



B R I E F I N G M A T E R I A L

N A T I O N A L D E L I B E R A T I V E P O L L

Policies Toward the Roma in Bulgaria

| G H E T T O E S | C R I M E | E D U C A T I O N |



Content:



NATIONAL DELIBERATIVE POLL*

Policies Toward the Roma in Bulgaria

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Why a National Deliberative Poll “Policies toward the Roma”?

One of the most serious problems caused by the transition in Bulgaria is the social and economic situation of the Roma. This issue increasingly affects the whole society. Regardless of the fact that the Roma receive social assistance, their situation does not improve. Many of them live in extreme poverty, they are isolated in ghettos, they lack adequate education, and they have few opportunities to find a job. This closes the vicious circle in which generations of Roma live only on welfare. Everyday communication and willingness for communication between Roma and Bulgarians is constantly receding, and the problems with the limited access to education, jobs and quality of life are growing deeper. The economy will incur further losses because a part of the population does not work, the financial support of the Roma (as part of the group of the socially disadvantaged) will become more expensive, and dangerous political and social tensions in society will emerge. If this vicious circle is not broken, we will all continue to pay the high price of our lack of concern.

Why Is a National Deliberative Poll Necessary?

Many people in Bulgaria do not feel represented and their voice is not heard when the government institutions make decisions. This leads to withdrawal from politics and mistrust in the government institutions. What can we do to make the voice of the people heard? One of the answers is to hold referendums and apply other forms of direct democracy. The problem with referendums is that they are expensive and difficult to organize, and their critics do not miss to point out that the referendum is in essence a mechanism for seeking the opinion of uninformed citizens. The other option is to conduct national Deliberative Poll, like this one, on key issues for the country to make the voice of the people heard while avoiding some of the problems associated with referendums. The national Deliberative Poll® is an opportunity for all of you, after having discussed the problem with experts and politicians, to share your opinion on an issue that affects us all as citizens.



The National Deliberative Poll “Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria” does not aim to reach an agreement. As organizers we hope that our conversation during the two days of deliberation will help the experts and politicians to acquire a better idea of what people think and what specific measures they believe will be effective in tackling this serious issue.

The Roma in Bulgaria

The Roma in Bulgaria

The forefathers of today's Roma come from India. The earliest descriptions of Roma in the Balkans are from the 13th -14th century, The first groups settle down on the territory in what is today's Bulgaria at the end of that period. A significant part of the Roma settled soon after coming and by the end of the 19th century they had already lost their nomadic culture.

The Roma community in Bulgaria, and around the world, is made up of many traditional sub-groups. Regardless of their traditional differences, however, the acute social problems are common for many of the Roma – poverty, unemployment, lack of education, poor health, bad housing. Not all the Roma live in deprivation. There are also some rich Roma; there is also a Roma middle class who, like most Bulgarians, live on limited income, but they work, pay their bills and send their children to school. The reason that the successful Roma are hardly noticed by the rest of society is that those who have a good education and are fully integrated are no longer perceived as Roma. Despite the variety of traditions in the group, many of the educated Roma are trying to create the understanding that the community is unified in their common identity and faced with common problems.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



Of the Roma²

44%

are Orthodox.

Christians

39%

are Muslim.

15% are Prot-

estants.

Less than

1% are Cath-

olic

About 370 000 people identified themselves as Roma in the 2001 Census¹. Approximately the same number exhibit characteristics typical for the Roma population and are frequently identified as “Roma” or “gypsies” by the other groups. Most of them deny being Roma and identify themselves as either Turks, or Bulgarians. A small part even claim to be Vlachs. According to expert estimates, the number of those perceived as Roma varies between 700 000 and 800 000 people³. The most recent Census shows that almost half of the Roma population is concentrated in the villages. Unlike those in Romania and Hungary, Bulgarian Roma live in closed-in communities and the number of mixed marriages is smaller.

Compared to the total number of Roma in the country, the number of Roma represented in government at both political and expert levels as remains quite low. Currently there is only one Roma MP in Parliament, and of 5281 municipal councillors only 100 are Roma. Sometimes MPs of non-Roma origin advance the interests of constituencies that are predominantly Roma. Despite the fact that more than 10 political parties target their messages to the Roma voters, they are practically without any power and are not represented in Parliament. Some of the major parties put Roma candidates on their lists but usually at the bottom of the party ballot where they can hardly get elected.

Policies for the Roma

There are different social assistance and employment programs in Bulgaria. The Roma, to a greater extent as compared to other ethnic groups, collect social benefits. This is not because the social assistance, employment and health legislation grant special rights to the Roma. The laws provide equal rights to welfare for all disadvantaged groups - people who do not have property and who live below a certain minimal income level. The larger number of Roma who receive social assistance is due to the fact that most of them are poor. Unemployment among the Roma is very high - more than a half of the adult Roma have no regular job and as a result there is extreme poverty - 64% of the Roma live under the poverty line on close to 2 USD per day while 24% of the Turks and 9% of Bulgarians live below the poverty line.⁵

Regardless of the extensive social programs of the government a large number of the Roma continue to be less educated, unemployed and with lower chances of finding a job. This makes them once again dependent on welfare in the long run. Thus, generations on end of Roma people have to be supported by society.

The economists who have studied the problem claim that the positive effects of Roma integration would be enormous. Integration will save huge resources from social transfers by increasing employment; it will result in greater

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



In Bulgaria nearly **9%** of the people aged under 29 are Roma. While **62%** of the Roma are under the age of 29, only **2,7%** of the Roma are over 65.⁴

efficiency and productivity and hence in larger revenues. The financial impact in the course of 10 years would be comparable to the effect that the EU funds will produce in Bulgaria.⁶



Here is a generalized version of the positions on what should be the policies to resolve the problems of the Roma:

➤ The proponents of one argument make the case that the government needs to carry out an active policy for the Roma by facilitating their access to education and the labor market. The Roma exclusion is caused by many factors -social, cultural and economic - and is not just due to the reluctance of the Roma to make an effort. Everybody who was born in the ghetto is to a great extent doomed to failure, regardless of their personal potential. This is why the state should make special programs for the Roma on overcoming this isolation, if we want for the Roma to stop being a burden for society in the long-run but, instead, to be actively involved in public life and start contributing to the common good.

➤ The proponents of the second approach agree that there is a need for special programs but they should address all the disadvantaged and not the Roma in particular. There are many other people in Bulgarian society who are also in a difficult financial and social situation. It is fair to spend the government money for all those in need on equal footing.

➤ According to the third perspective, people are individually responsible for their own lives, ed-

ucation, development and career and for their children's education. The Roma should be left to deal with the situation themselves. Creating special government programs for them would inevitably mean that considerable financial resources would need to be allocated which the government is under no obligation nor capacity to do. Also, such programs, though not granting rights based on ethnicity, would in practice benefit mostly the Roma.

This briefing material presents various proposed solutions. Some of them would be unacceptable to some people. However, they are included because they reflect existing notions and possible policies. The proposed solutions do not embrace all problems but they show the wide range of policies and consequences, should such policies be implemented. There are no solutions offered here concerning two of the key topics related to the situation of the Roma: healthcare and unemployment. These topics are certainly just as important as the rest. They are not included here because the key notion of the Deliberative Poll is that good decisions are based on adequate and balanced information on the issues, combined with substantial discussion. The two days for deliberation that we have would not be enough to allow for a truly detailed presentation of the major issues of the national health care reform and the labor market, in addition to the problems related to construction regulations, penal policy, and education.

WHAT to do with the Roma Ghettos?

What to Do with the Roma Ghettos?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Close to 400 thousand people live in the urban ghettos or, as we are used to call them, “gypsy slums”.⁸

These are large, separated neighborhoods with overpopulated shanties, without sewage system, running water, and electricity. The streets are unpaved, the houses often do not have an exit to a street, and there is no street lighting and telephone network. In the past 15 years due to internal migration of Roma from the poor rural regions to the bigger cities the phenomenon of “a ghetto within the ghetto” has emerged. About three fourths of those who live in the ghetto, however, have never left their place of birth.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



Most of the residents of the ghettos are Roma, but not all of them identify themselves as such. For example, in the Census about **5 000** people in the Plovdiv Municipality claimed to be Roma, whereas about **30 000** people live in the suburban ghettos⁷.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



One fifth

of the Roma live on less than 4 m². While sewage and water supply are a staple for 93% of the Bulgarians and 72% of the Turks, **half of the Roma families** have no sewage and **every third family** does not have water supply system.⁹

The living conditions in the ghetto lead to serious health problems. Compared to the rest of the population, the Roma suffer more often from lung diseases, bone and muscle diseases, STDs, hepatitis, abdominal diseases, parasitosis, etc. According to 2004 data, there was a chronically ill person in more than two thirds of the Roma households. Tuberculosis is much more widespread among the Roma compared to the rest of the population. In 2001 every one of three people with TB in the Saint Sofia Hospital¹⁰ in Sofia was of Roma origin. In the same year 60% of the TB patients in the Sliven Hospital for Lung Diseases were Roma.¹¹ In 2006 there was a hepatitis outbreak in the Plovdiv ghetto of Stolipinovo. There is a massive spread of drug addictions among the youth in the ghettos which causes hepatitis B and C epidemics and increases the risk of HIV infections. The higher disease incidence among the Roma increases the risks of epidemics among the rest of the population.

The Roma encounter more difficulties when it comes to prevention and early diagnosis of cancer, cardio-vascular and lung diseases. Many diseases which are widespread among the Roma are diagnosed at a very late stage when effective treatment is more difficult and sometimes more expensive. In 2005 about 5% of the Roma children did not receive any immunizations and 15% of the Roma children did not receive the full group of immunizations required

by the National Immunization Calendar.¹² It is a mass practice to not monitor the development of the embryo in Roma pregnant women, and often the future mothers are not hospitalized on time. The results are a significant number of children born with complications and high mother and child mortality.

In 2004, 46% of the Roma did not have health insurance¹⁴. In 2002, 62% could not afford medical services and medicines¹⁵. Self-treatment is a widespread practice. The high disease incidence among the Roma population affects their social inclusion - creates obstacles to their education, to finding a regular job.

The ghetto is an isolated territory which has its own relations and rules. When those who live in the ghetto leave it, they go to another, "big" world, where they feel insecure and find it difficult to adapt. This results in a desire to go back to the safe harbor of the poor, but familiar world. The isolated life in the ghetto results in lack of education, adequate health-care and unemployment.

The majority of the residents in the ghetto live in extreme poverty, although there are rich houses - demonstrating luxurious lifestyle - in the part of the ghetto which borders the "big" world. In some ghettoes most buildings are illegal. As a result, getting connected to the electricity and water supply network is also illegal, which is why many of the households do

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



Child Mortality
2001 - 2003¹³

(Dead children under age of 1 out of 1000 born children)

13.4‰ Average for the country

9.9‰ Bulgarians

17.8‰ Turks

25.0‰ Roma

4.7‰ EU countries in 2002 (average)

not have individual electrometers and the bills due need to be collected for the entire neighborhood. Most ghettos are built on unregulated land where there are no clear zoning regulations. The majority of the houses are built too close to each other, there is no space for streets and the buildings do not meet the existing construction regulations. Therefore, it is impossible to provide public services like ambulance, fire department, and garbage collection.

The solutions in this section refer to measures aimed at only two of the problems related to the ghettos - illegal construction and electricity. There are no proposed solutions with respect to health care and unemployment; as such solutions inevitably would introduce major issues of the health care reform and the labor market, which are beyond the time scope of the present Deliberative Poll.

Possible Solutions



This section proposes solutions to the problem of illegal housing. The proposed solutions do not embrace all possible options. They are an attempt to show the wide range of policies and their consequences, should such policies be implemented.

The first two suggested solutions are focused on legalization of the existing buildings in the ghettoes. The first suggested solution proposes actions that would not entail changes in the current construction regulations while the second solution proposes the establishment of special construction regulation rules applying specifically for the ghettoes.



To legalize those buildings that meet current regulations, and to destroy the rest. After a fixed and publicly announced date every new illegal construction is to be demolished unconditionally. The state has to organize the process of legalization and to cover the legalization expenses for the disadvantaged for those buildings included in the zoning regulation and meeting the current construction rules. The rest of the buildings should be demolished.

For > **< Against**

- This measure will stop the continuous expansion of the ghettoes.
- This will give some people the chance to legalize their houses and to live in more normal conditions.
- This solution is both expensive and ineffective - it will legalize very few building.
- It sounds good to stop the illegal construction but the state actually cannot enforce its laws in the ghettoes.
- To facilitate the process of legalization will be a privilege for a certain group of people. The state does not provide the same assistance to other citizens.



To legalize more buildings, with new regulations, and to destroy the rest. After a fixed and publicly announced date every new illegal construction is to be demolished unconditionally. The state should establish new regulations that would permit the inclusion in the zoning regulation and the legalization of most buildings with acceptable living conditions. The rest of the buildings should be demolished.

For > **< Against**

- This measure will allow a lot more people to legalize their housing.
- It will reduce the number of housing units necessary to accommodate those whose houses have been demolished because they were constructed illegally. There will be less governmental expenses.
- This will mean to legalize illegal acts.
- Accepting special regulations will establish a negative precedent which will later be used in other construction disputes
- This will perpetuate the existence of ghettoes and will doom the people living there to live always in worse conditions than the rest.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



Demolish all illegal housing. The illegal buildings need to be demolished immediately.

For > < Against

- The ghetto breeds crime, noise, filthiness and diseases which are dangerous for those who live there, and for the people in the other areas of town.
- Democratic society is based on the rule of law; we all need to observe the rules and those who break the rules should suffer the consequences.
- (moved up) After the illegal buildings are demolished, all new construction will be in compliance with the regulations and the law.
- Many of the people in the ghettoes have lived in such illegal houses for years and the state has in practice accepted this. We cannot now just suddenly tear down the houses.
- Most of the people in the ghettoes do not have the financial resources to quickly build new houses or pay rent. Many people will be left in the street, including pregnant women, small children, elderly and sick people.
- The ghetto has its more advanced parts which do not need to be pulled down, but rather should be legalized.

The illegal construction is only a part of the housing problems of the ghettos. Regardless of the accepted solution, the issue of how the further new construction should be launched remains.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



Provide loan assistance for new homes. Those in need should build their own houses if they follow the regulations by taking housing loans if needed. The state should support the disadvantaged groups in paying their debt taking into account their financial situation.

For > < Against

- The new construction will be done only on regulated land and in compliance with legal provisions.
- The families in need will build their own house. Thus the Roma will become owners of legal and better quality houses which will make them more responsible and willing to take good care of the house.
- This will create privileges for the Roma. Giving privileges is unfair.
- The disadvantaged groups will not have the capacity to maintain the property and will not pay off their part of the mortgage.
- This is a complicated and expensive version of social assistance and will be as ineffective as the other social assistance programs.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



The state should construct new housing. The state and municipalities should construct new housing for the disadvantaged people in the ghettos. Those provided with municipal apartments will have to pay a rent and if at a later stage they have the financial resources, they will be allowed to purchase those apartments.

For > < Against

- There will be only legalized construction.
- The money will be spent efficiently and the new housing will be allocated fairly which can be scrutinized by the authorities.
- Many disadvantaged families - for instance disabled people or single mothers - will be given a chance to resolve their current dire situation.
- This option guarantees that the disadvantaged from the ghettos will get the housing without any effort on their part and they will never take care of it as their own. Those who are given state or municipal housing do not have regular income and they will not be able to pay the rent.
- Some of the current ghettos started precisely as state built housing projects. This solution will create new ghettos.

Some proponents argue that the state should not spend any resources in attempting to resolve the problems in the ghettoes. The following solution reflects this position.



The state should separate the ghettoes with a wall.

For > **< Against**

- Thus society will be protected from all the bad things that the Roma bring - crime, disease, noise, filthiness, chaos.
- Only those who have a job will have the grounds to regularly leave the ghetto.
- This will reduce the risk of crime and conflicts.
- Isolation will result in even worse poverty and ignorance and will generate ethnic tensions.
- This will not stop either the infectious diseases or the crime.
- A civilized society should not apply such discriminating measures.

Among the most illustrative examples of the constant problems with the ghettos is the issue of the unpaid electricity bills. Unless all the houses in the ghetto are legalized, as suggested in one of the policy solutions above, problems with collecting individual electricity bills will persist. Thus the possible solutions are either legalizing all houses based on one of the above suggested solutions, or one of the two following solutions.



Power should be cut off in the neighborhoods where the residents do not pay.

For > **< Against**

- Electricity is a product which costs money. If you don't pay, you should not have the right to use it. Otherwise, some people pay, others don't and this is unfair.
- If the bills are not paid, the electricity companies try to make up for their losses from other customers.
- A legal electricity grid needs to be built reaching each individual subscriber, so that it is clear who does not pay their bills. Only when it is verified that a subscriber does not pay their bills, their power should be cut off.
- Even if only one household in the neighborhood is a diligent payer, they will suffer along with the rest.
- This is a collective punishment, and collective punishments are against the law.



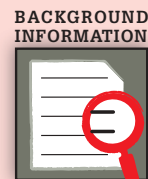
Power should be paid by the Government until the homes can be individually metered.

For > **< Against**

- Since the government has neglected the problem with the ghettoes for so many years and it has allowed their existence, now it cannot suddenly shift the responsibility to the citizens.
- The government needs to resolve the legal issues about housing in the ghetto so that the homes can be individually metered. Until these problems are resolved the government should make sure that the ghetto residents are not deprived of electricity.
- This means that some people should have to pay for the electricity used by others and this is not fair

Penal Policy

Penal Policy



Police data shows that the Roma suspects are about 19% of all the suspects. This means that the number of Roma suspects is 4 times as big as their relative share of the general population. 85% of the Roma suspects are for theft¹⁶.

The data that we have does not allow us to state if the Roma commit more crimes. Police statistics does not provide reliable information because it only registers 1 of each 17 crimes perpetrated (figure 1). Given that we do not have information about the ethnicity of the perpetrators of the other 16 crimes, any generalization based on such data could not be considered reliable.

The police and the judicial statistics cannot give complete data on the ethnicity of crime perpetrators. The police register a small

number of all committed crimes and data on the ethnicity of the perpetrators exists in even smaller number of committed crimes - the ones that have an identified perpetrator.

Fig.1

The funnel of penal proceedings¹⁷



It is not only the police statistics that reports an overrepresentation of the Roma in the group of crime perpetrators. A relatively large number of prisoners in Bulgarian prisons are also Roma. The percentage of Roma in the prisons is significantly higher than the percentage of Roma as part of the general population.

The fact that the number of Roma in prisons is 8 times higher than their relative share of the population does not mean that they commit 8 times more crimes. The majority of the crimes remain unresolved and there is no data on the ethnicity of the perpetrators (figure 1). The reasons for the large number of Roma prisoners are many. Some reasons are social-economic and demographic factors. There is a larger number of Roma in the 15-29 age groups, and this group as a rule exhibits higher levels of criminal behavior and a greater number of the Roma are unemployed. The statistics shows that 62-63% of the convicted are in the 15-29 age group. A considerable portion of research shows also that there is a correlation between the levels of unemployment and crime. An additional factor is the way in which the penal justice system works. The investigation and conviction of Roma is much easier due to their lower educational status and poverty. The Roma can rarely defend themselves or pay for professional legal defense. They get harsher sentences and are rarely granted parole.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



През 2005 г. затворниците в България са били **11 436** души.

През 2002 г. от общо **9 422** затворници

около **40%** са се самоопределили като роми,

а според служителите в затворите те са повече от **60%**¹⁸.

The Roma are being stopped for random police checks more frequently than the members of any other ethnic group. This phenomenon is known in criminology as “ethnic profiling.” A survey conducted among pedestrians shows that the Roma are much more likely to be checked by the police when they are away from home, in neighborhoods and cities where the predominant population is Bulgarian. The attitude of the police during the checks is different depending on whether they deal with ethnic Bulgarians or Roma (see the table).

Treatment of citizens during police checks¹⁹

	Roma		Bulgarians	
Did the policeman use offensive language?	Always	8%	Always	0%
	Sometimes	8%	Sometimes	3%
Did the policeman threaten you?	Always	6%	Always	0%
	Sometimes	5%	Sometimes	5%
Did the policeman use force?	Always	3%	Always	0%
	Sometimes	2%	Sometimes	1%

Possible Solutions



There are different opinions as to what should the penal policy of the state be, including who should the government measures be targeted at. We suggest to discuss the following solutions. They do not embrace all possible options, but are an attempt to show the wide range of policies and consequences, should such policies be implemented.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



The police should stop Roma for checks of their documents and belongings more frequently.

For > **< Against**

- The checks are a prevention measure. In this way the police will deter the Roma from committing crimes.
- More frequent checks will inspire more respect to the police on the part of the Roma.
- The large number of Roma in prison and the many publications about crimes perpetrated by Roma do not mean that there are more criminals in this group which would require more frequent checks.
- The more frequent checks of Roma bring about more arrests and convictions in the Roma group which in turn reinforces the myth of "Roma crime".
- Ethnic profiling is unfair to Roma who are not committing crimes, making it more difficult for them to go about their day to day lives like the other citizens.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



There should be harsher sentences for second and third crimes committed.

For > **< Against**

- Imposing more years of imprisonment for second and third-time offenders will make them think more carefully before continuing to behave in that way.
- Thus society will be safe for longer from second and third-time offenders
- The harsher punishments only result in more people in prisons and not in reducing crime.
- The long stay in prison does not reform people but creates even more hard-crime offenders.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



Investigation of crimes should be focused more on the organizers of crime schemes, embezzlement, and corruption.

For > **< Against**

- The Roma tend to perpetrate more petty crimes but the system remains focused on them and the perpetrators of more serious offences remain at large.
- The Roma, who commit those crimes, do so because they have no other source of income
- The focus on the organizers, just as up until now, will most likely be unsuccessful, but meanwhile a lot of petty criminals will remain untouched.
- Every crime that the police can resolve, regardless of how grave it is and what caused it, should be punished.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



The Government should take steps to increase the number of Roma police officers and judges.

For > **< Against**

- This is a measure that would allow balancing to some extent the existing prejudice of the criminal justice system against Roma.
- Individuals should get jobs according to their qualification and professional experience, not on the basis of their ethnicity.

HOW to Solve the PROBLEM with the Education of the Roma?

How to Solve the Problem with the Education of the Roma?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Under the Constitution education in Bulgaria is compulsory until the age of 16. It guarantees for the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills and lays the foundation for the professional and individual accomplishment of every Bulgarian citizen. For most of the Roma, however, education is just a right granted on paper. The illiteracy rate among the Roma is between 12% and 20%²⁰, with a significant part of the illiterates being a second generation out-of-school people.

Approximately 15% of the students in Bulgaria are Roma²¹. Most members of the Roma community go to “gypsy schools”. Such schools are more than 550. Close to 100 of them are situated in the urban ghettos and in recent years their number has been increasing in the villages as well. The children start school without the necessary pre-school training. The first “sev-

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



The 2001 Census data shows that the Roma are the least educated population group in the country. In the 25-64 age group, for example, the percentage of illiterate Roma is **12,7%** of the total number of Roma. The percentage of Roma with secondary or higher education is **7,2%** of all Roma (given an average of **69,1%** for the entire population)²².

en years” in their lives children take place in a closed environment where the “mutual education” method is being employed - the older ones take care of the younger ones. As a result, the majority of them does not speak Bulgarian well, has no studying habits and completes grades due to the leniency of the teachers. Many do not manage to complete the respective grade. Of 100 children at least 70 drop out of school before completing primary school and even in the cases when they finish primary school, they rarely continue onward. A large number of the Roma perceive school not as an educational, but as a predominantly social assistance institution: it provides what most Roma families are not able to offer.

About 10% of the Roma receive a relatively good professional education and employment (mostly drivers and mechanics for men and seamstresses, hairdressers and orderlies for women); 3-4 of every 100 manage to finish secondary education. The Roma with university degrees are very few - about 0.5% of all the Roma (Bulgarians are 21% and Turks - 5%). As a rule the Roma who have completed higher education do not live in the ghettos and have studied in mixed groups with Bulgarians.

	Total for the country	Roma
Higher	882 795 (20,7%)	443 (0,3%)
Secondary	2 063 011 (48,4%)	11 075 (6,9%)
Primary	1 051 338 (24,7%)	71 521 (44,8%)
Elementary	182 111 (4,3%)	43 819 (27,4%)
Unfinished elementary	30 727 (0,7%)	12 445 (7,8%)
Illiterate	49 475 (1,2%)	20 341 (12,7%)

Most of the children in the special schools and the institutions for orphans are Roma²³. Many of them are there because the school provides shelter and food - they are otherwise physically and mentally healthy children with living parents. The number of children, raised in orphanages, reform schools for juvenile delinquents and special schools is rapidly falling, but remains quite high. There were more than 16 000 children in such institutions in 2005.²⁴

Preparation for life usually happens out of school. It involves learning a traditional family trade, acquiring elementary household skills, working as an aid to a local artisan. Such preparation, however, cannot substitute formal education and the Roma are not competitive on the labor market. Most frequently, they take lower positions - seasonal workers, janitors, shepherds, sorting clerks. Unemployment among the Roma is very high - more than a half of the adult Roma have no regular job, and all members of every fourth Roma household are unemployed. Women are worst affected by unemployment - most of the Roma women do not go to schools and do not work. They take care of their younger siblings, get married early and some become mothers before turning 16.

Thus while boys usually attend school till 6-7th grades, girls rarely complete more than fourth grade. A large number of women and children from the ghettos never leave their birthplace.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



Only **1,8%** of the children in special schools are orphans.²⁵ **60,5%** of the children in the schools for handicapped children are healthy, but the personnel in the homes is predominantly medical.²⁶

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



According to the Traffic Law, to get a driving license, one needs to have completed at least primary education. A large part of the Roma boys stay in primary school only to get a driving license.

Possible Solutions



The suggested solutions in this section refer to the issues of education for the Roma. The proposed solutions do not embrace all possible options. They are an attempt to show the wide range of policies and the consequences, should such policies be implemented.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



More funding should be provided for Roma schools, creating incentives for attending school and the improving the quality of education

For > < Against

- The large numbers of uneducated people from the ethnic minorities will cause serious social and economic problems.
- That would preserve Roma tradition, language, culture and identity.
- Providing increased funding to Roma schools is discriminatory against other students..
- It is wrong to force people to study, if they do not want to or are not capable of getting good education.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:



To close the segregated Roma schools and enroll the children in integrated schools with Bulgarian students. If needed, the Roma pupils should be transported by bus to their new school.

For > < Against

- The quality of education in the Roma schools is very low. Children do not learn Bulgarian language there, and knowledge of Bulgarian is a prerequisite for educational and individual success in the future. Bad education breeds future unemployed who are a burden for the social system.
- We all need to learn to live together. The curriculum is also a factor for achieving that - for example, to teach Roma traditions, fairy tales and even some words. Thus the education of the Roma and their future employment will be facilitated.
- The Roma schools can be left only as an exception - in the regions and villages where there are no Bulgarians in the vicinity. Practice shows the Roma who have studied with Bulgarians have a better school attainment, and a better career. They are no different from the rest of the population.
- The parents have the right to enroll the child in any school they chose, provided that there are vacancies.
- Most Roma schools are neighborhood or village schools. Their problems are part of the common problems of the education in Bulgaria, which need to be resolved without ethnic preference. For instance, instead of paying for school buses, it is better to raise the salaries of the teachers in the village schools.
- Some Roma parents will feel scared or uncomfortable about sending their children to school away from home. Closing the neighborhood and village school may lead to the child not going to school at all.
- Moving the Roma children around will make the bad situation in Bulgarian education even worse. Existing data shows that once Roma children reach a certain number in some schools, the Bulgarian and Turkish pupils leave it and go to better schools.
- Segregated Roma schools serve to preserve the Roma traditions and language, and form a specific Roma culture.

SUGGESTED
SOLUTION:

The state should hold the parents responsible for not sending kids to school. The state may impose fines or stop the social transfers if the children do not go to school.

For > < Against

- This is the only policy that promotes the interest of the child to stay with the family and receive education.
- The government practices are not suited to punish the parents who do not let their children go to school.
- Education is a personal and a family issue; the state should not impose obligations which are contrary to the will and traditions of the people.

SUGGESTED
SOLUTION:

To introduce admittance quotas for Roma and Turks in the universities.

For > < Against

- If one community is completely deprived of any chance to educate itself for generations on end, the discrepancies between the majority and minority groups will only increase. This creates risks of ethnic tensions and conflicts. Therefore, it is important for society the different ethnic communities to have a relatively similar educational structure.
- The quotas will make integration easier. The children will have more good examples of achievement. There was such a practice in the past in Bulgaria and it produced positive results - led to the formation of Roma intelligentsia. It will lend further support for the Roma educational efforts at all levels.
- The quotas would only reinforce the lack of equal treatment in our society. No community should be privileged, including in the area of education.
- The only criteria for admittance should be the knowledge and the results from the exams of the candidate.
- This will not contribute to the process of integration of the Roma community. In most cases after one generation the Roma with university degrees lose their ethnic identity and identify themselves as Bulgarians and Turks

Asked Frequently Questions

What Is the National Deliberative Poll “Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria”?

The National Deliberative Poll Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria is organized using the Deliberative Polling® method. This type of survey is different from the usual opinion polls. Firstly, a national representative sample of respondents answers a questionnaire on the subject of the Deliberative Poll. Of the sample we have selected a smaller group, representative for the country, whom we invited to Sofia. You are one of the participants in this group. In Sofia you will receive more information on the subjects to be discussed from the briefing materials, the conversations among you and the discussions with experts and politicians. At the end of the event you will fill out the same questionnaire. The purpose is to study the opinion before and after the citizens are given more information on specific issues.





What Are the Main Points of Discussion?

The main issues to be discussed in the National Deliberative Poll “Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria” are the following: “How to Deal with the Roma Ghettos?,” “Penal Policy,” and “How to Solve the Problem with the Education of the Roma.” The last panel will deal with “The Solutions of the Politicians” where ministers and parliamentarians will answer your questions on all issues of the debate.



How Are the Participants Selected?

Unlike Parliament, you were selected for participation based on the rules of sociology, and not based on political criteria. We do not know anything about you as individuals. What we do know, however, is that the group as a whole is representative for the country. This means that if it were possible for us to ask every citizen of Bulgaria about their opinion now, their opinion would be the same as the opinion of your group. This is why instead of asking everybody in Bulgaria, we ask you - and in response we get to hear what Bulgaria thinks.



How Is the Discussion Organized?

The discussions on the specific issues will take place in two days - 14 and 15 of April, 2007 (Saturday and Sunday) in the National Palace of Culture in Sofia. In them the participants will be divided into groups, so that all participants be able to express their opinions and as a group formulate questions to the experts in the panel sessions. At the plenary sessions the participants will ask the questions and experts and politicians will answer them. The discussions in the small groups and the plenary sessions will be facilitated by moderators



What Does the Briefing Material Include?

This briefing material was compiled by a wide circle of experts with different positions on the main issues - ghettos, penal policy, and education. Its main goal is to present clearly and in a balanced manner the different arguments for and against a certain solution. The briefing material does in no way provide categorical solutions. It will only serve as a basis for the forthcoming discussions in which everybody will be free to share their opinion.



Who Created This Type of Poll?

Professor James Fishkin of Stanford University originated the concept of Deliberative Poll[®], in 1988. He has served as either Director or Academic Advisor for all of the Deliberative Poll[®] events conducted thus far. He is the Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University. James Fishkin is also Department of Communication Chair, Janet M. Peck Chair in International Communication, Professor of Communication and a Professor of Political Science at Stanford University. Professor Fishkin has been working on each project in close collaboration with Professor Robert Luskin, Associate Professor of Government at the University of Texas at Austin and a Senior Fellow at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University.



Where Have Deliberative Polls Been Conducted So Far?

Twenty two national and regional Deliberative Polls have been conducted so far in the US, Great Britain, Australia, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Ireland, and China. The first national Deliberative Poll on crime was organized in Bulgaria in 2002 by the Center for Liberal Strategies. Professor Fishkin and his colleague Professor Robert Luskin have consulted all the national deliberative polls and will manage the National Deliberative Poll “Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria”.

Data Sources

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- ¹⁴ "Healthcare Strategy for the Disadvantaged People from the Ethnic Minorities" and Action plan for the 2005-2007 period.
- ¹⁵ "Healthcare Strategy for the Disadvantaged People from the Ethnic Minorities" and Action plan for the 2005-2007 period.
- ¹⁶ Unpublished report of Open Society Institute - Sofia.
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- ²⁰ National Statistical Institute; "Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope: The Magnitude of the Challenge" (2005), United Nations Development Program.
- ²¹ "The Roma Schools in Bulgaria 2005", Research of the Open Society Institute - Sofia.
- ²² National Statistics Institute, Census 2001.
- ²³ State Agency for Child Protection. Save the Children January 2006.
- ²⁴ State Agency for Child Protection.
- ²⁵ Analysis of the State for Child Protection on the conditions in the special institutions for parentless children 2005.
- ²⁶ Analysis of the State for Child Protection on the conditions in the special institutions for parentless children 2005.



Organizers

- Center for Liberal Strategies
- Bulgarian National Television
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- Open Society Institute - Sofia
- NGO Links

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- Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria

The opinions expressed in this material do not necessarily represent the positions of the supporting organizations.