negotiate a 50% discount. After further maneuvering through the Bulgarian customs and tax authorities, the new wheelchair was finally delivered.

Unsuccessful integration

The place is a medium-sized municipal secondary school with 654 students. A girl with a congenital disease (mental retardation) joined the school 2 years ago. She was admitted in grade 5 after completing the elementary level in an auxiliary school in a neighboring municipality. At first the new student was accepted very well by her classmates. More efforts were required (until the end of the first term) to explain the situation to their parents, until they were assured that the presence of a child with intellectual difficulties will not undermine the educational achievements of the entire class and will not put at risk the other children. The girl's performance during her first year at school verged on „good“ and was comparable with the results of 20% of the class. She received additional support – two hours of additional work every week provided by a resource teacher, but that was not enough. In the second term of grade 6 her performance deteriorated to „average“ and she started having frequent behavior changes (outbursts of hyperactivity and periods of total apathy). At the same time the girl's physical development dramatically began to outpace her intellectual skills. That created unexpected problems not in her class but during the breaks, when she became an „interesting“ object for teenagers from the upper grades. After consultations of the school psychologist with these children, the number of incidents (mocking and verbal abuse) decreased. The girl was becoming more and more isolated. The recommendation of the school integrated education team was to move towards one-on-one education. Meanwhile the closest auxiliary school had closed and the girl's re-entry in day school education was no longer possible. These cases are to a great extent typical and indicate several sets of problems facing the system of integrated education:

1. The regulatory and program framework

- The system fails to take into account the enormous variety of special needs that differently affect the educational abilities of children. Regulation No 6/2002, the Public Education Act and the Rules for Implementation of the Public Education Act indiscriminately define

⁴⁷ Report of the Government of European integration, 2005-2007.

children with physical disabilities, mentally retarded children and children with visual and hearing disabilities as „children with special educational needs“.

- Persisting oversights in regulations make the no easy task of teachers in general education schools all the more difficult. For example, repeating grade 1 is prohibited under the Public Education Act but is allowed in certain circumstances under and Rules for PEA Implementation.

2. Management issues

- Teachers, parents and resource teachers alike, that is, all adults who directly work with a child with special educational needs, complain of three things: a) shortage of information; b) unrealistically high expectations from the other participants in the process; and c) an overly bureaucratic system where the time for administration and paperwork exceeds the time for work with the child.
- Different institutions have competences to make decisions about the integrated education of a child with special educational needs. Their roles are not sufficiently and clearly defined in the relevant regulations and, with few exceptions, it is quite difficult to determine who is responsible for what concerning the child.
- The institutions and bodies responsible for integrated education – the Complex Pedagogical Assessment Teams (at the regional level), the Integrated Education Teams (in the schools) and the Resource Centers, have too many responsibilities, which are impossible to meet with the available resources.
- The management system of integrated education excludes the municipalities from the consultation process. At the same time the municipalities fund 85% of schools and virtually all kindergartens.
- There isn't good coordination of processes aiming to streamline the network of special educational institutions for children with SEN and the introduction of integrated education in mainstream schools. A blatant example was the creation of Resource Centers from scratch and the parallel closing of auxiliary schools in the same 28 cities (district centers). In most of them the restructuring of auxiliary schools into resource centers would have saved money and time.

3. Resource issues

- There are no assessments and analyses of the educational abilities of various groups of children with special educational needs, or information on their distribution across the country. That restricts the capacity of schools and municipalities to plan their actions for integration of these children.
- The teachers in general education schools have no readily accessible information and consultations about different groups and conditions of children with special educational needs. Paradoxically, the specialists in general educational institutions who spend most time working with such children, are least prepared for that.
- There are 28 Resource Centers employing 635 specialists. By July 2007 one resource teacher was responsible for seven integrated students. That is not sufficient for providing good quality support to the currently integrated students with special educational needs. Resource support for integration of children with SEN living in remote and small settlements is virtually impossible.
- The standard requirements for resource teacher openings in general education schools are ineffective, especially for children with intellectual difficulties. The requirement is to have five integrated children with SEN or a group of at least five students with SEN from different schools. Resource support is 2 hours of one-to-one work a week for each integrated student.

Source: Paideia NGO

dren with special educational needs. Differentiation in the quality of education can be healthy for the competition between some select schools in Sofia. The gap between elite educational establishments and small town schools, however, is too big to create

beneficial competition. If the eight Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, development should benefit the entire Bulgarian society and not only a limited elite.

Bulgaria's eight Millennium Development Goals are largely intertwined with one another. In the strongly competitive environment of the European Union, high incomes are unthinkable without competitive, good quality education. Although the indicators under the educational targets are comparable to the EU levels, the report notes that the quality of education is declining and urgent reforms are needed to support the adjustment of the educational system in an economy that must be innovative and competitive within the EU single market.



goal 3



Promote Gender Equality
and Empower Women

1. DESCRIPTION

Goal 3 aims at eliminating gender inequality and promoting gender equality at all levels. For Bulgaria that goal was specified in two targets:

- Eliminate income disparities between men and women;
- Increase women's participation in decision-making and governance.

Since 2003 the topic of equality has been constantly in the public debate, but Bulgaria still does not have an Equal Opportunities Act, there are substantial income disparities between men and women, and the number of women participants in political life is in fact smaller than in 2003. Seven years after the Millennium Declaration was launched and signed, the two targets under Goal 3 are still valid for Bulgaria.

Equal participation of men and women in the economic and political life of the country is instrumental for achieving progress against all Millennium Development Goal indicators. At first glance the achievement of Goal 3 targets in Bulgaria did not seem difficult even at the signing of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, because in the public mind there was the inherited belief that the situation of men and women was not dramatically different, at least in terms of labor market participation.

Formal gender equality before the law, however, continues to go hand in hand with substantial imbalances. There are discrimination practices in the labor market with regard to some groups of women

(for example, young women with short professional experience, pregnant women and women with small children, women over 45 years). The average labor pay for women falls behind the average pay for men.

There is horizontal gender segregation in the economy, where certain economic sectors tend to get feminized and the average pay in them is far lower.⁴⁸

There is also vertical gender segregation, where a smaller percentage of women get leadership and management positions compared with men. Far fewer women are employers or self-employed. Women have smaller demands when seeking and starting a job. Finally, a smaller proportion of women get paid when they work in a family business.⁴⁹

The review of indicators in 2002 revealed significant disparities in the participation of men and women in the labor market and the pay they were earning (according to the first report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, in 2002 women were getting only 72% of men's income). One reason for that was that lower paid professions were getting increasingly feminized; another reason was that women were unable to fully realize their professional potential even when they had the same professions as men, because they had to take care of their children and families.

The high proportion of women in Parliament in 2002 brought Bulgaria ahead in the list of countries that are self-confident they are making significant progress towards parity in political participation. That success, however, was not confirmed in the following years and halfway through the target period for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, instead of progress towards achieving Goal 3 Bulgaria will report a drawback.

Table 3.1: Indicators for Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women

	2000/2001	2007	2015
Target 1: Eliminate the disproportion between the incomes of men and women			
1. Pay of women as a percentage of the pay of men	72% (2000)	82% ⁵⁰ (2005)	80%
Target 2: Ensure the participation of women in governance			
2. Proportion of women in the National Assembly and in Municipal Councils	26% (2001)	22% (2007)	40%

Source: National Statistical Institute; The report team.

⁴⁸ For example, according to NSI data, in 2006 the average annual salary in education was BGN 4,535 versus BGN 7,537 in the production industries and distribution of electricity, gas and water.

⁴⁹ National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria (2006-2020), <http://www.ncedi.government.bg>.

⁵⁰ 65% according to the Global Gender Gap Report in 2007.

2. STATUS AND TRENDS

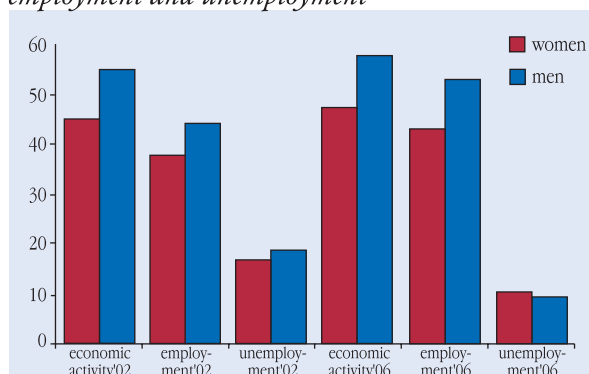
2.1. Women's participation in the labor market and incomes

The participation of women in the labor market is slowly increasing, but is still far from the goals of the Lisbon strategy, which aimed at achieving women's employment in the EU over 57% by 2005 and close to 60% by 2010.

In 2002 economically active women in Bulgaria accounted for 43.9% of women over 15, and in 2007⁵¹ their share was 47.5%. The numbers of employed women also increased from 37% in 2002 to 44.2% in 2007. There is a corresponding drop of women's unemployment from 15.8% in 2002 to 6.9% in June 2007. At mid-2007 employed women aged 15–64 made up 57.7%. That provides grounds for different interpretations and optimism that Bulgaria will reach the Lisbon targets. In reality, however, considering the longer life expectancy of women, a substantial proportion of economically active women over 64 remain out of employment.

Women's job numbers grow slower than men's and women's unemployment declines slower. If at the beginning of the period there were more unemployed men than women (17.6%), in 2006 the trend was reversed and the share of unemployed men was smaller compared to women (8.6% unemployed men against 9.3% unemployed women). The same trend persisted

Graph 3.1. Economic activity,
employment and unemployment



Source: National Statistical Institute; own calculations

in 2007. The difference is even greater in quantitative terms, since the economic activity of men is higher than that of women.

Feminization of poverty is a global issue and has its dimensions in Bulgaria, too. Women from minorities, single women and mothers, unemployed and old women, women from agricultural and rural regions all face the risk of poverty.⁵²

There is a definite positive trend for diminishing disproportions in the pay of labor. Despite quite significant disparities in the wages of men and women in different regions of the country, the overall wage difference for Bulgaria over the period 2001–2005 dropped 4 points down from 21.17% to 17.16%. By the end of 2005 working women earned on average 82.84% of the income of working men.

2.2. Political participation of women

„The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.“ The UN General Assembly is urging governments „...to commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in all governmental and public administration positions and to take measures that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions... to recognize that shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men promote women's increased participation in public life, and take appropriate measures to achieve this, including measures to reconcile family and professional life“.⁵³

The dynamics of women's representation in Bulgaria's legislature (the National Assembly) from 2000 to 2007 do not outline a consistently positive trend. After the general elections in 2001 the number of women in Parliament more than doubled and from 10% in the

⁵¹ <http://www.nsi.bg/Labour/RabSila2q07.htm>. The data are for the second quarter of 2007.

⁵² National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria (2006–2020).

⁵³ Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, 1995.

38th National Assembly women held 26% of the seats in the 39th National Assembly. The public hoped that politics and policies will become more humane and will face up the real social issues. These hopes did not materialize, at least in terms of the legislature's sensitivity about gender equality. In 2002 that same Parliament that for the first time had outstanding women's participation, turned down the Equal Opportunities Bill. In 2005 women lost some of the positions they had gained and with 22% of women in Parliament, in August 2007 Bulgaria ranked 42nd worldwide, losing its 19th place from March 2003 when the country published its first implementation report about the Millennium Development Goals.⁵⁴ In October 2007 out of 240 members of Parliament in the 40th National Assembly, only 53 were women.

The representation of women in the different bodies of the National Assembly is more alarming. Only 4% of standing parliamentary committees are chaired by women and only 1.3% of caucus leaders are women. More women are represented in deputy functions: 16.1% caucus deputy leaders and 23.6% deputy chairs of standing parliamentary committees.⁵⁵

Bulgaria is one of the few European countries where the Speaker of Parliament has never been a woman.

By October 2007, out of 18 government ministers only 4 were women, and 1 of them was also a vice prime-minister. Ministries led by women include the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of European Integration and the Ministry of Disasters and Emergency Situations (where the incumbent minister combines the functions of vice prime-minister).

Women's participation in local self-governance is also limited. Only 5 of 28 district governors are women – in Russe, Silistra, Stara Zagora, Sliven and Haskovo. The share of women at the head of municipalities is almost negligible: out of 264 municipal mayors, only 20 are women.⁵⁶ Four districts (Burgas, Dobrich,

Montana and Haskovo) have 2 women mayors each. Ten regions, including big districts like Blagoevgrad, Vratsa, Veliko Turnovo, Razgrad, Russe, etc., have no municipalities led by women mayors. All other 14 districts have one single woman mayor each.

3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES – REGIONAL DISPARITIES AND DISPARITIES BY ECONOMIC SECTOR

The pay for male and female labor in the different regions of the country is quite different. Between 2001 and 2005 there was a general trend towards convergence with two exceptions in Gabrovo and Targovishte, where remuneration differences between men and women increased with 1 percentage point. Women in Gabrovo received 76% of men's pay in 2001 and 75.37% in 2005. The proportion in Targovishte was respectively 89.42% in 2001 and 88.66% in 2005.

At the end of 2005 some regions reported quite „European“ standings in terms of pay difference between men and women. Women in Razgrad received 91.66% of the pay of men, with similar proportions in Dobrich (91.51%), Yambol (91.22%), Sliven (90.17%) and Montana (90.01%). In other regions, like Vratsa and Sofia district, that indicator exceeded 25%. The greatest difference was found in Stara Zagora district, where in 2005 women received only 69.6% of the wage of men. There were substantial differences between regions in real terms. If in 2005 the average annual wage of women in the capital Sofia was BGN 4,821, women in Smolyan were earning BGN 2,798.⁵⁷

4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

4.1. *Participation of women in the labor market and pay differences*

Global trends indicate that across the world women's labor is more likely than men's to be unpaid.

⁵⁴ Rankings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as of 31 August 2007, „Women in National Parliaments“.

⁵⁵ Participation of women in politics, Liberal Politological Institute, 2007.

⁵⁶ The numbers reflect the situation before the last local elections in October 2007.

⁵⁷ NSI data, www.nsi.bg.

Table 3.2: Share of women in total employment by job status

Employment type	Women (%)	Men (%)
Unpaid family workers	60	40
Hired workers	40	60
Employers	22	78
Total employment	41	59

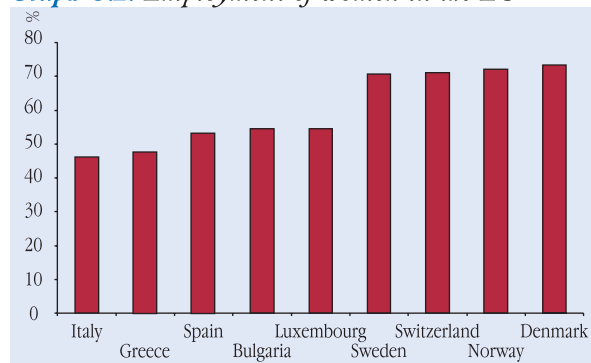
Source: UN Millennium Development Goals Report, New York 2007.

Wage employment in most of Africa and in many parts of Asia and Latin America is concentrated in urban areas. Outside towns and cities, most employment is in agriculture, and mainly for family subsistence. Women in developing countries are more likely than men to work in agriculture and as contributing but unpaid family workers. Worldwide, more than 60% of unpaid family workers are women – meaning that women continue to lack access to job security and social protection.

According to EU workforce monitoring everyone having at least 1 hour of gainful employment per week is regarded to be employed. According to that definition and EU labor force surveys, the countries with the highest shares of employed women in 2006 were Denmark (73.4%), Norway (72.2%), Switzerland (71.1%) and Sweden (70.7%). At the bottom of the table were Spain (53.2%), Greece (47.4%) and Italy (46.3%).

Based on the survey findings, the participation of Bulgarian women in wage employment in 2006⁵⁸ was equal to that in Luxembourg, up from 47.5% in 2002 to 54.6% in 2006, but it was a long way from the top levels. Women's labor participation in Bulgaria was by

Graph 3.2. Employment of women in the EU



Source: EU Labor force survey 2006

Box 3.1:

GENDER DIFFERENCES BY ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The average wages in different regions do not reflect the existing pay differences by economic sector, where the feminized professions clearly stand out and demonstrate significant disparities. In the educational sector 79% of employees are women, whose wages are 80% of the pay of men. The average annual wage in the sector is BGN 4,340. Most men in the educational system occupy higher and better paid positions. Women employed in healthcare account for 79.5%. The average annual salary is BGN 5,111 and the wages of employed women are only 68% of the pay of men, again as a result of vertical segregation. The situation is quite different in the more advanced technology sector of power and heat supply, where the average wage is BGN 6,510. Women employed in the sector are only 28% and receive 76.4% of men's wages. In all economic sectors the average salary of women is lower than that of men. Industries where the average salaries are significantly lower for both genders employ twice more women than men. The only exceptions are the trade sector, which offers some of the lowest paid jobs at an average salary of BGN 3,032 and employs almost as many women as men (53% women and 47% men), and the construction industry (with an average wage of BGN 3,210), where more than 87% of workers are men.

Source: The report team (based on NSI data for 2005)

three percentage points smaller than average employment in EU-27 and by four percentage points smaller than average employment in the „old“ EU-15.

Women's employment in Bulgaria, however, is higher compared to Slovakia, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Romania. Even more importantly, it has increased by more than 8 percentage points after 2000, making a 6 point progress after 2002 alone.

According to 2005 data, the gender pay gap was smallest in Belgium at 7% (women receive 93% of men's pay) followed by Slovenia (8%) and Greece, Italy, Ireland and Portugal (9%). Bulgaria was on a par with Sweden (16%), which has long-standing traditions in gender equality. More important for Bulgaria was the 6 point progress the country had achieved since 2001. The average indicator for EU-15 and EU-27 was 15%. Estonia, Cyprus and Slovakia stood farthest from the EU average, respectively at 25% and 24%. There are far greater pay gaps outside the EU. In Japan, for instance, women

⁵⁸ Eurostat data. The latest aggregate data are for 2006: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

make only 60% of men's income, and in countries like Paraguay and Botswana the proportion drops to 53%.

4.2. Political participation of women

At the beginning of 2007 women represented 17% of members of parliament around the world, up from 13% in 1990.⁵⁹ Despite progress made, women represent a critical mass (30% and more) of parliamentarians only in 19 countries and Bulgaria is not one of them. The global leader is Rwanda with 49% women in parliament followed by Sweden and Costa Rica, where women's representation is 47% and 39%, respectively.

At the other end of the spectrum are countries like Kuwait, where women were allowed to run in parliamentary elections for the first time in 2006 and obtained 2 seats. Worldwide, by March 2007 there were 35 women presiding officers in parliament – including, for the first time, in Gambia, Israel, Swaziland, Turkmenistan and the United States.

There were 13 women presidents or prime-ministers in the world in 2006, compared to 9 in 2000 and 12 in 1995.⁶⁰

Participation of women in politics is determined by many factors, including political will, the strength of national women's movements and continued emphasis by the international community on gender equality and empowering women. However, the most decisive factor remains gender quota systems. Where there are quotas for participation of women in governance, the number of women in decision-making positions has almost doubled compared to countries without any quota arrangements.

In Bulgaria, however, both men and women eagerly denounce the gender quota principle in politics as a vestige from the totalitarian past. The principle of parity in the composition of party ballots adopted by

some EU countries seems more acceptable. Bulgaria should steer towards that principle to demonstrate its real commitment to the cause of gender equality.

5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

Implementation of gender equality policies implies a systematic review of the different conditions, situations and needs of men and women in all policies and activities. An important area of future action is the development of mechanisms and actions to promote the policy of reconciling family and professional obligations for parents who are raising small children or are taking care of a dependent family member.

A significant step in that direction came with the new provisions in the Labor Code regulating maternity.

A new Labor Code amendment took effect on 1 January 2007, regulating leave entitlement due to pregnancy and giving birth. The length of leave was extended from 135 to 315 days for each child with a mandatory period of 45 days of leave before giving birth. During that time mothers receive 90% of the salary they would be getting, if they were still at work. That is a good incentive for stronger motivation of mothers and fathers to use that leave.

Another successful practice was made available under programs providing social and personal assistants to people with disabilities. Such programs engage mostly unemployed women who are taking care of dependent family members.

Promoting fatherhood is essential for achieving equality. That premise was reflected in the 2007 Labor Code amendments and in the Social Security Code. Childcare leave until the child is 2 years old can be used by the mother, the father or by their parents with the mother's consent. The leave is recorded as time in active employment.⁶¹

⁵⁹ UN Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007. The numbers are based on women's participation in single and lower houses of parliament.

⁶⁰ IPU <http://ipu.org/wmn-e/speakers.htm>

⁶¹ The entitlement is formulated as unpaid leave for raising a child under 2 (Amended title, The State Gazette, # 25/2001, # 52/2004, effective 1 August 2004).

Each of the parents is entitled to additional 6 months of unpaid leave until the child is 8 years old. That is a serious measure encouraging fathers to take equal responsibilities in raising small children.⁶² Time on additional leave also counts as active employment.

Further measures and incentives for better reconciliation of family and professional life contribute to the higher economic activity of the population. A new national program called „**Support for Mothers**“ was launched in January 2007. The program creates conditions for mothers to return to work by engaging unemployed people as childcare providers, and enables a smooth transition between giving birth and re-entering the labor market. According to information from the

Employment Agency, 114 people worked under the program at end-June 2007.

The **Child Family Centers project** is another good practice providing employment for unemployed women who look after children of working parents in a semi-family environment. The project involves unemployed nurses, unemployed teachers and women experienced in providing social services. The government provides funds for remuneration and social security contributions of the nannies from the active policy budget of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The project partners are the local municipalities. They assist with the equipment of the family centers and provide one meal a day for the children. Nine family centers were up and running at end-June 2007.

Box 3.2

IN FOCUS: BULGARIA STILL HAS NO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT

Immediately after signing the Millennium Declaration, Bulgaria started developing an Equal Opportunities Bill. The first drafts were ready at the end of 2001, but they were rejected twice, in 2002 and 2003, regardless of the high representation of women in the National Assembly. The bill provided for guarantees against discrimination in employment, political participation, education, etc. The office of an ombudsman on gender equality was also envisaged. In 2006 the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy initiated a new bill. It was approved by the Council of Ministers but has not been considered on second reading by the National Assembly.

The 2006 bill provides for the adoption of a National Strategy on Equal Opportunities which should define the key principles of equal opportunity policies; the bodies responsible for establishing equal opportunities; and the monitoring systems to track the implementation of the strategy. The proposed draft followed the experience of a number of EU member states that chose enacting special laws as a way to address gender discrimination. The bill also met the recommendation set out in Chapter 13, Social Policy and Employment, of the European Commission Monitoring Report of 25 October 2005, stating that Bulgaria must undertake the necessary legal amendments to ensure the equal treatment of men and women. For all these reasons, the adoption of the bill by the Bulgarian National Assembly is of paramount importance.

Not all European countries have special laws regulating gender equality at all levels. In the 15 old EU member states gender equality was promoted through various directives that were transplanted in national law at various times and through various legal instruments. Equal opportunity acts are in place in Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia and gender equality in the workplace is explicitly stipulated in the Czech Republic, Latvia and Cyprus. The EU is undergoing a process of review and restructuring of directives dealing with gender equality and legal motions are being made to formulate a new cohesion policy.

In a report on the development of EU law on gender equality from June 2006 until May 2007, the European Parliament called on the Commission to regard gender equality not simply as a priority for the European Union, but first and foremost as an essential requirement for respecting human rights. The Parliament also urged for stronger measures aimed at the legal protection of women and children.

For Bulgaria to be able to measure its achievements against Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, it needs to introduce immediately a system of comparable indicators that can sensitively capture specific gender differences as envisaged under the new National Strategy for Demographic Development. They would enable realistic assessment of equality and planning of more specific legal and other interventions that will produce tangible results.

Between 2003 and 2007, Bulgaria has made progress in the pay of women's labor but has fallen back in terms of women's political participation. Formal equality is accompanied by continuing practices of horizon-

tal and vertical discrimination in the professional growth of women. The adoption of the Equal Opportunities Bill would signal there is political will for establishing real equality between men and women.

⁶² Unpaid leave for raising a child under 8 (New, The State Gazette, # 52/2004).

For Bulgaria to be able to measure its achievements against Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, it needs to introduce immediately a system of comparable indicators that can sensitively capture specific gender differences as envisaged under the new National Strategy for Demographic Development. They would enable realistic assessment of equality and planning of more specific legal and other interventions that will produce tangible results.



goal 4



Reduce Child Mortality

1. DESCRIPTION

Child mortality and its sub-types are one of the most informative development benchmarks in all societies. The sensitivity of this indicator goes far beyond the social systems of healthcare and medical care. The children of a nation live and die not only and not primarily because of the medical service they receive. Child mortality is largely a product of the economic, social, cultural and civilizational setting as well as living standards. Child mortality trends and dynamics are a primary indicator of a society's advancement or failure to move forward.

2. STATUS AND TRENDS

Child mortality in Bulgaria has shown a downward trend over the past couple of years. Albeit unevenly, the indicators are closing on the set target under the Millennium Development Goals (Table 4.1).

A favorable trend is evident for the 0–5 age group, where for the past 5 years child mortality has decreased from 16.7/1,000 live births (2001) to 11.0/1,000 in 2006. Similarly, infant mortality has declined from 14.4/1,000 live births (2001) to 9.2/1,000 live births in 2007. Both indicators report a drop of 5 to 6% a year. The pace of progress has overtaken almost twice the required decrease rates for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which are respectively 3.1% (for under-five mortality) and 3.7% (for infant mortality).

The pace of reducing child mortality in Bulgaria is especially impressive compared to Latin America. Against a target rate of around 2.7%, in 1990–2004 Peru has reached 4.3%, Chile – 3.8%, Salvador – 3.5%. All other Latin American countries maintain child mortality reduction rates under 3.5%.⁶⁴

The trend of decreasing child mortality in Bulgaria is the result of multiple factors. The proportion of GDP allocations for healthcare and medical care has been increasing every year. However, the healthcare system is still under-funded. In 2005 healthcare appropriations in Bulgaria accounted for 4.3% of GDP against 6.65% in Europe (2003) and 8.81% in EU countries (2003). The difference is even more dramatic in absolute terms. In the same years per capita GDP was USD 3,443 in Bulgaria, USD 20,776 in Europe and USD 24,743 in EU countries.⁶⁵

The connection between different sub-types of child mortality and the available healthcare resources was analyzed specifically for the purposes of this report. Healthcare resources were examined in quantitative terms: number of staff, new hospital beds and special medical equipment at the district level in all 28 districts. Overall, the correlation analyses⁶⁶ show a weak link between child mortality rates and the quantitative parameters of the healthcare system. The general indicators of social and economic development in the districts, such as the average wage and unemployment, have a greater impact on child mortality.

Table 4.1: Key child mortality indicators for Bulgaria

Indicator	2001	2004	2007	2015
Child mortality for the 0-5 age group per 1,000 live births	16.7	14.4	11.0	9.5
Infant mortality (children deceased before one-year of age) per 1,000 live births	14.4	11.6	9.2	7.0
Perinatal mortality (still-born + dead before the 6th day) per 1,000 live births	12.3	12.0	11.0	8.0
Proportion of underweight live births (under 2,500 g. at birth) ⁶³	8.6	8.6	8.8	6.0

Source: National Health Information Center, National Statistical Institute

⁶³ Proportion of newborns under 2,500 g. per 100 live births less live births where no weight information was specified, according to NSI data.

⁶⁴ Formula for calculating the annual rate of progress of infant mortality rate, UNDP, 2003, Human Development Report.

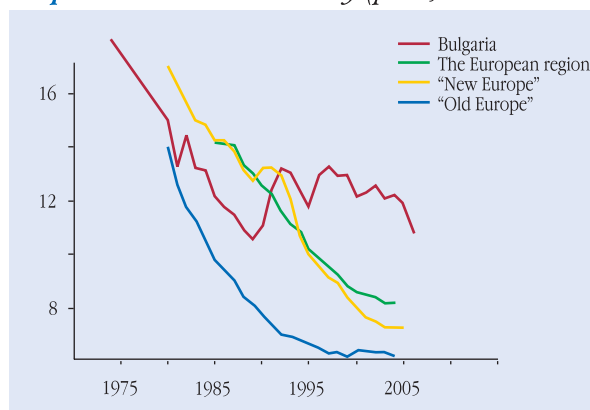
⁶⁵ WHO/Europe, HFA Database, June 2006; National Health Information Center, 2006.

⁶⁶ Correlations were made for all 28 districts (data for 2006) between: (i) indicators (per 1,000) for child mortality, number of still births, perinatal mortality, early neonatal mortality, late neonatal mortality, and neonatal mortality; (ii) indicators for the available healthcare resources (per 1,000), including numbers of pediatricians, obstetricians, maternity nurses, maternity beds, neonatal beds, nursing beds, pathological pregnancy beds, respirators, and incubators; (iii) overall social and economic development indicators, including the average wage in 2003 and unemployment levels as of November 2007. A significant correlation between the nine survey indicators for healthcare resources and the six types of child mortality was established only for two indicators: there is a negative correlation between the number of obstetricians and respirators and neonatal mortality. Another correlation with child mortality was established for unemployment (negative) and the average wage (positive, close to significant values). Unemployment also suggests higher early neonatal, neonatal and perinatal mortality, correlating negatively with these sub-types (Pearson correlations, significance <0.05).

Data show that positive changes result more from Bulgaria's overall social and economic development than from specific progress in the healthcare system. A particularly strong evidence for that is the correlation between high child mortality and high unemployment by regions. The favorable trend in child mortality dynamics in Bulgaria over the past years is a factor mostly of the improving welfare of most Bulgarian families and the balanced political situation in the country.

The key indicators in Table 4.1 highlight the lagging progress in perinatal mortality rates and premature births. Both indicators decrease at a slower pace. Perinatal mortality rates (still-born + dead before the 6th day per 1,000 live births) have fallen with less than 2 points from 12.3/1,000 in 2001 to 10.7/1,000 in 2006, rebounding up to 11.0/1,000 live births in 2007.

Graph 4.1. *Perinatal mortality (per 1,000 live births)*



Source: National Statistical Institute; own calculations

If the trend is sustained, the set target of 8 perinatal deaths per 1,000 live births can realistically be achieved by 2015. Perinatal mortality dynamics, however, are falling behind against improvements in the other sub-types of child mortality. Explanations can hardly be found in the general social and economic environment. A much closer assumption is that obstetric care cannot detect in time the pathological states causing intra-uterine death of the fetus. There are different reasons for child mortality before the 6th day after birth, but the two most significant causes include conditions originating in the perinatal period (the so-called „ailing fetus“) and congenital abnormalities. Diminishing the adverse conse-

quences of these two categories of diseases is closely contingent on the quality of obstetric care.

An upsetting indicator is the dynamics of underweight births⁶⁷ (proportion of underweight live births under 2,500 g.). It remained quite high over the report period and was 8.8% in 2007, against a 6% target by 2015. Underweight births closely correlate with the quality of obstetric care and are a significant contributor to perinatal mortality. Not surprisingly, perinatal mortality rates and underweight births demonstrate parallel trends. Underweight births are far more frequent among socially disadvantaged groups and adolescent mothers (under 20 and especially under 15 years). Births by teenage mothers are a definite issue for Bulgaria. The problem was particularly acute in 1985–1995, but has started to abate recently. A noteworthy development is the similar, almost identical curve of developments in Bulgaria and Romania, which both have numerous and insufficiently integrated Roma minorities.

The emphasis on high perinatal mortality in the context of still high child mortality in Bulgaria cannot ignore local deficiencies in recording perinatal mortality. Bulgarian demographic practice does not follow the criteria for „giving birth“ and „abortion“ recommended by the World Health Organization. Many countries restrain from the full adoption of these criteria, but in Bulgaria they have been completely altered, which significantly distorts demographic data. Recording births and abortions under a uniform methodology with other EU countries will lead to even greater and more negative aberrations of perinatal mortality indicators in Bulgaria.

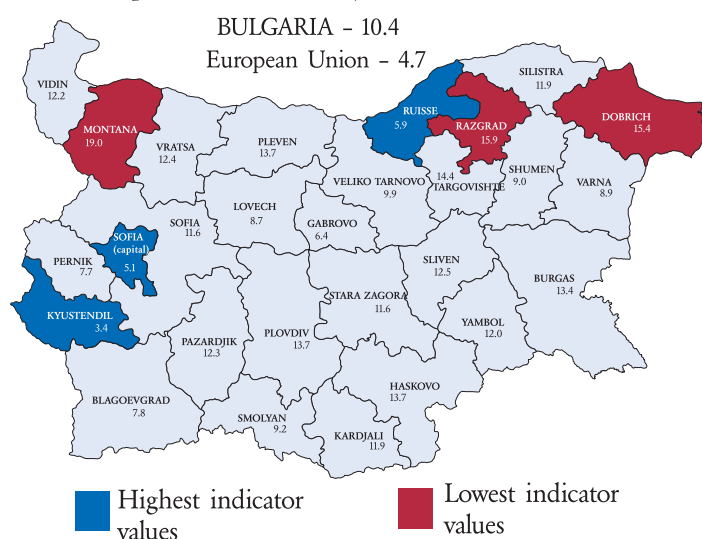
Perinatal mortality rates and underweight births call for greater efforts to improve the *quality* of obstetric care in Bulgaria.

3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES

There are significant domestic disparities in child mortality indicators (Graph 4.2). Regional disparities are reported for all sub-types of child mortality, with

⁶⁷ The data for this indicator was recalculated by the National Statistical Institute. The previous MDG report for Bulgaria used data provided by the National Health Information Center.

Graph 4.2. Child mortality (infant (under-one) deaths per 1,000 live births)



Source: National Health Information Center

different regions showing best and worst indicators for different sub-types.

As already mentioned, statistical correlations generally found a weak dependency between child mortality and healthcare management levels in Bulgaria's 28 districts. One exception is the high early neonatal mortality in Kurdzhali, Razgrad and Silistra – all districts with compact Turkish minority populations.

District-based correlations between child mortality rates⁶⁸ and the proportion of ethnic populations corroborate the significance of social factors. Districts with higher concentrations of Roma minority members report higher child mortality indicators for total child mortality (significance <0.01), stillbirths (significance <0.02) and perinatal mortality (<0.02). The three districts of Montana, Sliven and Dobrich have the highest concentrations of Roma inhabitants and report peak child mortality rates: 19.0 per 1,000 live births in Montana (12.5% Roma minority); 12.5/1,000 in Sliven (12.3% Roma minority); and 15.4/1,000 in Dobrich (8.67% Roma minority). No correlation was established between Roma ethnicity and neonatal child mortality.

Child mortality correlations were less pronounced for the Turkish ethnic minority. A correlation was established only immediately after birth in early neonatal (<0.01) and neonatal mortality (0.01). Kurdzhali district, for instance, which has the largest Turkish minority (61.7%), reports a child mortality rate of 11.9 per 1,000 live births. By contrast, the districts of Pernik and Kyustendil have the smallest Turkish minorities (under 1%) and show low child mortality rates (7.7/1,000 and 3.4/1,000, respectively).

4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

Child mortality data for UN member states support the following conclusions:

- Infant (under-one) mortality per 1,000 live births is low in regions and countries with high living standards and stable governance. Examples: Europe – 9; developed countries total – 8; North America – 7; Hong Kong – 3.2; Iceland – 2.6.⁶⁹
- Infant (under-one) mortality per 1,000 live births is high in regions and countries with low living standards and unstable governance. Examples: Latin America – 35; Asia – 56; developing countries total – 63; Africa – 88; Sierra Leone – 136; East Timor – 143; West Sahara – 146; Afghanistan – 150.⁷⁰

The steady trend of declining child mortality in Bulgaria is particularly evident in a comparison between child mortality curves in Bulgaria, the European region, „new“ and „old“ Europe. After a period of significant increase (1995–2004), the indicator values for Bulgaria in 2006–2007 virtually leveled up with the values for the European region and „new“ Europe, but are 50% higher compared to „old“ Europe.

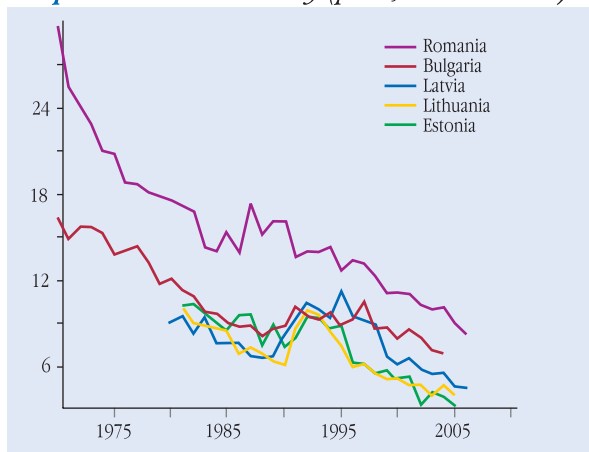
Almost all child mortality indicators reveal negative international contrasts for Bulgaria. They are worse compared to the European region, „new“ and „old“ Europe. The worst child mortality component for Bulgaria is perinatal mortality.

⁶⁸ Total child mortality rate – from day 0 to 1 year per 1,000 live births; neonatal mortality – from day 0 to day 28 per 1,000 live births; early neonatal mortality – from day 0 to day 6 inclusive per 1,000 live births; late neonatal mortality – from day 7 to day 28 inclusive per 1,000 live births who survived day 28; perinatal mortality – the sum of stillbirths and early neonatal mortality (according to data for 2006).

⁶⁹ 2001 World Population Data Sheet, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Graph 4.3. Child mortality (per 1,000 live births)



Source: WHO/Euro, National Health Information Center

If Bulgaria is to substitute or at least converge its local birth and abortion criteria with the ones adopted by the World Health Organization, its national perinatal mortality indicators will look even worse, but they will reflect the real picture.

Other perinatal mortality indicators, which put Bulgaria behind other countries in the European region, include:

- Stillbirths;
- Premature births;
- Teenage births.

In absolute terms, child mortality dynamics and indicators place Bulgaria extremely close to the Baltic states: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Romania reports the same dynamics and slightly higher absolute values (Graph 4.3). The concurrent curves of five countries sharing a quite similar economic base and almost identical recent history, once again confirm that child mortality mirrors the overall development of society.

5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

Current data give grounds to expect that by 2015 Bulgaria will achieve at least two Millennium Development Goals for child healthcare – reduction of under-five mortality to 9.5 per 1,000

live births and reduction of infant mortality to 7 per 1,000 live births.

If the current reduction pace is sustained, Bulgaria can do even better by 2015:

- Achieving under-five mortality of 5.4 per 1,000 live births, and
- Achieving infant (under-one) mortality of 4 per 1,000 live births.

These are realistic forecasts, if Bulgaria keeps the current favorable trends for improving living standards and maintaining social peace, especially if it can also alleviate regional and ethnic disparities.

The lagging dynamics of perinatal mortality and underweight births is a sign that the current policies of overcoming negative trends under these indicators are insufficient. Further robust measures are required for improving the *quality* of obstetric care, while keeping the indisputable achievements in the public health sector.

In 2001 the Bulgarian Government adopted a National Program for Antenatal Diagnosis of Congenital Diseases – one of the leading causes for stillbirths and perinatal mortality. The program's span of action expired at the end of 2006 and the creation of a new program is more than imperative. The new program should not only regulate funding streams for buying diagnostic kits (which was the case until now), but should also cover the comprehensive issues of congenital anomalies before and after birth, their early identification, treatment and, most importantly, prevention. To include underweight births, the program should go beyond the narrow framework of antenatal diagnosis and should expand into a National Program on Fetal Medicine.

Again in 2001, the health administration in Bulgaria started developing *quality standards for medical care*. The initiative has proved to be extremely useful in many special medical fields like surgery, laboratory diagnostics, clinical pathology, and anesthesiology,

**IN FOCUS:
A QUALITY STANDARD FOR OBSTETRIC AND
GYNECOLOGICAL CARE**

Today an underweight newborn (less than 1,000 g.) in Bulgaria is not considered a human being by the authorities. The child is not recorded in the civil registers under newborns, nor under abortions. If it dies before the 6th day after birth, the child is registered as an abortion. It is as if it never existed. On paper, the woman who delivered it has never given birth. If this child is alive on the 7th day after birth, it is registered as a newborn, that is, a human. It has the right to have a name, a surname and a family name, as well as a personal ID number. One way out of this absurd labyrinth is to adopt a quality standard of obstetric and gynecological care in Bulgaria.

Source: The report team

among others. To date obstetrics and gynecology are the single main surgical specialty without a specific quality standard. There are all reasons to believe that the adoption of a standard will have a beneficial impact on the evolution of perinatal mortality and underweight birth indicators in Bulgaria.

Progress against child mortality is yet another proof that the Millennium Development Goals should be

analyzed and strived for in unison. Data indicates that lower child mortality is contingent on higher incomes and lower unemployment, while high child mortality at the district level correlates with concentrations of Roma minorities. Continuing disparities between districts inhibit Bulgaria's convergence to European mortality indicators in general and child mortality indicators in particular.

Child mortality dynamics reveal social and ethnic disparities congruent with the available data under other Millennium Development Goals. Bulgaria's social and economic development prospects are marked by two clashing trends. One is the concentration of human, material, financial and intellectual resources in the big cities (chiefly in the capital Sofia). The other trend is for homogenous and balanced regional development, and most EU funds are intended for that purpose. If the first trend prevails, an increasingly wider gap can be expected for all disparities between regions, including total mortality and child mortality. If the driving forces of society choose to support the second trend, disparities between regions are likely to fade and domestic contrasts will become more and more insignificant.



goal 5



Improve Maternal
Health

1. DESCRIPTION

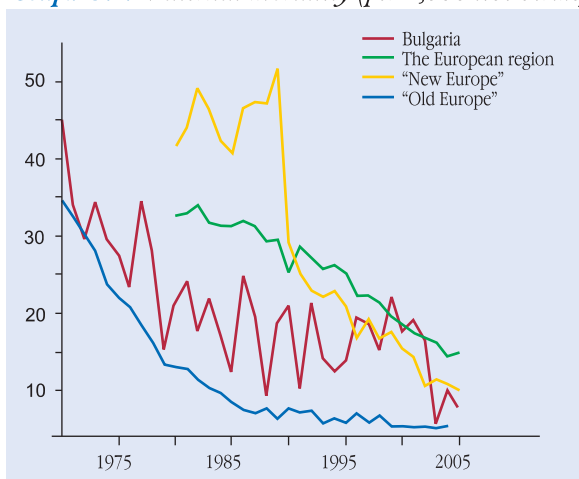
Goal 5 continues to be relevant in Bulgaria's reality in 2008. Women's health will never cease to be a touchstone of healthcare efficiency in any country. When Bulgaria adapted the Millennium Development Goals in 2003, the following targets were formulated for *improving maternal health* until 2015:

1. Considerable reduction in maternal mortality with one single indicator – maternal health (women deceased during pregnancy per 100,000 live births)
2. Considerable improvement of healthcare services for pregnant women with the following indicators:
 - Abortions (per 1,000 live births);
 - Proportion (%) of pregnant women under medical monitoring (until the third month of pregnancy)
 - Proportion (%) of births attended by skilled healthcare personnel.

Indicator dynamics over the past years call for revising the target for *Considerable reduction in maternal mortality* with another target: *Considerable reduction in cervical cancer morbidity and mortality*. What are the reasons for modification? Maternal mortality in Bulgaria shows a lasting trend downward in line with maternal mortality developments in the EU (Graph 5.1.). The curve reveals significant fluctuations due to the low absolute values both of the indicator and the sample (around 70,000 live births a year). In that context, a maternal mortality rate of 7.3 reported in 2005 corresponds to five deaths across the country.

The maternal mortality indicator in Bulgaria (women deceased during pregnancy per 100,000 live births) is far from the extreme values recorded in countries like Iceland (zero maternal mortality) or Angola, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone (1,700–2,000 women deceased during pregnancy per 100,000 live births). With maternal mortality rates of 10 in 2004 and 7.3 in 2005, Bulgaria stands next to Germany (9), Poland (10) and the United States (14).⁷¹ For a short period (1999–2002) maternal mortality in Bulgaria exceeded that in the European region and „new“ Europe, but then it returned to its predictable limits close to the values in „old“ Europe (Graph 5.1.).

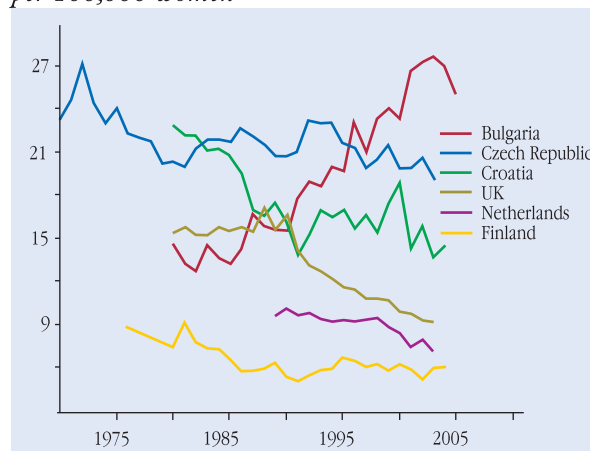
Graph 5.1. Maternal mortality (per 1,000 live births)



Source: WHO/Euro, National Health Information Center

The Millennium Development Goals will increase their relevance and significance for Bulgaria, if the target for *Considerable reduction in maternal mortality* is revised with *Considerable reduction in cervical cancer morbidity and mortality*. The most serious argument for that change is the steep growth of cervical cancer morbidity in Bulgaria, unlike most European countries. Graph 5.2. shows that cancer morbidity has been steadily increasing over the past 30 years from 16/100,000 in 1990 to 27.7/100,000 in 2002, reaching 29.4/100,000 women in 2006. This report sets a target to reduce cervical cancer morbidity in Bulgaria to 15/100,000 by 2015.

Graph 5.2. New cases of cervical cancer per 100,000 women



Source: WHO/Euro, National Health Information Center

⁷¹ Maternal Mortality in Year 2000, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA.

The indicator for *Proportion of births assisted by qualified medical personnel* should also be revised. In reality that is no longer an issue for Bulgaria. Regardless of their place of living, social status and ethnicity, Bulgarian women traditionally give birth in hospital (maternity) institutions (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Women who gave birth in hospital institutions as a proportion (%) of all women professionally assisted in childbirth

1990	2000	2003	2006	(2015)
99.1	98.8	99.0	99.4	99.8

Source: National Health Information Center

When by exception a woman gives birth outside a maternity institution, that happens most often on her way to hospital, for example in an ambulance. Under such circumstances, even though delivery occurred outside the hospital, it was still attended by *qualified medical personnel*. Therefore, evidence in Table 5.1 supports the conclusion that the indicator *Proportion of births assisted by qualified medical personnel* has reached its optimal values and is no longer relevant for further assessment of maternal health policies in Bulgaria.

2. STATUS AND TRENDS

Abortions

Abortions in Bulgaria show a steady trend downward, particularly for girls under 20.

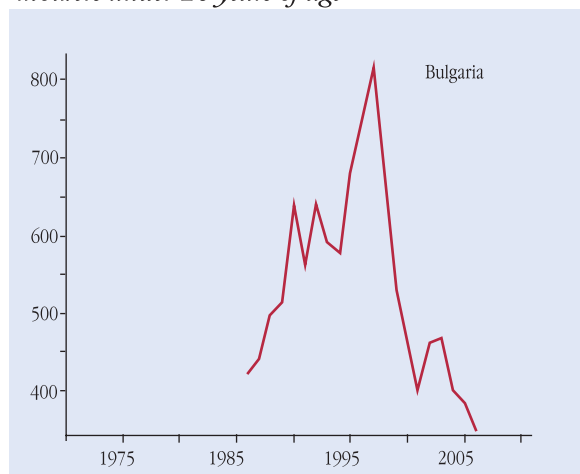
The WHO database shows abortion frequency as the number of abortions per 1,000 live births. In view of the low birth rates in recent years, Bulgarian health statistics prefers to use the number of abortions per 1,000 women in fertile age (15–49 years of age).

Table 5.2: Abortions in Bulgaria

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	(2015)
Abortions/1,000 live births	1,375	1,349	833	750	713	676	588	504	550
Abortions/1,000 women in fertile age	67	47	31	28	25	25	22	20	

Source (for 1990–2006): National Health Information Center, National Statistical Institute

Graph 5.3: Abortions (per 1,000 live births) – mothers under 20 years of age



Source: WHO/Euro, National Health Information Center

Irrespective of which method is used, the drop in abortions in Bulgaria is obvious (Table 5.2). There are no oscillations and the curve is unconditionally declining. Abortion incidence of 504/1,000 in 2006 suggests that Bulgaria will meet the target of 550/1,000 by 2015.

Proportion of pregnant women under medical monitoring (until the third month of pregnancy)

For now Bulgaria appears not to have achieved this goal. The set target is to restore by 2015 the number of pregnant women under medical monitoring to the 1990 level. Table 5.3 shows that the total number of pregnant women under medical monitoring has not increased – in fact it has decreased from 76.1% in 2003 to 64.5% in 2006.

The situation is extremely alarming against stagnant indicators of underweight births, stillbirths and perinatal mortality in Bulgaria. All these indicators closely depend on the timely monitoring of pregnancies. Many pregnant women in Bulgaria

Table 5.3: Pregnant women under medical monitoring until the third month of pregnancy as a proportion (%) of all pregnant women under monitoring

1990	2000	2003	2006	(2015)
89.4	81.8	76.1	64.5	90.0

Source (for 2000–2006): National Health Information Center

escape monitoring due to the healthcare reform model. The changes in 1999–2000 replaced district physicians practicing in clinics, rural and other health offices, with general practitioners providing the full range of *primary outpatient medical care*, part of which is normal pregnancy monitoring. Once the reform was put in practice, it turned out that many women did not trust sufficiently their GPs for pregnancy monitoring. Many women prefer to be monitored by an obstetrician. Some general practitioners feel unprepared to take responsibility for pregnancy monitoring and avoid providing this service. These specific relations between primary medical care providers and their clients were recognized by the health authorities and in 2003 pregnant women were granted the right to direct access to an obstetrician for outpatient medical care (without necessarily going through a GP). The timely monitoring of pregnancies, however, did not improve. The main reason is the lack of opportunities and habits for *active tracking* by outpatient specialists. Unlike general practitioners, who have a register of all people who selected their services („patient list“) and can actively communicate with them, specialists are in a passive position and expect people to come to them.

3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES

Unlike maternal mortality and births in hospital institutions, only abortion frequency shows significant variations by districts. In 2006 Dobrich district reported abortion incidence by 164% higher than the country average. Another example was Targovishte (121%). The lowest values were established in Silistra and Montana, respectively by 78% and 83% lower than the country average. Table 5.4 shows some deviations for the four districts in 2006 compared to the average indicators.

Comparative data on abortions in all 28 districts support the conclusion from the previous chapter about the lack of correlation with the available healthcare resources in terms of specialists and general practitioners. No significant correlations (<0.05, Pearson) were established between the number of abortions (total and voluntary abortions) and factors such as the number of general practitioners, obstetric and pediatric practices (per 1,000 live births). Unlike child mortality, the number of abortions is not affected by average wage levels and unemployment.

4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

As indicated earlier, Bulgaria's favorable standing in international comparisons gives ground to remove maternal mortality from the country's Millennium Development Goals indicators. No comparable international data is available for *Proportion (%) of preg-*

Table 5.4: Deviations from some average indicators in four districts: Dobrich, Targovishte, Silistra and Montana (2006 data)

District	Abortion frequency	Primary outpatient medical care density*	Outpatient obstetric care density**	Average annual salary	Unemployment level
Dobrich	+ 164	+ 10	- 8	- 17	± 0
Targovishte	+ 121	- 29	+ 17	- 19	+ 115
Silistra	- 78	- 17	- 25	- 20	+ 63
Montana	- 83	+ 11	± 0	- 17	+ 96

* Number of general practitioners per 100,000 people

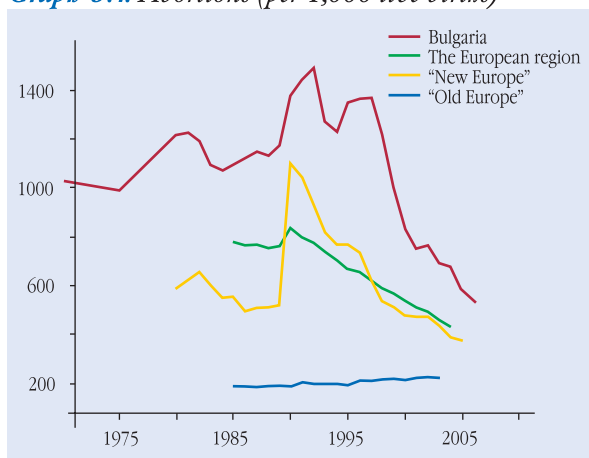
** Number of obstetrics and gynecology practitioners per 100,000 people

Source: National Health Information Center, Employment Agency

nant women under medical monitoring (until the third month of pregnancy) and Proportion (%) of births assisted by qualified medical personnel, since the European Office of WHO does not include these indicators in its database.

International disparities under the abortion frequency indicator are presented in Graph 5.4. Bulgaria is evidently approaching the values for the European region and „new“ Europe, but is still way above the abortion incidence in „old“ Europe.

Graph 5.4: *Abortions (per 1,000 live births)*



Source: WHO/Euro, National Health Information Center

Bulgarian health statistics reports the number of abortions as a sum of four components:

- Abortions for medical reasons
- Miscarriages
- Criminal abortions
- Voluntary abortions.

The proportion in recent years has been approximately 1:3:0:7, meaning that voluntary abortions are most frequent in Bulgaria. Voluntary abortion is increasingly popular in Bulgaria, although it is a life-and-health threatening alternative to contraception. There were 373 and 311 abortions in 2005 and 2006, respectively, per 1,000 live births. That incidence is not much higher compared to some EU countries (Denmark – 237, Italy – 243, Hungary – 464) and is in strong contrast with widespread abortions in former USSR countries in 2005 (Russia – over 1,000, Estonia – 631, Latvia – 530).

Abortion comparisons between Bulgaria and the EU, including abortions on medical grounds and especially miscarriages, fail to provide adequate information. The main reasons have to do with the specific recording of births and abortions in Bulgaria (see further details under Goal 4). An unknown, but probably significant part of cases registered in Bulgaria as abortions for medical reasons or miscarriages would be recorded in other European countries as births.

5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

Abortions

Success under the abortion frequency indicator is most likely associated with the introduction and popularity of condoms – not in their role as barrier contraception, but as a way to prevent infections. The steep decline of syphilis morbidity indicates greater awareness in sexual behavior. Gonorrhea morbidity reports identical developments. The incidence of HIV/AIDS remains considerably low (see further details under Goal 6). Voluntary abortion is still a birth-control option for Bulgarian women, but apparently it is beginning to lose its appeal as a leading choice and is gradually giving way to other methods, first and foremost the use of condoms.

Proportion of pregnant women under medical monitoring (until the third month of pregnancy)

Bulgarian health authorities and medical offices should exert major efforts in order to bring this indicator close to the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. A way out of the predicament will be to change the relations between the National Health Insurance Fund and specialist outpatient care providers. Essentially, outpatient obstetricians should partially obtain the status of „district obstetricians“ (like general practitioners have partially obtained the status of „district physicians“). That status and the corresponding payment mechanism will motivate and enable obstetricians to actively attract pregnant women in their patient list under medical monitoring.

**IN FOCUS:
PREVENTION OF CERVICAL CANCER**

Every day 3 women in Bulgaria get sick and 1 woman dies from cervical cancer. Cervical cancer morbidity in Bulgaria is continually increasing and in 2006 reached a record of 29 cases per 100,000 women. It is times higher compared to cervical cancer incidence in most European countries. Cervical cancer affects mostly women aged 35–50 – a time in a woman's life when she is most active at work and in looking after her family. It takes more lives than other malignant diseases developing at a later age. Organized population screening through cervical cytospin is the most effective means of cervical cancer prevention. This approach is fully consistent with the relevant European Commission directives. Combining mass screening with vaccines against the human papillomavirus (HPV) gives hopes for the full eradication of this lethal and disabling disease. Bulgaria does not have a National Program for mass screening of cervical cancer. Health authorities intend to establish a program, but they have not achieved clarity on the following key questions:

- Who will finance the mass screening program?
- Who will organize, manage and oversee the mass screening process?
- What will be the rules for conducting mass screening for cervical cancer in Bulgaria?
- Who and how will create a call-and-recall system for the population about the need of screen examination?
- Who will collect and process the data from mass screening results and post-screening activities – confirming diagnosis, treatment, follow-up?
- Who will conduct the screening examinations?
- Who and how will oversee the quality of screening examinations, as well as the processing and assessment of screening tests?
- Who will provide initial and ongoing training of the health specialists who will participate in the mass screening process? The regulation and launch of a mass screening process requires solid investments of specialist knowledge and skills, organizational capacity and financial resources.

During the report period Bulgaria has generally achieved good progress under Goal 5 aiming to improve maternal health. The extremely rare incidence of maternal mortality and births unattended by skilled medical professionals calls for removing these indicators from further monitoring. Abortions are

within acceptable limits. A persistent issue, however, is to ensure medical monitoring of pregnant women, which is especially alarming against high proportions of underweight births, stillbirths and perinatal child mortality in Bulgaria.



goal 6



Limit the Spread of
HIV/AIDS, Syphilis
and Tuberculosis

1. DESCRIPTION

Halfway into achieving by 2015 the Millennium Development Goals adopted at the UN summit in 2000, Bulgaria continues to set a priority on combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The political commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and syphilis stems from the Millennium Development Declaration, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted in 2001 at the UN General Assembly Special Session, the Global Initiative to ensure access to HIV prevention, treatment and support to all who need it by 2010, the European Strategy against HIV/AIDS in Europe and its Neighborhood (2006–2009), the

Stop TB Strategy and the Global Plan to Stop TB (2006–2015), the National Program for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (2001–2007), and the National Program for Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in Bulgaria (2001–2011).

2. STATUS AND TRENDS, DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

HIV/AIDS

HIV prevalence is still low among the general population in Bulgaria. The country, however, is facing a se-

Table 6.1: All indicators

Indicators	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008	2012	2015	Other countries/ region	Data Year	Source
Target 1. Prevent the epidemic spread of HIV/AIDS														HIV/AIDS
1. HIV/AIDS prevalence among people aged between 15 and 24	<0.01%	<0.01%	-	-	-	-	-	-	<1%	<1%	<1%	Russia, Ukraine, Estonia	>1%, aged 15–49	2005 UNAIDS, WHO, Global HIV/AIDS database
2. HIV/AIDS prevalence among intravenous drug users	-	-	-	-	-	0.59%	0.50%	-	<5%	-	<5%			
3. HIV/AIDS prevalence among men having sex with men	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<5%			
Target 2. Reduce cases of tuberculosis and improve successful treatment														Tuberculosis
4. Tuberculosis incidence (per 100,000 persons)	25.9	41	48.8	47.8	41.7	42.4	40.1	39.1	42	36	22	EU 27	19	2005 European Center for Disease Prevention and Control
5. Countrywide DOTS coverage	-	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			
6. Successful DOTS treatment	-	-	87%*	86%*	91%*	80%*	-	-	81%	>85%	>85%			
Target 3. Reduce cases of syphilis														Syphilis
7. Syphilis incidence (per 100,000 persons)	4.4	19.4	18.7	16.4	13.2	11.1	7.7	6.6	-	-	5.0	EU 25	3.5	2005 European Center for Disease Prevention and Control

* Percentage of new cases of lung tuberculosis with active bacillus secretion during the year, which were cured and completed the treatment, compared with all new cases of lung tuberculosis with active bacillus secretion registered during the year. Data on the outcome of TB treatment are about patients discovered in the previous year. Data for 2001–2004 present the situation before Bulgaria's full coverage by the DOTS strategy.

Source: National Health Information Center, Ministry of Health

rious challenge from the possibility of rapid development of concentrated epidemics among the highest risk groups, which are the target groups of the national policy for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and STIs. Such epidemiological and behavioral indications are already present for the groups of injecting drug users, men having sex with men, and prostituting men and women. The possible risk is for the infection to cross over to the general population, mainly through heterosexual transmission, and for development of a general epidemic.

By the end of 2007 the total number of registered HIV cases in Bulgaria was 814, of which 125 were recorded since January 2007. Annually registered cases have more than tripled compared to 2002 (Graph 6.1). The trend for a relatively high proportion of newly registered people under 25 (36% of all cases recorded during the year) persisted in 2007, too. An extremely alarming development is that the age limit for new infections has dropped to 16 years. The greatest number of cases is reported in the large urbanized districts – Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas and Varna. Over the past two years the annual number of registered new cases in Plovdiv (31 in 2006) alarmingly exceeded new registrations in Sofia (19 in 2006). There is a direct link with the overall situation of people injecting heroin, the illegal distribution of drugs and the effects of the amended Art. 354a, paragraph (3) of the Criminal Code adopted in 2004, which criminalized the possession of a single dose of narcotic substance.

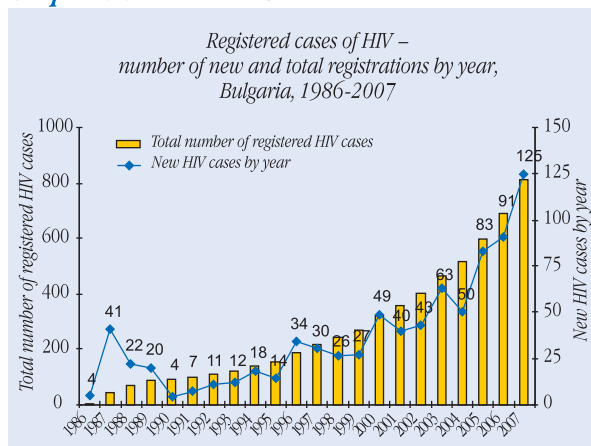
The increase in registered cases after 2004 is due largely to active tracking and provision of HIV prevention services among the most vulnerable groups under the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Program financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Program activities are 6 times more effective than routine diagnosis and screening among the general population. In 2006, a total of 44% of registered cases were discovered by the network of offices for anonymous and free AIDS consultation and testing, and by non-government organizations on the ground.

Incidence among men who admit having sex with men has also increased in recent years. In 2007 alone they accounted for 24% of all new registered cases of HIV-positive people. Very importantly, the total number of children infected by their mothers remains under 1% of all cases, because the government provides free and adequate prevention to all HIV-positive pregnant women and their newborn children.

The main goal of the national HIV/AIDS policy is to prevent an epidemic. To measure progress against that goal, Bulgaria is tracking HIV prevalence among one of the target groups of the national policy – young people aged 15–24, who are indicative for the entire population. Urgent and effective measures for prevention, health promotion and health and sexual education of young people are required, if Bulgaria is to check the spread of HIV in that age group under 1%.

The current epidemiological situation in Bulgaria, the neighboring Black Sea countries and Western Europe calls for inclusion of two new indicators tracking HIV prevalence among injecting drug users and men having sex with men. The objective is to prevent concentrated epidemics by limiting the spread of HIV under 5% in each group. Maintaining low HIV prevalence among the most-at-risk groups by 2015 will be impossible without: implementing interventions that have proved their effectiveness, ensuring sustainability and dedicating national resources towards HIV prevention. Data from second generation HIV surveillance studies show this goal is quite ambitious. Injecting drug users show extremely high prevalence of hepatitis C (63% in 2005), versus lower incidence among people avoiding the use of shared injection materials (22.3% in

Graph 6.1: HIV/AIDS



Source: Ministry of Health, Department for Prevention and Control of AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

2005). That indicates high-risk injecting behavior about HIV/AIDS and a need for targeted prevention.

Bulgaria is at the junction of two epidemics with different dynamics and different driving forces. According to UNAIDS, the fastest spread of the epidemic is in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Nearly 1.6 million people in the region are living with HIV, with 150,000 new infections in 2007 alone. Two-thirds (62% of new cases in 2006) were infected through injection drug use and almost 90% of all registered new cases in 2006 were in Russia and Ukraine. The epidemic continues to spread in Central and Eastern Europe. Unlike in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the epidemic in Bulgaria is affecting mostly men who have sex with men. They accounted for 29% of newly infected people in 2006, while the number of registered new cases between 1999 and 2006 almost doubled.

Syphilis

The spread of some sexually transmitted infections facilitates the sexual transmission of HIV. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the presence of syphilis increases the risk of HIV infection by 2 to 5 times. The presence of other sexually transmitted infections is another marker for risk behaviors associated with the spread of HIV.

In 1990–2000 syphilis incidence in Bulgaria showed an alarming and steady trend upward (from 4.4 per 100,000 in 1990 to 19.4 per 100,000 in 2000). The peak was re-

corded in 1998 with more than 30 cases per 100,000 persons. The number of newly discovered cases started to decrease significantly after 2002, down to 7.7 per 100,000 in 2005 and 6.6 per 100,000 in 2006 (Graph 6.2).

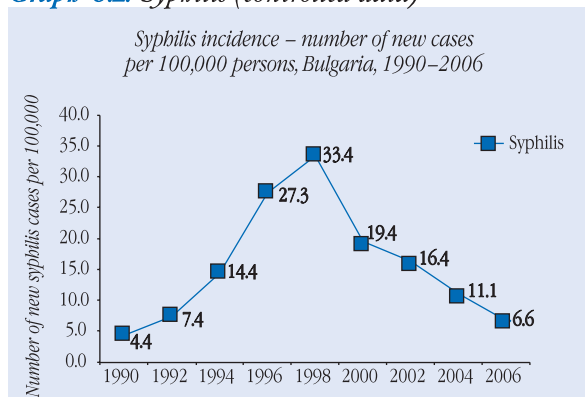
According to the annual Epidemiological Report on Communicable Diseases published by the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control in June 2007, newly discovered cases of syphilis per 100,000 persons in the EU varied in 2005 from 0.85 in Portugal to 19.21 in Latvia. The number of new cases in Bulgaria in 2005 was comparable to that in the UK (6.51) and some Central European countries like Hungary (5.40) and the Czech Republic (5.12). The overall trend in EU member states and the European Economic Area over the past 10 years showed a significant decrease of the average number of registered new cases from 3.5 per 100,000 in 1996 to 2.2 in 2000. A stable increase followed up to 3.5 in 2005 due mainly to epidemic outbreaks in some big cities among men having sex with men.

The analysis of epidemiological data for the past 10–15 years in Bulgaria and in the EU reveals a certain cyclic recurrence in syphilis prevalence caused primarily by changing patterns of sexual behavior. Reducing new cases of syphilis to 5 per 100,000 by 2015 is a realistic goal, but it depends on several factors. Data from second generation HIV surveillance showed relatively high levels of syphilis prevalence in 2005 among high risk groups: injecting drug users – 5.1% (61/1,199); prostituting men and women – 11.8% (103/874); and young Roma men – 3.2% (44/1,399). The high incidence of hepatitis B also indicates at-risk sexual behavior for HIV. An upsetting trend in Bulgaria is the increasing incidence of congenital syphilis (22 newly registered cases in 2005 and 19 in 2006). With the emergence of private medical practices providing STI diagnosis and treatment in recent years, many patients remain outside the system of routine epidemiological control of infectious diseases, which makes it difficult to collect data about the actual situation.

Tuberculosis

In 1990 tuberculosis morbidity in Bulgaria was 25.9 per 100,000 of the population. Under the combined influ-

Graph 6.2: *Syphilis (controlled data)*

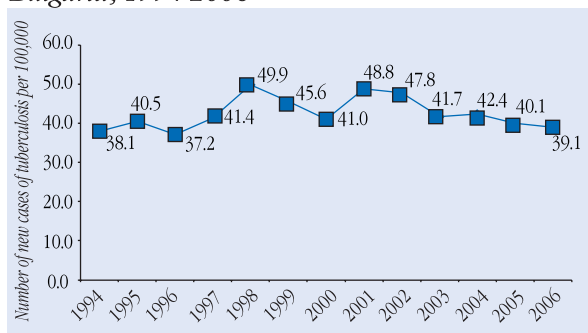


Source: WHO, Central Database on Infectious Diseases

ence of various economic and social factors, as well as deteriorating health infrastructure during the transition period, the newly registered cases of tuberculosis almost doubled up to 49.9 per 100,000 in 1998 and 48.8 per 100,000 in 2001. Since 2002, there has been a trend for sustaining and slowly reducing incidence – 42.4 per 100,000 in 2004 and 40.1 per 100,000 in 2005. According to data from the National Health Information Center, tuberculosis morbidity in 2006 was 39.1 per 100,000, but in some regions like Gabrovo, Vratsa, Montana, Kyustendil and Vidin it was more than 50 per 100,000. In comparison, in 2005 average tuberculosis incidence in EU-27 was 19 per 100,000.

The epidemiological situation in Bulgaria shows that the goal to reduce tuberculosis cases by half from 41 per 100,000 in 2000 to 20 per 100,000 in 2015 is quite ambitious. Another indication is that WHO has defined Bulgaria as one of the 18 high TB priority countries in the European region, where an average of 79 new cases per 100,000 requires urgent and effective measures for limiting the spread of the disease. An Action Plan to halt tuberculosis in these 18 countries was drafted for 2007–2015 aiming at average incidence of 42 per 100,000 in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

Graph 6.3: *Number of new cases of tuberculosis per 100,000 of the population, Bulgaria, 1994-2006*



Source: National Health Information Center

Progress will be measured by two main indicators. The national targets by 2012 are to reduce tuberculosis incidence – measured by the number of new cases – to 36 per 100,000, and to sustain the successful treatment rate of patients with active lung tuberculosis above 85%.

Already in 2003 Bulgaria ensured full coverage of the Directly Observed Therapy-Short course (DOTS) strategy recommended by WHO. However, a negative trend has been observed in recent years for more frequent incidence of heavy forms of lung tuberculosis and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). Populations at risk have increased, including people with HIV/AIDS. Tuberculosis morbidity in children has slowly been rising. The launch of the new National Program for Tuberculosis Prevention and Control in Bulgaria (2007–2011) and the Program for Improving TB Control in Bulgaria, financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is expected to detect many new cases as a result of specific activities among the most vulnerable groups. All that supports the need to revise the TB target formulated in 2003 to 22 per 100,000 by 2015, as well as to break down and reformulate the successful TB treatment indicator in accordance with the indicators set out in the Global Plan to Stop TB (2006–2015).

The global epidemiological trends show there are still regions where the number of new tuberculosis cases is rising. The Global Millennium Development Goals Report states that although the TB epidemic has begun to stabilize, progress is not fast enough to meet additional targets set by the Stop TB Partnership – to halve prevalence and death rates by 2015 from 1990 levels. The key constraints include increasing cases of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, extensive drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB), a rapid increase of HIV cases, growing numbers of people at high risk, for instance, people detained in prison and injecting drug users, as well as growing population mobility and migration flows which contribute to spreading the disease.

3. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

HIV/AIDS and Syphilis

Bulgaria is implementing targeted long-range policies for limiting the spread of AIDS and STIs and diminishing the health, demographic, social and economic consequences for the people. The first steps were undertaken already in 1996 with the creation of the Na-

tional Committee for Prevention of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases at the Council of Ministers. The committee's main function is to coordinate the development and implementation of national policies on HIV/AIDS and STDs.

In 2001 the Bulgarian Government adopted a National Strategy and a National Program for Prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs for 2001–2007. Implementation would be impossible, however, without providing adequate financial resources.

Over 2001–2007 the Bulgarian Government provided USD 19.2 million to fight HIV/AIDS and STDs. Incremental allocations each year were used mainly for:

- Ensuring the safety of every unit of donated blood;
- Free HIV testing;
- Free antiretroviral treatment for people with HIV/AIDS;
- Free antiretroviral prevention to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

In 2004–2008 the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria provided grant funds totaling USD 15.7 million, which are used for providing:

- Specific free HIV prevention services, care and support for vulnerable groups and people living with HIV/AIDS;
- Free STI prevention, diagnosis and treatment for the most vulnerable groups;
- Modern health education of young people;
- Development of human and institutional capacity.

Many other international donors, UN agencies in Bulgaria and foreign governments have provided financing for:

- Supporting the development and implementation of the National AIDS Strategy;
- Financing local projects for HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health;
- Supporting people living with HIV;
- Technical assistance.

Bulgaria is thus able to ensure and implement an integrated approach to fighting HIV/AIDS involving prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and support of people in need.

Tuberculosis

In order to achieve the goal to halt and reverse the incidence of tuberculosis locally and to contribute to meeting that goal globally, Bulgaria should improve TB control by reducing morbidity and increasing treatment success rates.

In accordance with the Stop TB Strategy 2006–2015 and the Millennium Development Goals, Bulgaria adopted a new National Program for TB Prevention and Control for 2007–2011. The program is based on several main principles which are crucial for successful implementation. It:

- Covers all components of the Stop TB Strategy for 2006–2015;
- For the first time defines vulnerable groups and specific interventions among them;
- Pays special attention to activities aiming to stabilize the infrastructure, management and coordination of different elements of the national healthcare system, which are engaged in TB control, to improve the system of epidemiological control and to create a national monitoring and assessment system;
- Ensures linkages with other national programs such as the National Program on HIV/AIDS;
- Builds on multi-sectoral partnerships for implementation of activities through the active engagement of other ministries besides the Ministry of Health, non-government organizations, the affected communities and public-private partnerships in TB control;
- Plans activities for strengthening public awareness, advocacy and social mobilization for fighting the disease;
- Identifies existing program and funding discrepancies and has a committed budget.

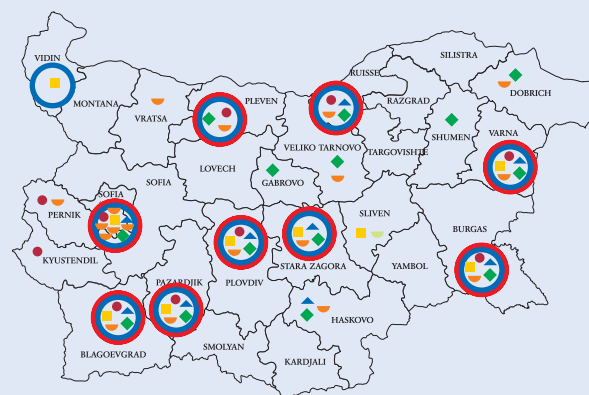
IN FOCUS: HIV PREVENTION IN HIGH RISK GROUPS

Since 2004 Bulgaria quickly managed to expand access to HIV prevention services under the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Program financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The key goal is to sustain the low prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the highest risk groups: injecting drug users, prostituting men and women, young Roma people, adolescents in and out of school, as well as – after 2006 – people detained in prison and men who have sex with men. Good practices underpinning the program's work among these vulnerable groups are based on the following principles:

- Situation analysis and assessment of local needs and resources to select geographic regions facing a possibility of a rapid HIV outbreak, where program activities should be implemented as a priority;
- Selection of dependable non-government organizations to implement program activities and to provide specific HIV prevention services to the highest risk groups of the population;
- Selection and continuous training of the NGO teams for work on the ground;
- Development of municipal partnership networks and referral to available health and social services;
- Development of professional networks for exchange of experience, guidance and support between non-government organizations along with development of national standards and good practices;
- Regular supervision, monitoring and assessment of program and financial implementation;
- Health education of young people in and out of school with a special focus on HIV and STI prevention, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and development of services aimed at young people.

Services to the target groups are provided mainly in 19 of Bulgaria's 28 districts in cooperation with 52 non-government organizations, 12 Regional Inspectorates to Protect and Control Public Health, the National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases and 138 schools. Additional infrastructure was established to expand the accessibility and outreach of specific services. The network includes 19 offices for anonymous and free HIV consultation and testing, 12 mobile medical labs, 5 low-threshold centers for intravenous drug addicts and 8 health and social centers based in Roma communities.

HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Program financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria



HIV/AIDS prevention among:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ● Intravenous drug addicts | ● Offices for anonymous and free HIV/AIDS Consultation and Testing |
| ■ Roma communities | ● Existing |
| ▲ Prostituting men and women | ● Planned |
| ◆ Young people | |
| ○ Second generation HIV/AIDS surveillance | ○ Local coordination office |

Source: The report team

Bulgaria's achievements under Goal 6 are controversial. While for now the epidemiological situations for HIV/AIDS and syphilis are under control, the incidence of tuberculosis is alarmingly increasing. These diseases are connected with the overall state of society and can hardly be addressed by health means

alone – the problems of the most vulnerable groups of injecting drug users, prostituting men and women, people with low incomes and poor education, interlink in several Millennium Development Goals. They require a concerted and coordinated national response.

Bulgaria continues to set a successful example for effective government policies and efficient measures at the national and the local level to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. In June 2008 it received excellent appraisal for the implementation of the National Program for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and was able to secure continued financing of 32.4 million euros for 2009 - 2014 from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.



goal 7



Ensure Environmental
Sustainability

1. DESCRIPTION

The key environmental issues facing the world in 2002–2007 were challenges for Bulgaria, too – the climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and shortage of natural resources including drinking water.

That determined the proposed modifications in targets and indicators under Millennium Development Goal 7: *Ensure environmental sustainability*.

- To track and adequately assess progress on Target 1 for integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policy and programs, a new indicator has been introduced to **assess the use of renewable energy sources (RES) in the national energy sector. The indicator will trace the proportion of electricity from renewable energy sources.**
- In accordance with the recommendations of the world leaders at the 2005 high-level meeting, one additional **target has been included under Goal 7 aiming entirely at conservation of biodiversity. Target 2 has been formulated: Reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2010.**
- Following Bulgaria's accession to the EU and the alignment of national legislation with EU law, a process started for defining eligible territories to be included in the EU Natura 2000 network. That calls for **increasing the target indicator for proportion of protected territories from 12% to 34% by 2015** (according to scientific estimates, about 42% of Bulgaria's territory is eligible for special protection and inclusion in the Natura 2000 network).
- The indicators under Target 3 for reducing the number of people without access to drinking water and proper sewerage infrastructure were revised (to trace population numbers instead of settlements).

2. STATUS AND TRENDS

Forests in Bulgaria span 4,076 million hectares making up 33.3% of its total territory. Forested land has slightly increased from 3,464 million hectares in 2001 to 3,704 million in 2007. Increasingly negative human impact is putting forests at risk, notably from unregulated felling and fires.

Bulgaria is successfully meeting its obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the 1988 baseline. The latest estimates place Bulgaria's greenhouse gas emissions at 70,718 Gg CO₂ equivalent in 2006, a 50.14% reduction from the 1988 baseline compared to the obligation for 8% reduction under the Kyoto Protocol.

Bulgaria implements a consistent policy promoting the production and consumption of energy from renewable energy sources (RES). The Energy Act introduced the requirements of Directive 2001/77/EC and incentives for all producers of electricity from RES. Electricity generated from RES in Bulgaria totaled 4,254 GW/h in 2006. The bulk (97.2%) of it still comes from hydro power plants, with wind generators contributing only 2.8%. One of the major opportunities for significantly increasing the share of RES-based energy in the coming 10 years without cutting down domestic consumption is through the **large-scale use of biomass** in all its forms and varieties.

Bulgaria is one of the richest European countries in terms of biodiversity and well preserved natural habitats. Successfully underway is the creation of an environmental network of protected areas, whose functions and structure are compatible with the EU Natura 2000 network. The National Biodiversity Council approved 114 areas for protection of wild birds and 228 areas for protection of natural habitats of wild flora and fauna. The European environmental network will cover 34% of the country's territory. **Protected areas made up 28% of Bulgaria's territory at end-2007. The report suggests a revised target of 34% by 2015.**

New waste management policy considerably expanded population numbers covered by organized waste collection and disposal systems, from 80.2% in 2001 to 90.3% in 2006.

Priority improvements were made in water supply and the quality of drinking water. Urban and rural water supply systems already cover 98.9% of the population. The national water supply system, however, reports an extremely high loss of water – over 60%, caused by excessively degraded water supply infrastructure.

Establishment of sewerage networks and waste water treatment facilities falls behind progress made in the

water supply system. According to the National Statistical Institute, 69.4% of the population was connected to sewerage networks in 2006, up a modest 1.5% compared to 2001. The capabilities of available waste water treatment facilities are often poorly coordinated, both in terms of overload and unused capacity.

Seven new waste water treatment plants were launched in 2000–2005. The share of the population connected to waste water treatment facilities increased by 1.1%, reaching only 41.1% in 2006 from 40% in 2001. It is not enough to guarantee a good quality of life to people and environmental standards. Efforts over the coming period should focus on that target. Bulgaria has formulated the following goals to meet the requirements of the EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/272/EEC):

- Establish sewerage networks and waste water treatment plants for settlements over 10,000 equivalent residents – by end-2010;
- Establish sewerage networks and waste water treatment

plants for settlements over 2,000 equivalent residents – by end-2014. At present, 75% of Bulgarian population lives in places over 2,000 inhabitants.

3. DOMESTIC DISPARITIES

The most significant domestic contrasts concern the establishment of environmental infrastructure. There are differences in urban development and quality at the level of districts and planning regions, but the most striking disparities are between urban and rural regions.

Organized waste collection and treatment services have the greatest coverage in Sofia (100%), Smolyan (98.4%), Pazardjik (97.5%), and some other districts. The most disadvantaged districts are Silistra (50.7%), Targovishte (60.25%) and Razgrad (62.7%). While almost 100% of urban dwellers benefit from organized waste collection services, the proportion for rural residents is slightly under 40%.

Table 7.1: Targets and indicators

Target 1: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs, reverse the loss of environmental resources					
Indicators	1990	2001	2005	2006	2015
Proportion of the territory covered by forests ⁷²		31.2%	33.1%	33.3%	35.9%
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Gg CO ₂ equivalent ⁷³) against 1988 baseline (<i>fulfillment of obligations under the Kyoto Protocol</i>)	(-)12.3%	(-)54.32%	(-)50.77%	(-) 50.14%	(-)8% (go 2012 z.)
Proportion of electricity from renewable energy sources	4.1%	4.7%	6.9%	15%	
Proportion of the population covered by an organized waste collection and disposal system	80.2%	87.82%	90.3%	95.0%	
Target 2: Reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2010					
Indicators	1990	2001	2006	2007	2015
Proportion of protected territories	2.6%	4.8%	5%	28%	34%
Target 3: Reduce the proportion of people without access to drinking water and proper sewerage infrastructure					
Indicators	1990	2001	2005	2006	2015
Proportion of the population served by waste water treatment plants	40%	40.7%	41.1%	75%	
Proportion of the population connected to sewerage networks	66.3% (1991)	67.9%	68.9%	69.4%	75%
Proportion of the population connected to central water supply	98.7%	98.7%	98.9%	98.9%	100%

Source (1990-2006): National Statistical Institute⁷⁴, Ministry of Environment and Waters

⁷² On recommendation from the State Forestry Agency, the indicator is no longer calculated based on Bulgaria's total forest area (which was monitored in the previous report); the calculation is based on total forested land (afforestation percentage).

⁷³ The summary greenhouse gas emissions indicated in Table 7.1 are calculated in CO₂ equivalent under the following global warming potential (GWP) scale: CO₂ = 1, CH₄ = 21 and N₂O = 310.

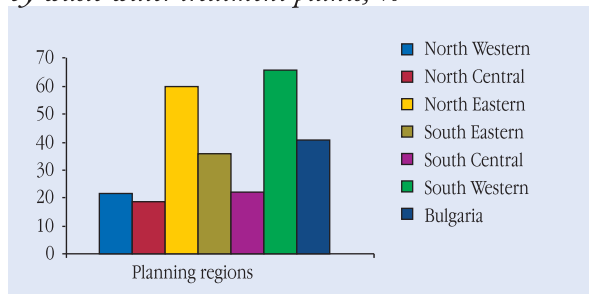
⁷⁴ No NSI data for 2007 was available at the end of June 2008.

Analysis of the infrastructure for protection and rational use of waters shows that Bulgaria has a well developed water supply system providing water to 5,031 settlements and 98.9% of the country's population. However, many regions experience water rationing due to internal losses in the distribution networks and lack of water preservation and storage facilities.

Differences within regions are no less significant. The main challenge is access to quality services that guarantee safe disposal and treatment of household waste water and sewage both for the environment and human health. Sewerage networks cover 277 settlements – 167 towns and cities and 110 villages. Roughly 70.5% of towns and cities have proper sewerage against only 2.1% in villages.

There were 67 operational waste water treatment plants (WWTP) in 2006 serving 71 agglomerations. Only 18.6% of the population in the North Central region and 21.8% in the North West had access to WWTP. The district centers Vidin, Kurdzhali, Russe and Silistra have no WWTP, and plants are still under construction in Blagoevgrad, Pazardjik, Targovishte, Stara Zagora and Haskovo.

Graph 7.1: Proportion of the population served by waste water treatment plants, %



Source: National Statistical Institute, 2006

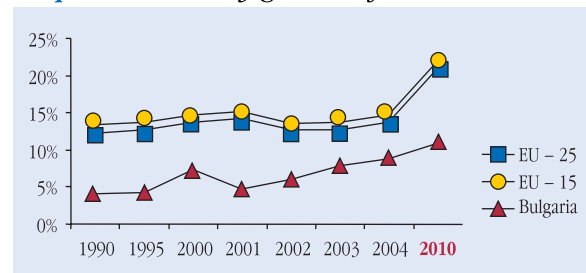
4. INTERNATIONAL DISPARITIES

Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a priority for the global community. Bulgaria has significantly reduced emissions from the 1988 baseline (-50.14% in 2006), way above the EU average (-11% for EU-25).

Countries like Iceland (100%), Norway (90%) and Austria (60%) have made renewable energy sources

their main generator of electricity. It preserves natural resources and curbs greenhouse gas emissions. Power contributed from RES in Bulgaria varies between 4% and 7% depending on weather conditions.

Graph 7.2: Electricity generated from RES



Source: Eurostat, 2005

Acting on its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU Directives on birds and habitats, Bulgaria is already among the countries that have designated a large proportion of their territory for in-situ protection of biodiversity (the potential Natura 2000 areas are about 34%). At end-2006, only six EU countries had more than 15% of their territory in the Natura 2000 network – Slovenia (31.4%), Spain (22.6%), Portugal (17.4%), Greece (16.4%) and Hungary (15.5%).

Bulgaria has 257,000 hectares of old forests, ranking third in Europe after Switzerland and Finland.

There are vast differences between developed and developing countries about proper access to drinking water and sanitation. Nearly a fifth of the world's population lives without guaranteed access to drinking water. About 2.6 billion people, or nearly half of the population of developing countries, have no access to safe sewerage networks. Bulgaria stands among the most developed countries in the world providing sufficient amounts of water of good quality to its citizens – 98.9% of the population is connected to central water supply systems. In comparison, in neighboring Romania that indicator is only 54%.

Population numbers connected to sewerage networks (67%) and served by WWTP (41%) are still low. Nearly 80% of EU citizens have access to waste water treatment plants, and in the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and the UK that indicator is over 90%.

5. GOAL ACHIEVEMENT POLICIES

Over the report period Bulgarian law was revised and aligned with EU requirements. Framework laws were elaborated and adopted, regulating the rules of environmentally safe behavior for waste water management, protected areas, chemical substances, noise, etc. A number of investment projects in water, waste and air management were launched to make real improvements in the environment and to minimize health hazards. Construction is underway of waste water treatment facilities, sewage collectors, waste depots, air cleaning plants and other facilities. Active work is dedicated to preserving Bulgaria's unique biological diversity. A network of protected areas is in the making, whose structure and functions are compatible with the European environmental network Natura 2000.

According to the National Environmental Strategy for 2005–2014, the national policy for the environment adequately reflects Global Goal 7, *Ensure environmental sustainability*, and the formulated targets. Bulgaria's environmental priorities for the coming years aim at:

- *Meeting Bulgaria's engagements to address global environmental issues* (meeting the engagements under the Kyoto Protocol and the UN Convention on Climate Change; ceasing the use of dangerous chemical substances and preparations destroying the ozone layer);
- *Preserving natural heritage and sustaining the wealth of biodiversity* (conservation and recovery of biodiversity and stopping the loss of biodiversity by 2010; sustainable use of natural resources, protection and restoration of natural habitats and ecosystems);
- *Achieving and maintaining a high quality of urban and rural environments* (achieving compliance with EU air quality standards; improving waste management, including by introducing systems for separate waste collection, reuse and recycling);
- *Ensuring access to water of good quality and sufficient quantity*, including through rational use of water resources by the economy and the general public;
- *Integrating environmental policy in sector-specific and regional policies* (including for increased use of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency);
- *Ensuring effective environmental management.*

Box 7.1:

DEFICIENCIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Loopholes in law and weak controls allow for emergence of vicious practices leading to loss of environmental resources.

Forest Swaps

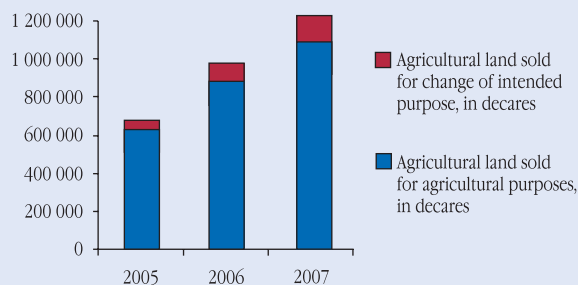
Public expectations that separation of forest management from the agricultural sector into a stand-alone agency under the Council of Ministers will strengthen oversight on swap deals did not materialize. In April 2008 the National Assembly passed amendments to the Forests Act, but they failed to produce the desired changes. On the contrary, in April–June 2008 alone the State Forestry Agency sealed 18 swaps, exchanging a total of 13,431 decares of forests located chiefly around the Black Sea and mountain resorts, for 35,075 decares inland. The issue with forest swaps is that in its current form the law does not forbid changing the intended use of previously swapped forests.

Changing the Intended Use of Agricultural Land

Official statistics from the agricultural market information system SAPI OOD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Foods report a boisterous market of agricultural land sales in 2007, where the buyers explicitly wanted to change the land's intended purpose. Potential construction plots have doubled compared to a year earlier, reaching a total of 91,699 decares. Procedure to change use has already been completed for 44,000 decares. Some 25,000 decares are along the Black Sea coast in the districts of Varna, Burgas and Dobrich. The average price for land changing the purpose of its intended use has reached the fantastic BGN 18,571 per decare along the Black Sea coast.

Active deals for land changing status along the Black Sea were considerably spurred by the Bulgarian Parliament's decision that the Black Sea Coastline Act, which was adopted in mid-2007, should take effect on 1 January 2008. The 6-month grace period was deftly used to initiate procedure for changing the farmland's intended purpose. Loopholes in law helped to cement Bulgaria's coastline.

Graph 7.3: Land market trends, 2005–2007



Source: SAPI OOD

Source: The report team

IN FOCUS: AIR QUALITY IN THE CITIES

According to UN data, in 2008 for the first time in human history more people live in cities than in villages. The cities are the main consumers of natural, human and energy resources. And they release massive waste flows back into the environment.

Accelerated urbanization in Bulgaria is accompanied by increased construction, congestion of built-up areas and uncontrolled destruction of urban green plots and suburban green systems (where a frequent practice is to change land use from agricultural to urban). Destroying the green lungs of cities impairs air quality.

Bulgaria is divided into 119 regions for assessment of air quality. One or more air pollutants chronically exceed admissible values in 34 regions. According to the National Monitoring System, large cities which house half of Bulgaria's population have the worst air quality.

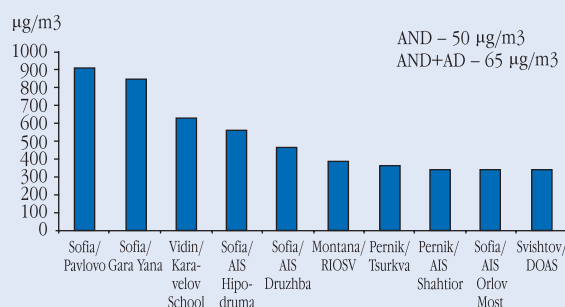
There is a large variety of air pollutants, but over the past years air dust has become a major issue for large Bulgarian cities. Particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter fall into the category of fine particles, or particulate matter (PM10). PM10 penetrates through the protecting mechanisms of the respiratory system, travels to the lungs and causes serious harm to the human body. According to the latest epidemiological studies⁷⁵ conducted in big cities, there is a direct dependence between particulate matter pollution and death rate – fine particles can kill. Scientific conclusions are alarming: Every next microgram of fine particulate matter in the air will cause between 0.6% and 1.2% more deaths.

Short-term exposure to 500 µg/m³ dust and sulfur dioxide increases general mortality, while half of that concentration increases incidence of disease and lung disorder. Continuous exposure to sulfur dioxide and dust increases non-specific lung diseases, mostly upper respiratory infections and bronchitis, at much lower concentrations (30-150 µg/m³). The effects are particularly severe in children.

The World Health Organization has recommended a PM guideline value of 10 µg/m³ (<http://www.who.int>). According to data from the National Monitoring System, values in Sofia in recent years have systematically exceeded the average daily norm, which was 65 µg/m³ for Bulgaria in 2005 (average daily norm + admissible deviation).⁷⁶ Pavlovo, Gara Yana and Orlov Most in Sofia are 3 of 10 monitoring sites where maximum average daily concentrations were measured. The maximum concentration was registered in the monitoring site Sofia / Pavlovo - 14 times the threshold value including admissible deviation from the average daily norm. The reasons are intensive traffic, poor road maintenance, large-scale construction and polluting industries in and around the city.

The most important condition for reaching and maintaining the norms is introducing the principles of sustainable development in city planning: protection of existing and creating new green areas; quality change of the structure of fuels used for home heating and introducing eco-fuels in public transport; improving infrastructure and road covering in large settlements. In many regions of the country, including Sofia, a gasification of the industry and homes has started, which to great extent will reduce dust particles in the air.

Graph 7.4: Ten monitoring sites reporting maximum average daily concentrations of PM10 in 2005



Source: The report team

Environmental sustainability is one of the Millennium Development Goals where the impact of Bulgaria's accession to the EU was felt most strongly. It called for a higher proportion of protected territories, inclusion of energy efficiency indicators and implementation of new environmental policy as well as sustainable development policies in general. Goal 7 is especially challenging for good governance. The environment is the battlefield for some of the most severe clashes between non-government organizations and business. Environmental policies are therefore particularly vulnerable to corruption practices locally and at the central level.

Overall, Bulgaria's indicators under Goal 7 show positive dynamics. Total forest areas remain stable (over 33%), but no information is available about forest types and dynamics of species. The proportion of the population covered by organized waste collection and disposal systems is increasing, albeit slowly. Population numbers served by waste water treatment plants and connected to sewerage systems are growing too slowly for the 75% targets to be achieved by 2015.

⁷⁵ (a) Emma Maris. The politics of breathing. *Nature* 444, 248-249 (2006); (b) Pope, C.A. & Dockery, D.W. Air Waste Mn=gmt Assoc. 56, 709-742 (2006); (c) Steve Moorhouse. US air pollution is harmful and fine particles can kill. *Nature* 445, 709 (2007).

⁷⁶ Regulation No 9 of the Ministry of Environment and Waters and the Ministry of Health under the Clean Air Act (State Gazette, No 46/1999).



goal 8



Include Bulgaria
in the System of Official
Development Assistance

1. DESCRIPTION

Bulgaria's accession to the EU calls for a radical revision of Goal 8. In the previous Millennium Development Goals report, *partnership for development* was seen from Bulgaria's position as a beneficiary of international assistance. Although Bulgarian citizens have much lower incomes than the other members of the „rich club“, in 2008 Bulgaria is already on the side of donors. That determined the following targets under Goal 8:

- Complete the transition from a beneficiary of international assistance to a donor of official development assistance (ODA);
- Participate actively and effectively in EU overall development cooperation policy.

In the past 15 years Bulgaria advanced in its political, economic and social development as a result of national efforts and support from the international donor community. It has consistently shown solidarity with the global efforts to end hunger and poverty.

Bulgaria's participation in international development cooperation must follow the political commitments undertaken in the framework of the United Nations and the European Union. Bulgaria supported the decisions made at the UN conferences on international development issues, including the Millennium Summit, and the decision of the European Council of June 2005 adopting the new ODA volume targets within the EU. Eradication of poverty and strengthening the economies of developing countries are essential conditions for creating a better international economic environment.

After becoming an EU member on 1 January 2007, Bulgaria focused its efforts on harmonizing its national norms and practices and coordinating its foreign policy, including participation in EU development cooperation policy and joint actions in third countries. From a beneficiary of international assistance, Bulgaria should now become a donor of assistance to developing countries within its experience and capabilities. Along with all new member states, Bulgaria has the ambitious goal to participate actively in EU development cooperation policy by

contributing ODA funding to fight poverty. The target ODA volume for Bulgaria and the acceded countries is 0.17% of its gross national income (GNI) by 2010 and 0.33% of GNI by 2015.

The European Union is the largest ODA contributor in the world. In 2004 the European Commission (EC) and the member states provided collectively 52% of total ODA in the world, or USD 43,264 billion against USD 40,021 billion provided by all other donors. The leading role of the EU in international development cooperation has been defined as one of Europe's priorities.

Funds to support developing countries on a multilateral basis have three sources within the EU: the EU budget, the European Development Fund (EDF) and the own resources of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

As from 1 January 2007 the external actions and policies of the EU, including development policy, are financially covered by Section 4 („EU as a global partner“) of the Financial Framework for the period 2007–2013 approved by the European Council in December 2005. The former range of over 100 geographical and thematic instruments was replaced by 6 instruments:

- the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance;
- the Instrument for Stability;
- the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument;
- the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument;
- the Instrument for Humanitarian Aid;
- and the Instrument for Macro Financial Assistance.

The EC preliminary estimates expect that almost 90% (EUR 40,009 billion by 2013) of the funds intended for the external relations section could be accounted as ODA. Between 2008 and 2013 the EU has pledged to provide 23 billion euros in development assistance to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean.

Officially reported ODA by Bulgaria was **BGN 1,453,276 (or 0.0359% of GNI) in 2005 and slightly less in 2006 at BGN 1,432,866 (or 0.0326% of GNI)**. That trend came to an end in 2007 and in the first year of its EU membership Bulgaria reported BGN 25,222,380 in ODA **equaling 0.053% of GNI**.

Despite the past decade of economic growth reported by the new member states, including Bulgaria, reaching the ODA targets is quite difficult (with expected target contributions of 0.17% of GNI by 2010 and 0.33% by 2015, respectively). Comparison with some of the newly acceded countries clearly indicates that Bulgaria must make significant progress to catch up with countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. For example, **the Czech Republic planned 0.11% of GNI in 2005–2007 followed by 0.12% and 0.13% of GNI in 2008 and 2009, respectively**. Hungary's contribution was 0.13% of GNI in 2006, with a planned 20% increase in ODA volume for 2008. Poland's targets were 0.68% of GNP in 2005, 0.1% in 2006, and 0.11% in 2007. As a new EU member, Bulgaria is facing a number of difficulties and challenges associated with achieving ODA targets, completing the transition from a recipient to a donor of international assistance, and active and effective participation in EU overall development cooperation policy.

First, multiparty political and public support and commitment need to be built for Bulgaria's participation in development cooperation, including for the idea to

support less developed countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region. The non-government sector (chiefly development organizations) has a major role to play, initiating public debate and galvanizing citizens to formulate and implement development policy. The spirit of the Millennium Development Goals calls for stronger cooperation between government and the private sector through public-private partnership. Undoubtedly, business can drive forward economic development, employment and welfare in developing countries by building up human capital; transferring know-how, technologies and good practices; building up physical and social infrastructure; developing skills for participation in social dialogue; providing technical assistance for establishment of regional integration structures, etc.

A challenge for Bulgaria is to ensure transparency and clear and objective rules for distribution of ODA funds and evaluation of their use. Adequate cooperation between government administration, NGOs, private business, the academia and other stakeholders and public interest groups will again be indispensable. Public opinion is that the European Commission (32%) and the European Parliament (28%) should have the greatest say in setting priorities for support. Member states' governments come third (26%) followed by non-government and civil organizations (19%). NGOs (16%) and governments (15%) in the recipient countries are the last to decide. Apparently, the general attitudes are for central management of assistance and decision-making from

Table 8.1: Official development assistance provided by Bulgaria

Year	Bilateral assistance (BGN)	Multilateral assistance (BGN)	Total ODA (BGN)	% of Gross National Income
2005	294,136.80	1,159,139.87	1,453,276.67	0.0359%
2006	294,136.80	1,138,729.87	1,432,866.67	0.0326%
2007	304,577.94	24,917,802.23	25,222,380.17	0.053%

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance

Table 8.2: Comparative data for ODA contributions from new EU countries (% of GNI)

	2005	2006	2007	2010	2015
Bulgaria	0.0359%	0.0326%	0.053%	0.17%	0.33%
Poland	0.068 %	0.1%	0.11%	0.17%	0.33%
Czech Republic	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%	0.17%	0.33%

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance

Note: Comparisons for 2005 and 2006 should note that at that time Bulgaria was not yet an EU member.

Brussels, although national actors will also play a role. Public opinion in Bulgaria is in agreement with that: 41% claimed the decisive role in determining support priorities should belong to the European Commission. For 32% of people that was the role of the European Parliament and 25% said it was the responsibility of the Bulgarian government. Bulgaria has the smallest trust in its non-government and civil organizations (7%) compared to other EU countries (19% total for EU-27).

2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Building and strengthening good institutional capacity in Bulgaria and creating an adequate conceptual framework is instrumental for achieving the formulated national goals. The most important step for that

Box 8.1:

PUBLIC OPINION⁷⁷ ABOUT THE PRIORITIES OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set eight goals, but EU public opinion in the EU supports them to a different degree. Like other EU countries, Bulgaria places an emphasis⁷⁸ on the pragmatic goal to eradicate extreme poverty and malnutrition. That key priority is supported by 74% of Bulgarians and 66% of all EU citizens. Public opinion in Bulgaria is at one with general EU attitudes about limiting the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which loomed as the second most important MDG priority (according to 46% of citizens in EU-27 and 44% in Bulgaria). Bulgaria ranked third the reduction of child mortality (at 43% versus 31% in EU-27). The choice is justifiable, considering the serious disparities between child mortality indicators in Bulgaria and the EU average. On the whole, public opinion in the new member states puts at the head of the list the fight against poverty and HIV/AIDS, whereas citizens in the old member states more often tend to emphasize the priorities of education and gender equality.

In terms of the regional priorities of European development assistance, 64% of EU citizens placed first Sub-Saharan Africa. Support for priority assistance there was almost twice higher than for the Indian sub-continent (34%), the Middle East and North Africa (29%) or South East Asia (Cambodia and Vietnam, 26%). Bulgaria impressed with the large number of people who were unable to make an opinion (39%) – the highest across the EU. The poll results highlight the need for intensive communication on development assistance policy in Bulgaria.

Source: The report team

was undoubtedly the National Concept for Bulgaria's Policy to Participate in International Development Cooperation, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 19 July 2007 (Decision # 504).

The national concept for cooperation and development was elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a result of active discussions between representatives of the relevant government institutions and non-government organizations. The concept outlines decision-making guidelines, development cooperation in its international and European context and Bulgaria's experience to date. It sets out the main elements of Bulgaria's future development policy – its goals, objectives, principles, geographical and thematic priorities, financing, administrative and organizational aspects, etc.

According to the Concept, Bulgaria's main development policy objective is **eradication of poverty and associated issues, which prevent improvements in the quality of life in developing countries**. Poverty cannot be eliminated without making progress towards **sustainable development**, which is seen as achieving sustainable levels of production/consumption, protecting the environment, ensuring minimally acceptable health and education standards, fruitful integration of the countries in international cooperation in a globalizing world, etc.

As defined in the Concept, the countries with which Bulgaria will build up development partnerships should meet a set of specific criteria. There must be a certain level of political, diplomatic, commercial, economic and cultural contacts between Bulgaria and the respective partner country, as well as comparative advantages for Bulgaria providing assistance to the country. They may include greater experience in certain areas compared to other donors and/ or better knowledge of local needs and specifics, which will be conducive to making assistance more effective. The recipient country must meet the general conditions for cooperation with the donor community and must take real steps addressing the problems of its own development.

Based on these criteria, Bulgaria has defined two groups of countries for development cooperation:

⁷⁷ The 2007 study of Eurobarometer reveals different motivations in the old member states and the 12 newly acceded countries (NACs-12).

⁷⁸ Three priorities mentioned.

- Priority countries – this group includes countries from South East Europe and the Black Sea region. On the basis of experience gained and available financial opportunities, the range of priority partners may be extended in the future to include some of the least developed countries, particularly in Africa, in the context of the EU commitment to direct 50% of EU development aid to that continent;
- Countries to which Bulgaria has undertaken international commitments within the framework of international organizations or coalitions (e.g., participation in rehabilitation efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan).

The geographical priorities of Bulgaria's development aid do not limit the provision of humanitarian support or any urgent *ad hoc* actions aiming to prevent or mitigate the aftermath of crises, armed conflict or action against international terrorism.

Bulgaria's development cooperation policy will focus on thematic areas where the country has a comparative advantage in providing assistance, expertise and capacity. Such areas include education and training of specialists; infrastructure construction and maintenance; implementation of economic, financial, administrative, social and healthcare reform; cultural diversity and tolerance; environmental protection and promotion of sustainable development; security and post-conflict reconstruction.

All EU-15 member states have similar concept papers on development policy. Only 4 countries (Finland, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands) have not adopted a special law on development assistance. The prevailing institutional model is highly centralized, involving in most cases the leading role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A decentralized model with several ministries and implementing agencies is applied only in 2 countries (France and Portugal), and the United Kingdom is the single member state which has entrusted its development assistance entirely to an independent department dealing with external aid (DfID). The main objective of EU-15 concept documents is eradication of poverty, either on its own or together with sustainable development, protection of peace, human security, etc. The predominant geographical priority is the region of Sub-Saharan Africa. All EU-15 member states have made a commitment to achieve

the Monterrey goals and the EU aid volume targets, according to which assistance should reach 0.51% of GNI in 2010 and 0.7% of GNI in 2015.

Among the other newly acceded countries, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have adopted documents that lay down the concept framework of their development policy, and Malta is in the process of drafting and adopting its document. Special legislation on development cooperation issues is not widespread. From an institutional perspective, the new member states tend towards one basic model – development policy is formulated and coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via a dedicated directorate (except in Cyprus). The main objectives of development cooperation in these countries are sustainable development, democracy, rule of law and human rights. Geographically, the main aid recipients are countries from Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Asia.

3. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Bulgaria's formal commitment to contribute to the European consensus for development is not enough. Support at home is required from Bulgarian citizens, for many of which the average EU standard is still a difficult to achieve, far-off prospect. Bulgarian society needs a profound change of values and attitudes to face the new global responsibilities, which Bulgaria now has as a member of the community of developed countries.

First and foremost, public motivation is needed for Bulgaria to share part of its, albeit modest, economic prosperity with the undeveloped world. The citizens of EU-15 motivate their support for development assistance with the need for global stability, democracy and good governance worldwide. For example, 24% of EU-15 citizens mentioned the need for promoting democracy and good governance in developing countries against only 16% in the new member states (EU-12). Improving governance was a valid motivation for 12% of respondents in Bulgaria and 16% in Romania, compared to 44% in Malta and 41% in Denmark. People in the new member states look for much more pragmatic arguments,

which revolve around the perception of „self-interest“⁷⁹ of the countries providing support for development. The prevailing attitudes are that development assistance is extended in order to stop immigration to the rich countries. That feeling was shared by 24% of respondents in EU-12 and 18% in EU-15.

Perceptions in Bulgaria are no different. The most popular reason for development assistance was perceived to be the „self-interest of the rich countries“ (33%) and the least popular answer was „so the rich countries can have a clean conscience“ (6%). By contrast, EU-15 citizens characteristically share altruistic interpretations of development assistance. People in Austria head the chart and most often claim that development aid is meant „simply to help people in need“ (24%).

These differences are understandable in the light of insufficient knowledge about development assistance priorities, mechanisms and institutions. The new EU members, including Bulgaria, were until recently only recipients of support and see the topic only through the narrow lens of their internal interests. The inability of Bulgarian citizens to answer many questions on the Eurobarometer poll indirectly betrays limited knowledge. Together with Spain, Bulgaria tops the list for lack of knowledge about EU development assistance priorities (15% unable to answer). Bulgaria also

provided the highest proportion of „don't know“ answers to the question which institution has a decisive say in defining support priorities (29%).

Awareness is slightly rising compared to 2004, but still too few people in the EU know what the Millennium Development Goals stand for. In 2004, 84% of Europeans said they were not aware of the MDGs, down to 80% in 2007. Similarly, 74% of EU citizens have not heard or read about the European consensus for development.⁸⁰ Bulgaria is not an exception – 4% of Bulgarians know about the MDGs and 15% altogether have heard something about it⁸¹ (versus 41% in Sweden and 38% in Holland). MDG awareness is also low in countries with well developed donor practices like the United Kingdom (80% saying they don't know or giving no answer), France (88%) and Spain (88%).

The public in Bulgaria is generally little aware of development assistance priorities, institutions and instruments. There are highly pragmatic attitudes for focusing assistance on actions that can end hunger and stop the HIV epidemic in developing countries, whereas the priorities for good governance, universal education and environmental sustainability tend to be underestimated. Like in other member states, the public in Bulgaria expects that the central European institutions will have a leading role in determining these priorities.

Box 8.2.

IN FOCUS: THE NEW OLD DONORS FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

According to international development cooperation glossaries, they checked the box for new donors only a few years ago. For most of them taking up the role of donors at once revived or renewed in a different context traditions interrupted by transition. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Hungary began preparing for their new responsibilities even before formally joining the European Union. The Czech Republic started summer university courses and seminars on development policy organized by the Institute for International Relations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In order to build up national capacity, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary created joint trust funds and partner projects with leading bilateral and multilateral development agencies (the Canadian International Development Agency, UNDP, and USAID). They launched the first pilot tenders for development policy implementation by non-government organizations. The People in Peril Association in Slovakia quickly turned from an ad-hoc humanitarian organization, created in 1999 during the events in Kosovo, into one of the leading development NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. Founded by journalists, the association is widely using in its work TV journalism, political journalism and documentary cinema, setting an example for one of the most public professional communities' commitment to the goals of development. Not accidentally, the first projects in the framework of Poland's official development assistance (in Yemen) and Lithuania's development policy (in Georgia) started with group visits of journalists in the priority countries.

⁷⁹ For example, supporting the poor countries so they can buy more goods from the rich countries.

⁸⁰ In December 2005 the presidents of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council signed a new EU Declaration for European Consensus on Development, which sets out the principles and goals for eradicating poverty worldwide in the context of sustainable development.

⁸¹ Aggregated answers „I have heard about it“ and „I have heard about it but I don't know what exactly it stands for“.

Today non-government and business organizations from the new donor countries carry on development projects in Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Kenya, Mozambique and other countries. They build hospitals, train farmers, bring back critical infrastructure. Destinations in Africa or Asia, however, only add some exotic names to the list of countries receiving the bulk of official development aid from the new donors. Less surprisingly, the target countries are mostly from the Balkans and the Black Sea region.

In November 2007 all new EU member states took part in the traditional European Development Days held in Lisbon, Portugal. There Bulgaria presented its first political paper (the Framework Concept) on the country's development policy. In 2007 the 12 new EU members contributed collectively around 500 million euros in global development aid. If all new donors deliver on their commitment to substantially increase official development assistance to 0.17% of GNI by 2010, their total ODA contribution will exceed 1 billion euros.

However, the challenges of transition from the status of beneficiaries to development assistance donors are truly immense. In the beginning of 2008 the European Parliament reported on that and warned that none of the new donor countries has a national development education strategy. Development policy coordination is missing even within the responsible national ministries and only isolated cases have benefited from staff training opportunities provided by the European Commission to enhance capacity. The European Parliament also warned that many of the new donors will not achieve the target to spend 0.17% of GNI by 2010 on official development assistance, and that a common development communication strategy is required.

The challenges continue!

Source: Public communications, UNDP, 2008

In 2003-2008 Bulgaria has achieved significant progress against the defined goals. As economic, educational and health standards come closer to EU levels, both Bulgarian citizens and EU institutions will increasingly insist on better governance, too. Furthermore, Bulgaria is part of our global home and global poverty is not something Bulgarian citizens can pretend to overlook – not only because of human solidarity and Bulgaria’s international commitments, but also because overwhelming global disparities lead to upheavals that affect all.

CONCLUSION

In June 2008 at the New York Stock Exchange Bulgaria's Finance Minister Plamen Oresharski received the World Bank and International Finance Corporation award for **excellent conditions for doing business**⁸² in Bulgaria's emerging market. Almost parallel to that, the European Union urged the country in very insistent terms to **crack down corruption**, including in the management of EU funds and programs. These two landmark events show what Bulgaria has been able to achieve over the past six years and what it has failed in, including the targets and indicators set in the national MDG framework.

Goal 1 is about raising incomes and curbing unemployment. In 2006 average incomes in Bulgaria reached 142 euros against the planned target of 280 euros by 2015. Annual income growth rates over 10% and high inflation give reason to revise the average income target to 337 euros by 2015. Declining relative poverty implies revising that target indicator from 15% to 13% by 2015. The youth unemployment target of 25% was practically overachieved in 2006 (19.5%) and calls for a more ambitious target of 15%. The long-term unemployment target of 7% was also overachieved (5% in 2006) and was redefined to 3% for 2015.

In the coming years, Bulgaria will face unemployment issues more and more rarely as they increasingly give way to shortage of skilled labor. EU membership and the Lisbon Strategy in particular make it necessary to expand the unemployment reduction target with specific additional indicators measuring employment, labor productivity and the relative share of employee compensation in GDP. A realistic goal for Bulgaria would be to achieve 45% of EU labor productivity by 2015. However, poor labor productivity is a result of overall business efficiency in Bulgaria and not only of workforce efficiency. An indication that wages lag behind is that whereas labor productivity is 35% of EU average, earned income is about 20% of EU average.

Regional and ethnic disparities continue to hold back total economic growth. The proportion of the poor at the municipal level varies from 1.8% in the capital Sofia to 53.8% in Boynitsa, Vidin district, and 38 municipalities report unemployment over 25%. Against the backdrop of low incomes, which place Bulgaria at the bottom of EU standards, luxury consumption is growing at a stunning pace and volume.

Economic growth should have a much stronger social focus. A new public consensus is needed based on more solidarity and justice, which are the fundamental democratic values of the European social model.

The second Millennium Development Goal is about education. Indicator dynamics show relatively good achievements in access to education.

Basic education continues to have a high coverage – 94.7% of children graduated elementary school in 2007 against a 100% target by 2015. Issues build up in the upper educational grades. No small numbers of children drop out of school, mostly in the second (junior high) stage of primary education.

International studies show that the quality of education in Bulgaria's elementary schools is still very good, but it falls down in junior high schools. Between 1995 and 2003 Bulgaria lost 51 points in international student performance rankings in mathematics and 66 points in natural sciences – the highest drop in all 46 countries covered by the assessment (TIMSS).

Like economic development, progress in education is uneven geographically and socially. Educational disparities divide not only Roma children and Bulgarian children, rural children and children in Sofia. There is a great divide between elite schools (special profile high schools) and other schools, which were more than 100 points apart in PISA 2006. Formally, all Bulgarian children have equal access to primary and secondary education. In reality, many Bulgarian children have already been excluded from the global running. And a very small part has vast chances to be among the winners.

⁸² 2008 Top Ten Reformers of the Year Award.

To improve quality, Bulgaria needs a streamlined school network; an independent system to evaluate the quality of education; and an effective teacher qualification and career development system, as well as elevating education into a national priority.

The third Millennium Development Goal is about promoting gender equality, more specifically by eradicating income differences between men and women and ensuring wider participation of women in governance.

Women's participation in the labor market grew to 47.5% in 2007 from 43.9% in 2002, but is still far from the 60% Lisbon target by 2010. The number of employed women in Bulgaria is 3 percentage points lower compared to EU-27 and 4 points lower compared to the old EU member states (EU-15). The pay gap is closing faster. In 2001–2005 it dropped from 21.17% to 17.16%, down by 4 percentage points. At end-2005, working women were paid on average 82.84% of the wage of working men against a 80% target by 2015.

Developments under the second target are rather negative. After more than doubling up to 26% in the 38th National Assembly, the number of women parliamentarians edged down to 22% in the 40th National Assembly. As a result, Bulgaria slipped from the 19th position worldwide in March 2003 to 42nd in August 2007.⁸³ By October 2007, only 43 of 240 representatives in the 40th National Assembly were women.

Women are represented even less in the executive and in local governments. In October 2007, only 4 of 18 ministers were women and only 5 of 28 district governors were women. The number of women in office is even smaller at the local level – out of 264 municipal mayors, only 20 were women.

Bulgaria needs to systematically implement gender equality policies in all policies and activities. A particularly important step is the adoption of the Equal Opportunities Bill, which has been postponed since 2001.

Child mortality (Goal 4) is indicative for the overall social and economic state of any society and goes far

beyond issues of healthcare and medical care. From 2001 to 2006 infant (under-one) mortality in Bulgaria significantly decreased from 14.4/1,000 to 9.2/1,000. Under-five mortality also decreased from 16.7/1,000 in 2001 to 11.0/1,000 in 2007. If that annual reduction rate of 5 to 6% is sustained, Bulgaria will be able to achieve its planned targets by 2015. Progress against the other two targets is significantly slower. Perinatal mortality has declined marginally from 12.3/1,000 in 2001 to 11.0/1,000 in 2007, whereas underweight births show no substantial dynamics over the past 6 years (8.8% in 2007 compared with 8.6% in 2001).

Positive changes result more from Bulgaria's overall social and economic development than from specific progress in the healthcare system. With few exceptions, child mortality in the 28 districts does not directly depend on the status of healthcare services represented in the number of beds, obstetricians and other factors. Lagging dynamics in the effort to address perinatal mortality and underweight births, however, require decisive measures for improving the quality of obstetric and gynecological aid.

Overall data give reason to believe that by 2015 Bulgaria will achieve at least two of its child mortality targets – under-five mortality down to 9.5 per 1,000 live births and total infant (under-one) mortality down to 7 per 1,000 live births. If the current rate of improvement is sustained, even better results can be expected for these indicators.

Indicator dynamics under **Goal 5 – improve maternal health** – necessitate a change of targets. Maternal mortality of 7.3/100,000 live births in 2005 corresponds to five deaths across Bulgaria. On the other hand, cervical cancer morbidity has been alarmingly increasing, from 16/100,000 in 1990 to 27.7/100,000 in 2002 and 29.4/100,000 in 2006. Therefore the target for *Considerable reduction in maternal mortality* should be replaced with a new target, *Considerable reduction in cervical cancer morbidity and mortality*. The ambition will be to reduce new cases of cervical cancer down to 15/100,000 women by 2015.

Positive dynamics are reported for the other target: reduc-

⁸³ Ranking of the Inter-Parliamentary Union by 31.08.2007, „Women in National Parliaments“.

tion of abortions. The frequency of abortions in 2006 was 504/1,000 live births – meaning that the set target of 550/1,000 live births by 2015 has already been achieved. Some districts, however, still show extremely high indicators – in 2006 abortions in Dobrich exceeded the country average by 164% followed by Targovishte at 121%. Total progress under *frequency of abortions* is most likely the result of increasing use of condoms for protection from infections, particularly HIV/AIDS.

The indicator *Pregnant women under medical monitoring (until the third month of pregnancy)* shows alarming setbacks. The set target is to regain by 2015 the baseline level from 1990, but the indicator values are not increasing. On the contrary, they have fallen down to 64.5% in 2006 from 76.1% in 2003.

To include more pregnant women under medical surveillance, outpatient obstetricians should partially obtain the status of „district obstetricians“. For the newly introduced target – *Reduce cervical cancer morbidity* – the most necessary step is to launch mass screening. Combined with vaccination, mass screening is the most effective approach for the full eradication of this lethal and disabling disease.

The sixth Millennium Development Goal is also about human health and aims to limit the spread of HIV/AIDS, syphilis and tuberculosis. The spread of **HIV/AIDS** in Bulgaria is for now under control and remains under the epidemiological threshold of 1%. The number of registered HIV cases, however, has increased threefold from 2002 up to 814 cases at end-2007. Particularly alarming is the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people under 25 years (who accounted for 36% of reported new cases in 2007). The current epidemiological situation in Bulgaria, the neighboring Black Sea countries and Western Europe indicates there is a serious danger of concentrated epidemic outbreaks among injecting drug users, men having sex with men and prostituting men and women. Therefore two new indicators will be added tracking HIV prevalence among injecting drug users and men having sex with men. The objective is to limit the spread of HIV under 5% in each group.

Like in most European countries recently, the spread of **tuberculosis** in Bulgaria has been increasing. Tuberculosis incidence was 25.9/100,000 people in 1990 and 40.1/100,000 in 2005. The epidemiological situation in Bulgaria shows that the goal to reduce tuberculosis cases by half down to 20 per 100,000 persons in 2015 is overambitious and should be revised with the more realistic target of 22/100,000. Key factors contributing to the resurgence of tuberculosis include the appearance of extremely resistant forms of the disease, the fast increase in HIV cases, and the growing numbers of most-at-risk people. In 2007 the government launched a new National Program for Tuberculosis Prevention and Control in Bulgaria (2007–2011) and a Program for Improving TB Control in Bulgaria, financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Syphilis morbidity in the EU and in Bulgaria characteristically shows cyclic dynamics caused primarily by changing patterns of sexual behavior. After a peak in 1990–2000, syphilis morbidity began to subside, down to 7.7/100,000 in 2005 and 6.6/100,000 in 2006. Reducing new cases of syphilis to 5 per 100,000 by 2015 is a realistic goal. It will depend on several factors – limiting the spread of syphilis among the highest risk groups (injecting drug users, prostituting men and women and young Roma men) and limiting the cases of congenital syphilis, which lately have alarmingly increased.

Millennium Development Goal 7 is about ensuring environmental sustainability. In accordance with international recommendations, one new target was added: *Reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2010*. Another modification is connected with the Natura 2000 network. The target proportion of protected territories by 2015 is revised from 12% to 34%. At the end of 2007 protected areas covered 28% of Bulgaria's territory.

Bulgaria is successfully meeting its obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the 1988 baseline. Greenhouse gas emissions were 70,718 Gg CO² equivalent in 2006, a 50.14% reduction from the 1988 baseline compared to the obligation for 8% reduction under the Kyoto Protocol.

The proportion of the population covered by organized waste collection and disposal systems has grown from 80.2% in 2001 to 90.3% in 2006. Central water supply systems already cover 98.9% of Bulgaria's population.

Progress in the establishment of waste water treatment plants is relatively slower. The share of people served has marginally increased to 41.1% in 2006 from 40% in 2001.

The most significant domestic disparities concern the establishment of environmental infrastructure. Whereas almost 100% of urban dwellers benefit from organized waste collection, the proportion for rural dwellers is under 40%. The district centers Vidin, Kurdzhali, Russe and Silistra have no waste water treatment plants, and plants are still under construction in Blagoevgrad, Pazardjik, Targovishte, Stara Zagora and Haskovo.

Goal 8 – Partnership for development, was completely revised according to Bulgaria's new status as an EU member. By 2015 Bulgaria sets the goal to complete the transition from a recipient of international aid to a donor of official development assistance (ODA). That will require its effective participation in EU overall development cooperation policy. More specifically, by 2010 Bulgaria will strive to contribute annually 0.17% of GNI (gross national income) on official development aid compared to 0.053% in 2007. ODA allocations should grow to 0.33% by 2015.

To achieve these goals, Bulgaria will create a Development Agency and will define specific thematic and regional priorities, as well as specific ways for providing ODA. The Development Cooperation Concept elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sets priorities on fighting poverty and improving the quality of life. Target regions for Bulgaria include South East Europe, the Black Sea region and – in the future – Africa, where EU has decided to channel 50% of its development assistance.

The achievement of these goals requires first and foremost the support of Bulgarian citizens, for many of which the average EU standard is still a difficult to achieve, far-off prospect. Bulgarian society needs a profound change of values and attitudes to face the country's new global responsibilities.

In conclusion, Bulgaria's eight Millennium Development Goals are largely intertwined with one another. In the strongly competitive environment of the European Union, high incomes are unthinkable without competitive, good quality education. Economic progress needs good healthcare because a long-lived and productive workforce is indispensable. Higher incomes and employment in turn will lead to better access to education, lower child and maternal mortality, more care for socially sensitive diseases like HIV/AIDS, syphilis and tuberculosis, and greater responsibility to the environment.

Behind overall national achievements, however, there are dramatic disparities. Major contrasts can be seen in all social areas – incomes, education and healthcare. They jeopardize sustainable development, because they create a soil for internal conflict on social, economic, regional or ethnic grounds. Furthermore, Bulgaria is part of our global home and global poverty is not something Bulgarian citizens can pretend to ignore – not only because of human solidarity and Bulgaria's international commitments, but also because overwhelming global disparities lead to upheavals that affect all.

On the whole, in 2003–2008 Bulgaria has achieved significant progress against the defined goals. As economic, educational and health standards come closer to EU levels, both Bulgarian citizens and EU institutions will increasingly insist on better governance, too.

ANNEX:

TABLES

Goal 1: Halve extreme poverty and malnutrition

	2001	2007	2015
1. Average monthly income (in euros)	88.35	164.90	380
2. Proportion of the poor (%)	15.6	14.1	13
3. Poverty line (in euros)	53.01	98.94	228
4. Proportion of underweight newborns under 2,500 grams per 1,000 live births	8.6	8.8	6
5. Youth unemployment (people aged 15-24) - %	38.8	15.1	10
6. Long-term unemployment - %	12.1	4.0	3
7. Employment (people aged 15-64) - %	49.7	61.7	70
8. Employment (people aged 55-64) - %	24.0	42.6	50
9. GDP per 1 employee in PPS (EC-27 = 100)	31.4	35.6	45
10. Relative share of employee compensation in GDP (%)	34.9	34.5	40

Goal 2: Improve primary and secondary education

	2002	2007	2015
1. Net enrollment rate in the initial stage of primary education (elementary school)	99.8	97.8	100.0
2. Net completion rate in the initial stage of primary education (elementary school)	93.3	94.7	100.0
3. Net enrollment rate in the junior high stage of primary education	83.9	83.7	97.0
4. Net completion rate in the junior high stage of primary education	85.0	86.5	95.0
5. Net dropout rate in the junior high stage of primary education	3.2		2.0
6. Net enrollment rate in secondary education	74.9	78.3	86.0
7. Net completion rate in secondary education	51.31*	76.3	90.0
8. Net dropout rate in secondary education	3.0		1.0

*The number of graduates in 2002 was smaller as a result of the extended overall length of education by one year

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

1. Pay of women as a percentage of the pay of men	72% (2000)	82% (2005)	80%
2. Proportion of women in the National Assembly and in Municipal Councils	26% (2001)	22% (2007)	40%

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

	2001	2007	2015
1. Child mortality for the 0-5 age group per 1,000 live births (a child's likelihood to die under age 5)	16.7	11.0	9.5
2. Infant mortality (children deceased before one-year of age) per 1,000 live births	14.4	9.2	7.0
3. Perinatal mortality (still-born + dead before the 6th day) per 1,000 live births	12.3	11.0	8.0
4. Proportion of underweight live births (under 2,500 g. at birth)	8.6	8.8	6.0

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

	2000 - 2002	2006	2015
1. New cases of cervical cancer per 100,000 women	27.7 (2002)	29.4	15.0
2. Abortions (per 1,000 live births)	750 (2001)	504	550
3. Proportion (%) of pregnant women under medical monitoring (until the third month of pregnancy)	81.8 (2000)	64.5	90.0
4. Proportion (%) of births attended by qualified healthcare personnel	98.8 (2000)	99.4	99.8

Goal 6: Limit the spread of HIV/AIDS, syphilis and tuberculosis

	2001	2006	2015
1. HIV/AIDS prevalence among people aged between 15 and 24	<0.01%	-	<1%
2. HIV/AIDS prevalence among intravenous drug users	-	0.5% (2005)	<5%
3. HIV/AIDS prevalence among men having sex with men	-	-	<5%
4. Tuberculosis incidence (per 100,000 persons)	48.8	39.1	22
5. Countrywide DOTS coverage	-	100%	100%
6. Successful DOTS treatment	87%	-	>85%
7. Syphilis incidence (per 100,000)	18.7	6.6	5.0

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

	2001	2006	2015
1. Proportion of the territory covered by forests	31.2%	33.3%	35.9%
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Gg CO ² equivalent) against 1988 baseline	(-)54.32%	(-)50.14%	(-)8% (until 2012)
3. Proportion of electricity from renewable energy sources	4.7%		15%
4. Proportion of the population covered by an organized waste collection and disposal system	80.2%	90.3%	95.0%
5. Proportion of protected territories	4.8%	28% (2007)	34%
6. Proportion of the population served by waste water treatment plants	40%	41.1%	75%
7. Proportion of the population connected to sewerage networks	67.9%	69.4%	75%
8. Proportion of the population connected to central water supply	98.7%	98.9	100%

Goal 8: Include Bulgaria in the system of official development assistance

	2005	2007	2015
1. Proportion of gross national income (GNI) contributed to official development assistance	0.0359%	0.053%	0.33%



UN Resident Coordinator's office

25, Khan Krum Str.
1040 Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel: (+359 2) 96 96 100
Fax: (+359 2) 981 31 84
www.un-bg.bg