



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Concluding observations on the combined fourth to seventh
periodic reports of Bulgaria**

Addendum

**Information provided by Bulgaria in follow-up to the
concluding observations***

[Date received: 12 August 2014]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Information about the measures taken by the Republic of Bulgaria in implementing the recommendations referred to in paragraph 16 (strengthening of institutional mechanisms) and paragraph 26 (protection against domestic violence)

Information referred to in paragraph 16/Strengthening of institutional mechanism

16. The Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously strengthen the national machinery by increasing its authority and visibility, by providing it with adequate human and financial resources to make it more effective and by enhancing its capacity to formulate, coordinate and monitor the elaboration and implementation of legislation and policy measures in the field of gender equality. The Committee also urges the State party to strengthen its cooperation with women's non-governmental organizations in achieving the implementation of the Convention and in monitoring such implementation.

In implementing the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European and international treaties to which the state is a party, and in conjunction with Council of Ministers Decision No. 438/25.07.2013 on the Action Plan for Implementation of the Final Recommendations to the Republic of Bulgaria made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), statutory guarantees concerning measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men should be established.

The plan contains measures in accordance with the recommendations, such as: drafting a Law on Gender Equality; strengthening of the national mechanism for ensuring gender equality; activities to overcome gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices; thematic studies and analyses; legislative changes to strengthen the protection and support of victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence; training to increase the capacity of magistrates, investigating police officers, pedagogues and social workers; activities to promote the participation of women in different spheres of public life; awareness and information activities, including among women from disadvantaged groups; promoting the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, etc.

The implementation of these measures should contribute to better protect the rights of women in various fields and promote real gender equality.

The strengthening of the institutional mechanism for gender equality is one of the key priorities in the government's program Statehood, Development and Justice 2013-2017, item II. Employment, Solidarity and Social Justice.

Council of Ministers Decree of 10 May 2014 amended the Rules and Procedures of the Structure and Organization of the National Council. Amendments to the Rules and Procedures relate to the strengthening of the national institutional mechanism for the implementation of the gender equality policy. These amendments are a result of the implementation of the measures set out in the Action Plan for Implementation of the Final Recommendations to the Republic of Bulgaria made by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The amendments are aimed at increasing the efficiency, capacity and transparency of the Council as a national consultative and coordinating body for the gender equality policy, including cooperation with non-governmental organizations. The changes will improve the organization and coordination of the work of the Council as a

central point of national institutional mechanism for implementation of the gender equality policy.

A draft Law on Gender Equality is prepared, and the discussion on it is forthcoming. The draft Law on Gender Equality determines the bodies and mechanisms for the implementation of the state policy on gender equality and it also regulates the institutional mechanism for gender equality.

Information referred to in paragraph 26/Protection against domestic violence

26. The Committee urges the State party:

(a) To amend its Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in order to specifically criminalize domestic violence and marital rape and to introduce the possibility of ex officio prosecution for both offences.

Ministry of Justice was working on taking actions to bring the draft of the new Criminal Code in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee and preparing amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act. The draft of the new Criminal Code was prepared and approved by the Council of Ministers Decision No. 50 of 31 January 2014. It was submitted to the National Assembly for consideration on the same date. The draft does not contain provisions similar to the ones mentioned above. In this sense, it can be concluded that the measure is implemented by the Ministry of Justice.

(b) To amend article 10 (1) of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act so as to remove the one-month time limit to file a petition for a protection order, and to ensure the stringent application by the judiciary of article 13 (3) of the Act so as to ease the burden of proof in favour of the victim.

Ministry of Justice will establish an interagency working group to develop the necessary legislative changes in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee in the second half of 2014. This process will continue after the parliamentary elections in early October 2014 and the appointment of a new government.

(c) To ensure that sufficient State-funded shelters are available to women victims of domestic violence and their children and to provide support to non-governmental organizations offering shelter and other forms of support to victims of domestic violence.

An investment priority “Active Integration”, including in Order to Promote Equal Opportunities and Active Participation and Better Employability will be supported within priority axis 2 “Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion” of the new Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014-2020. Specific targets for improving access to employment and services for social inclusion and health through integrated measures for families with children and to improve access to social and health services, including through integrated measures for people with disabilities are also provided.

An activity Provision of supportive services, including integrated cross-sectorial services in the community or at home; services for early childhood development; services for prevention and early intervention for children, families with children/including children with disabilities/elderly/including people over 65 year of age living alone and unable to take care of themselves/people with disabilities and

other vulnerable population groups is set within the abovementioned investment priority.

Effort is being put into creation of a better coordination between institutions, providers of social and health services and the public sector, including through the involvement of civil society in the implementation of public policies for social inclusion. The plans are to continue the practice of strengthening the capacity of the Social Assistance Agency (SAA) in order to improve the availability and quality of social services in the country. Measures to improve/create new models for higher quality and financial standards for evaluation of social services according to the needs of users and others will be supported. The activity is included in the new operational programme. This activity is also part of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and the International Projects Directorate within the Ministry of Interior is the programme operator under program area BG12 “Domestic violence and violence based on gender”. Targeted funding for the construction of shelters for victims of domestic violence and accompanying supportive services is provided.

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy organizes annually a vocational training aimed at developing the capacity of staff in regional offices of the Social Assistance Agency — Social Assistance Directorate to increase the competence of social workers on identification and adequate support to victims of violence. 243 social workers from the Social Assistance Directorate from the whole country participated in trainings during the period 2011-2013.

Parallel to the efforts of the state, a number of NGOs/FA “Animus”, Center Nadya Foundation, Social Activities and Practice Institute, Bulgarian Gender Research Center, SOS — Families at Risk, Varna, etc./working in social services for victims of domestic violence, organize periodic trainings, which include representatives of the Social Assistance Directorate.

Social Assistance Agency is a direct beneficiary under the project “Strengthening the capacity of the Social Assistance Agency to improve the quality and effectiveness of the social work”, implemented with the financial support of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development. 297 social workers were trained in 2013 under that project on topics related to the methods of working with children who are victims of violence and their families.

The project of Animus Association Foundation — “Comprehensive program for national guidance to people affected by violence” was approved and funded by the Ministry of Justice in 2013 in the context of projects funding under article 6, paragraph 7 of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act. One of the specific objectives of the project is to provide continuous access to assistance for victims of domestic violence through a national hotline for victims of violence (02/981 76 86).

In 2014 by a decision of the Board of the Social Protection Fund, funds were allocated from the budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to finance national hotline for victims of violence (02/981 76 86) operated by the Animus Association Foundation. Police officers disseminated information related to the line — they provided the phone number to victims of domestic violence through Regional Police Departments to the Sofia Directorate of Interior.

(d) To provide mandatory training for judges, lawyers and law enforcement personnel on the application of the Protection against Domestic

Violence Act, including on the definition of domestic violence and on gender stereotypes.

Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol is covered by the trainings of the National Institute of Justice dedicated to safeguards against discrimination, as well as the implementation of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act.

In 2013 a public lecture was held by Mr. Alexander Arabadzhiev, Judge at the Court of Justice in Luxembourg on “The practice of the Court of Justice on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The operation of the Charter in relation to the Member States”. The programme of the event focused on anti-discriminatory legislation and relevant case-law of the ECJ. The public lecture included 63 participants/48 judges, 9 prosecutors, 2 investigators, 2 representatives of the Committee for Protection against Discrimination, 1 representative of the Sofia University and 1 representative of the Union of Lawyers in Bulgaria. Along with the trainings on protection against discrimination in 2012 the National Institute of Justice developed a programme dedicated to the measures for protection against domestic violence within the distance learning courses for magistrates. The pilot training was attended by 38 magistrates/36 judges and 2 prosecutors/1 public bailiff, 2 experts of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The same distance learning course was conducted in 2013 and was attended by 36 judges.

Protection against discrimination/including against women/is a subject in relation to which is provided development of a specialized training programme for magistrates in the context of the project “Strengthening the capacity of the judiciary and education under the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the National Institute of Justice”, implemented with the support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. The training programme will be developed with the participation of Bulgarian magistrates and experts from the Council of Europe and will affect the application of national rules to protect against all forms of discrimination as well as the practical implementation of the United Nations and the Council of Europe conventions in this respect.

The police protection for victims of domestic violence is provided for in the Bachelor’s degree “Combating crime and public order” in the adopted curriculum course “Protection of public order” of the Police Faculty within the Ministry of Interior Academy, which is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protection against Domestic Violence Act.

(e) To set a time frame for the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

During the preparation process for the draft Convention, disagreements arose between the states on the scope of the future legal tool, as well as on multiple substantial questions. The Bulgarian side took active part in the deliberations of the draft, and proposed alternative formulations to some of the problematic texts. Due to significant disagreements, between May 2011 and May 2014 the Convention has been signed by only 11 out of 47 Council of Europe Member States. This issue alone raises certain concerns before joining of this Convention. After its entry into force,

experts will monitor the outcomes of its implementation, including in EU Member States.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy should do a comparative analysis on the correspondence between the Convention and the current Bulgarian legislation, and propose amendments, if necessary.

Component 1 of the BG 12 project under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism “Improving the national legal framework and increasing the capacity of competent bodies dealing with cases of domestic and gender-based violence”, provides for a legal assessment of the current Bulgarian legislation in the area of domestic violence, for a comparative analysis between the Bulgarian legal framework and the best European practices, and, for assessment and analysis of the mishaps of the Bulgarian legislature, and, if necessary, for legal amendments.

It should be noted that Bulgaria has a comprehensive national and international framework on the prevention and combating violence against women. This protection is legally funded in a number of general acts, including the Criminal Code, as well as in the special **Protection against domestic violence act** (in force since 2009). Since 1982, Bulgaria is state party to the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, as well as its 2006 Optional Protocol, which an international mechanism for individual claims.

In addition, it should be taken onto consideration that the European Court of Human Right provides protection against every violation of rights guaranteed by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its protocols.

Additional information on the implementation of the final recommendations of the Committee

Paragraph Visibility of the Convention

Ministry of Foreign Affairs/MFA/implemented the following activities:

- provided the Committee with information on the action taken by the Bulgarian authorities in the implementation of the recommendations on complaints 31/2011 (May 2013) and 32/2011 (February 2014);
- carried out a survey and distributed information on the mechanisms of financial compensation to the applicants established in other countries;
- carried out consultations with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Ministry of Finance in order to adopt an ad hoc decision of the Council of Ministers for financial compensation to the applicants on individual complaints against Bulgaria;
- created by a decision of the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Rights a special joint committee to establish a compensation mechanism in connection with individual compliances upheld by the supervisory bodies to the international convention in the fields of human rights;
- prepared for publication Committee’s opinions translated in Bulgarian language on the three individual complaints against Bulgaria (20/2008, 31/2011 and 32/2011) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women/opinions are submitted for publication on the official website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Paragraph Stereotypes and discriminatory practices

22. The Committee calls upon the State party:

(a) To further strengthen its efforts to put in place a comprehensive policy with proactive and sustained measures, targeted at women, men, girls and boys, to overcome stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;

Ministry of Interior Academy updated its educational documentation on the issues of protection against discrimination. The focus has been put on combating gender-based violence as part of a general theme of the absolute prohibition of violence, which is taught in all courses and forms of learning within the Police Faculty. The 2014 curriculum for Master's degree will include a new discipline covering the fight against gender-based violence: "Protection against discrimination". For the purposes of learning, the Ministry of Interior Academy uses modern literature as the process of training of police officers covers European law and domestic legislation regulating human rights, non-discrimination and racial profiling. Attention is paid to the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights against Bulgaria relating to the illegal actions of the police officers and discrimination.

250 police officers across the country were trained in the period 2012-2013 under the specific programme of the European Commission "Prevention and fight against crime" within the project European Police and Human Rights in conjunction with the Directorate General National Police/GDNP, Commission for Protection against Discrimination and Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. Two manuals — one for trainers and one for students on "Police without discrimination" were printed and given to police officers to continue the training at local level.

On 9 May 2012 State Agency for Child Protection together with UNICEF — Bulgaria organized a conference on "Children in support of the institutions". The aim was to encourage and bring together institutions and organizations to promote child and youth participation at local, national and European level, thereby to establish the right of children to be heard. In order to assist this process, State Agency for Child Protection developed a Mechanism and Charter for Child Participation which was presented at the conference. Specific actions were identified on the practical work of the Mechanism for Child Participation related to: presenting the Mechanism to all school principals; creating the structures at school level; training of experts to assist the work of the school, municipal and district councils; launching local campaigns for the creation of school organizations in the 6 planning regions.

On 30 May and 1 June 2012 a meeting of the Council of Children to the State Agency for Child Protection was organized. Council members visited the National Assembly, met with the chairman of the parliament and MPs from all parliamentary groups. Children urged MPs to guarantee child participation through the adoption of the draft law on the child and draft law on pre-school and school education, to create links of relevance between vocational education and the labour market and tougher penalties for child molesters. MPs declared their willingness to create a

children's advisory body to the National Assembly. Children from the Council of Children to the State Agency for Child Protection held a meeting with the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria. The second meeting of the Council of Children was held on 12-13 December 2012 in Blagoevgrad. Its topic was "Children and young people — the future of the modern city". The start of the pilot project for the promotion of child and youth participation at local and national level was given during that meeting. The project is implemented by the Partners Bulgaria Foundation with the support of the State Agency for Child Protection, UNICEF Bulgaria and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. The project aims to promote the Mechanism for Child Participation. The children participating in the forum exchanged good practices from the campaigns conducted throughout the year.

In 2013 was held one meeting of the Council of Children to the State Agency for Child Protection in order to actively involve children in the development and implementation of all policies relating to their rights and responsibilities, including policy against discrimination. Topics of tolerance and discrimination, especially in the school environment, were discussed during the meeting of the Council in Plovdiv. Children adapted version of the third, fourth and fifth consolidated report on the implementation of the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, was brought to the attention of the participants in the meeting.

(b) To take all appropriate measures to raise the awareness of the media and the advertising sector with a view of eliminating gender stereotypes, to ensure that women are not portrayed as sexualized commodities and to promoting objective images of women actively participating in social, economic and political life.

In October 2011, the Council for Electronic Media adopted Criteria for assessing content that is adverse or creates a risk of harm to the physical, mental, moral and/or social development of children. The criteria assessing the content are the indicators used for evaluation of programmes' compliance and their elements (audio-visual shows, radio programmes, various forms of commercial communications and other elements of programme content) with the requirement of the provision of article 17 of the Radio and Television Act in order to protect the rights and interests of children throughout the whole duration and content of the programmes. Media service providers are obliged to respect the rights of children covered by the Child Protection Act and other legislation, as they are obliged to prevent the participation of children in programmes that are unfavourable or create a risk of harm to physical, mental, moral and/or social development of children.

On 24 October 2012, the Council for Electronic Media, State Agency for Child Protection and media service providers signed an agreement for protection of children from content that is adverse or a risk of harm to their physical, mental, moral and/or social development.

On 2 April 2013, the Council for Electronic Media, State Agency for Child Protection and 77 organizations signed an agreement for protection of children from content that is adverse or a risk of harm to their physical, mental, moral and/or social development. The parties thereto undertook to respect the rights and interests of children in creating and broadcasting media content.

Currently the criteria for assessing the content that is adverse or a risk of harm to the physical, mental, moral and/or social development of children are being updated and changed. The annual signing of the agreement to protect children from an adverse content or a risk of harm to their physical, mental, moral and/or social development by the Council for Electronic Media, media services and State Agency for Child Protection is forthcoming.

In the period 2012-2013 the following commercial communication/advertising/in various media — television, external advertising, Internet/were identified as unsuitable for children by the National Council for Self-Regulation:

2012	2013
9	5

24. The Committee urges the State party to expeditiously repeal article 158 of the Criminal Code and to ensure that all acts of sexual violence against women and girls are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted and sentenced commensurate with the gravity of their crimes.

In the period 1 January-31 December 2013 the Public Prosecutor's Office have made significant efforts to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with a view to the effective investigation of crimes of sexual violence against women and girls.

For the period 1 January-31 December 2013 for crimes under Chapter Two "Crimes against the person", Section VIII "Debauchery" were initiated 838 pre-trial proceedings with a partial number of female victims — 616, including 153 minors and 203 underage persons. 330 indictments were brought to court for consideration, as the total number of persons convicted and punished with final judgment/decision is 312.

During 1 January-31 December 2013 period were initiated 83 pre-trial proceedings for crimes under Chapter Two "Crimes against the persons", Section IX "Trafficking of People" — Article 159a-d of the Criminal Code committed with a purpose "debauchery". 411 victims were women, including 38 minors and 5 underage persons. 75 indictments were brought to court for consideration, the total number of convicted persons and the number of persons sanctioned with effective judgments/decisions is 75. The pre-trial phase of 45 criminal proceedings has been completed within 7 months, 25 criminal proceedings within 1 year and 36 pre-trial proceedings have continued for over 1 year.

Paragraph Trafficking and exploitation of prostitutions

28. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Tackle the root causes of trafficking and exploitation of women by increasing its efforts to improve the economic situation of women and girls, in particular Roma women, thereby eliminating their vulnerability to exploitation and traffickers;**

– Completed trainings and workshops as well as with the participation of professionals working with victims of human trafficking and vulnerable persons:

In 2013, the National Commission held a series of trainings for professionals working in the field of combating trafficking in human beings with journalists, teachers and school counsellors, priests, as well as officials from central and local structures of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

1. The National Commission organized and conducted multidisciplinary training for police officers, prosecutors and judges in the town of Varshets where 21 police officers, prosecutors and judges from Vratsa, Montana and Vidin districts were trained. The training was organized with the financial support of the NGO “Hanns Seidel”.

2. In November 2013 in Ruse was held the annual national workshop on trafficking in human beings with topic “Policies to combat human trafficking with a focus on trafficking of children and young people and reintegration of victims”. The new trends of the policy to combat human trafficking at national and European level were presented as well as the existing mechanisms for the protection of children who were victims of human trafficking, specific issues and challenges to deal with these cases were also discussed.

3. A “Training of social workers from the children crisis centers” with representatives of the State Agency for Child Protection, crisis centers, Social Assistance Agency was conducted. The training was organized in cooperation with the Vienna Municipality and was aimed at exploring the social system of Austria, the work with children who are victims of human trafficking, exchange of good practices. The training was held for a third time. A similar training of employees of Children Crisis Center in Burgas was also held. That center is operated by the Demeter Foundation, social workers from the Child Protection Department to the Burgas District and the Centers for Community Support from the larger municipalities in the Burgas District.

4. In July 2013 the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings held its annual training seminar for journalists from Blagoevgrad, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Sofia and Montana on topic “Human trafficking: rights, social inclusion and reintegration of victims”, the crime “human trafficking”. The seminar was attended by about 25 media professionals who reviewed the various aspects of the “human trafficking” phenomenon. Lecturers of the training were representatives of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ministry of Interior of France at the Embassy of France in Bulgaria, Directorate General Combating Common Crime, sector Trafficking in Human Beings, District Prosecutor’s Office Oriahovo, Shelter for temporary housing of victims of trafficking, Varna.

5. In December 2013 a training seminar for Orthodox priests from the Sofia Metropolia of Sofia on “Human trafficking — social and universal problem. Social inclusion and reintegration of victims of human trafficking” was held. The seminar was attended by 20-25 priests from the Diocese of Sofia. The aim of the seminar was to familiarize the participants with opportunities for

prevention and identification of people at risk at Orthodox parish level with the support of the Orthodox clergy of the Diocese of Sofia with the ambition to be followed by similar events in dioceses of other municipalities at risk.

6. In March 2013 in Plovdiv an introductory spring Academy of volunteers to the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was held, which aimed to familiarize the participants with the problem of “Human trafficking”. 72 children aged between 14 and 17 years gained knowledge on how to protect themselves and their peers to reduce the risk of falling into a situation of human trafficking. In May 2013 in Varna a summer Academy for volunteers 2013 was held which was attended by 84 volunteers to the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings on the territory of the whole country. Volunteers have confirmed their knowledge on “human trafficking” and improved their skills in conducting interactive training with their peers.

7. Experts from the National Commission were invited and participated as lecturers in couple of trainings for employment agents and social workers to the Labor Offices and the Employment Agency organized by the Center for Human Resource Development and Regional Initiatives to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy under project “Building the Institutional Capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria”. Lectures from the National Commission participated in four training sessions in the center of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as within one training are usually trained two groups of employment agents, each group includes about 10-15 persons.

8. National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was a partner of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in the project “Development of common guidelines and procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking”. The project aimed to develop a network of national contact points between participating countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Romania, France and the Netherlands) for the collection and exchange of the best practices in the identification of victims of trafficking; to develop common guidelines and procedures for identifying victims of trafficking among the participating countries; to disseminate the guidelines for operational implementation by the participating countries; sharing of best practices and guidelines in 27 countries — EU members. The ultimate goal of the project was to improve and harmonize the methods and procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking in the European Union in order to better combat human trafficking and to ensure equal treatment of victims of trafficking with a view to their right to protection. Within the project, in June 2013 in Amsterdam was organized a training for trainers on how to use the guidelines and procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking and to train colleagues. The training included officials of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Local Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Directorate General Combating Organized Crime to the Ministry of Interior (currently sector to State Agency National Security), Directorate General Border Police to the Ministry of Interior, Directorate Migration to the Ministry of Interior, Social Assistance Agency, Supreme Cassation Prosecutor’s Office and NGOs.

– Implemented programmes for the reintegration of victims in temporary shelters/number of people who went through such programmes:

The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings' structure supports two temporary shelters for adult women who are victims of human trafficking, which are financed from the budget of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, as in 2013 there were housed 29 victims of human trafficking (it should be taken into account that in most cases victims stay in the shelters for a long period of time — average between six months and one year).

Protection and services for victims of trafficking in shelters follow the pattern of the so-called "National mechanism for guidance and support of trafficked persons" and the stages of guidance, protection, support and reintegration. The team organizes the meetings with the victims, the crisis accommodation and intervention. It prepares an assessment of the risk needs, an individual plan, provides humanitarian aid, medical examinations/treatment and psychosocial work. Victims receive support during the period of reflection and preparation and support before and after the process of giving evidence and identifying the perpetrators for the needs of the pre-trial proceedings and preparation for testimony in court. Essential aspect of the recovery process is the psychotherapeutic work with victims and conducting preventive and training programmes. The vocational guidance, vocational training, training in a skill to present yourself before the employer and assistance in finding a suitable job are the priorities in the phase of reintegration. The resources of the extended family are reviewed within the reintegration process, as well as the opportunities for permanent accommodation in appropriate institution, if necessary, independent living in a separate household.

In 2013 in Shelter 1 were accommodated and cared for 14 victims of human trafficking, all of which were victims of sexual exploitation. All the victims except one were exploited abroad. The age group of the victims was between 19 and 54 years. The women were Bulgarian nationals. In terms of health status — six (6) of the women had various forms of mental retardation and/or mental and/or psychiatric diagnoses. All had neglected health, as most of them had chronic diseases of the stomach, and all having an urgent need of dental treatments and interventions.

Most of the victims reintegrated themselves by their own will in their family environment: with parents — 4; with close relatives — 2, alone or with friends — 2. The social services provided by the shelter are for a limited period of time, within 6 months, which is not enough for most of the victims of human trafficking. One of the women who stayed in the shelter for 18 months, a period during which she was able to complete a vocational training course, to build her social, communicative and household skills, showed the most successful reintegration in 2013.

In 2013 in Shelter 2 were accommodated and cared for 15 female victims of human trafficking aged between 18 and 45 years. All cases concerned sexual exploitation, as in 1/3 of them, among the basic form of exploitation, the victims were forced to work without any remuneration, in most of the cases agricultural work or maintenance of the household.

Job seeking trainings were held, as well as presentation before an employer and budget management for 8 people accommodated in the shelter. 8 of the victims were involved in employment — 5 in restaurants; 2 in a carwash; 1 in a NGO. 2 trafficking victims were assisted in communicating with their children. In two of the cases, the victims were assisted to continue their education. All trafficking victims from the shelter were involved in prevention and training programmes on violence issues, trafficking in human beings, discrimination and other programmes to address the social and communication skills.

– ***Completed campaigns on the root causes of human trafficking, as well as events in connection with the “consumers” of sexual services:***

In 2013, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB), mainly through its administration/secretariat, held various prevention activities aimed at public awareness on issues related to human trafficking. Three major information campaigns were conducted aimed at the prevention of trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation, as well as traditional information campaign on the occasion of 18 October — European Day against Human Trafficking. Similar activities and activities within the three major campaigns are conducted in the regions of the 9 local committees — Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Montana, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Ruse and Sliven.

Campaign for prevention of human trafficking for labour exploitation

In the period January-June 2013, at central and local levels a campaign for prevention of human trafficking for labour exploitation was conducted in partnership with Manpower Bulgaria and Campaign A21 Foundation, aimed at raising public awareness on issues related to human trafficking — long-term unemployed middle-aged, looking for opportunities for seasonal work abroad, youth traveling for student brigades abroad, young disadvantaged people and to introduce and attract employers into the problems related to human trafficking and their negative impact on businesses and the possible ways for the private sector in the prevention of this phenomenon and reintegration of the victims of this crime.

Forums and round tables were held in cities with local structures to combat trafficking in human beings (at the end 2013 there were 9 Local Commissions for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings) with representatives of institutions and NGOs working on the problem, employment agents, student councils, labour offices, employers and other relevant structures during which a variety of issues related to human trafficking for labour exploitation were discussed. National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings together with the A21 Campaign Foundation took part in the Days of Career Development organized by Job Tiger in Sofia, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, Svishtov, Plovdiv and Burgas.

During the campaign for prevention of human trafficking for labour exploitation, NCCTHB and the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Network of Health Mediators and other relevant institutions and organizations carried out preventive activities on informing certain vulnerable groups about the risks of seasonal labour for picking berries in the Nordic countries, in particular picking blueberries in Sweden.

Campaign for prevention of human trafficking for sexual exploitation

At the end of June 2013 was launched a traditional campaign and conference of the NCCTHB for the prevention of sexual exploitation, carried out in partnership with Postbank. The campaign aimed to attract the attention of young people and their parents to issues related to trafficking for sexual exploitation, including during seasonal work in marine resorts in the country. The campaign included a variety of outdoor events, which were designed to attract public attention to the problem. Within the campaign were organized events in Varna and Burgas.

Campaign to prevent trafficking in human beings in connection with 18 October — European Day against Human Trafficking

Within the annual campaign for the prevention of trafficking in human beings in connection with 18 October — European Day against Human Trafficking, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings participated in the organization of the start of the international cycling tour FREEDOM CHALLENGE, aiming to promote the issue of human trafficking at European level. The initiative is organized by the international NGO A21 Campaign.

Other prevention activities:

- An essential part of the prevention activities include information sessions with students and young people on the problem of human trafficking. Sessions are conducted by expert from the NCCTHB in its administrative office and within pre-announced dates and times in schools.
- Several exhibitions of posters by students from the Fine Arts Department at the New Bulgarian University were organized on the topic “Trafficking in Human Beings”. The exhibition, entitled STEP 2 FREEDOM, opened for the first time last year on the Lovers Bridge in Sofia, now visited Plovdiv, Pazardzhik and Blagoevgrad. The exhibitions were organized by the National and Local Commissions for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings together with the relevant municipalities and attracted wide public interest to the issue.
- The premiere of the documentary by Jordan Dimitrov “Red like lipstick and blood” dedicated to the victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation was organized, as evidence of the longstanding partnership between the NCCTHB and the Bulgarian National Television. The film telling the true story of two women victims of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation was carried out with the organizational support of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The BNT film production was shown for the first time in the hall of the New Bulgarian University and later in Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Veliko Tarnovo, Montana, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv and Sliven, mainly students, disadvantaged youth, and children deprived of parental care, etc.
- Training meetings and field work in Roma communities in the country, within the project “Prevention of trafficking in human beings belonging to ethnic groups with a focus on the Roma minority in Bulgaria”, which is implemented in Varna by the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in partnership with Varna Municipality, Association “Sauchastie”, Bulgarian Family Planning Association and the National Network of Health

Mediators Association. The Project aims to reduce the number of potential trafficking victims of Roma origin. In its implementation lies the ambition to serve as a model for the overall state policy in the fight against human trafficking among vulnerable ethnic groups in Bulgaria.

- The training of police officers from the Ministry of Interior Center for specialization and professional training — Pazardzhik includes one-week course on “Prevention and protection from domestic violence”, “Accepting citizens and supporting victims of crime” and one-week course “Specialized hearing of children — victims or at risk of violence”. The training of police officers from the Ministry of Interior Center for specialization and professional training — Pazardzhik in the Police Faculty of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior contain a 5 week remote course on “Combating Trafficking in Human Beings”.

In order to improve the qualifications of the staff working with actual and potential victims of trafficking, training seminars were conducted together with non-governmental organizations, emphasizing on the indicators for identification of victims of trafficking. Leading European and global best practices were adopted in this area, and are taught in the Academy of the Ministry of Interior within the annual training plans. Short-term retraining courses were organized for employees of the Ministry of Interior on the topics of “Human Trafficking” and “Protection from discrimination”.

In view of its functions and tasks set in the Ministry of Interior Act and the Regulation for the Implementation of the Ministry of Interior Act, General Directorate Border Police took measures to intensify preventive activities with persons from risk social groups, the priority being not allowing offenses and crimes against and of minors and underage persons. The necessary organization was established for border checks for minors and underage persons — Bulgarian citizens. Particular attention is paid to border checks when minors and underage persons (Bulgarian citizens) are traveling with one parent, with a companion — a third party or unaccompanied, in order to prevent the child to leave the country against the wishes of the parent/parents.

With the creation of the “Coordination mechanism for referral and care in cases of unaccompanied Bulgarian children — victims of trafficking returning from abroad”, a uniform system for inter-institutional cooperation was launched to facilitate and speed up the work on cases reported in the country and abroad. Various government — Ministry of Interior, State Agency Child Protection, Social Assistance Agency, National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, NGOs, etc. are involved in identification, transportation, rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Multidisciplinary teams were established within the departments for child protection. The organization and procedures for meeting and escorting repatriated persons/minors or underage/from abroad are regulated by the instructions of the Ministry.

In 2012, the State Agency for Child Protection has worked on 66 cases under the Coordination mechanism for referral and care of unaccompanied Bulgarian children and children victims of trafficking returning from abroad. 48 girls and 18 boys were victims of trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation or have been victims of the migration processes, caused by the economic crisis.

Cases with Bulgarian children are from the following Member States: Greece — 14, Germany — 12, Spain — 8, Sweden — 5, Finland — 5, Austria — 4, Bulgaria — 3, Czech Republic — 3, Poland — 2, Italy — 2, England — 2, Netherlands — 2, France — 1, Denmark — 1, Hungary — 1, Slovenia — 1. In 2012 the State Agency for Child Protection was informed about 3 cases of internal trafficking in our country.

In order to better protect the children, and as a measure to prevent re-trafficking of persons for labour or sexual exploitation, within the framework of its powers in 2012, the chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection has offered to the Minister of Interior 42 opinions to impose administrative measure under article 76a of the Law for the Bulgarian Identity Documents (Article 76a. “Leaving the country shall be prohibited, passports and substituting documents shall not be issued and the issued shall be taken away from under the adulthood age persons, about which persons incoming data from a Bulgarian or a foreign competent body is available that during the stay abroad she/he has been involved in and used for the activities under Article 11 of the Law of Protection of the Child). Consequently, for 42 children measure under article 76a of the Law for the Bulgarian Identity Documents was applied for a period of two years. This year for 2 children the measure under article 76a was repealed after presenting indisputable documents including proof of regular income of the family in a particular Member State of the EU, documents for permanent residence in the state, and evidence that the child is enrolled and attending school activities in the state that the family intends to live for a longer period of time. In both cases, the children will remain under the supervision of the social services in the Member State. Cases of child victims of trafficking and/or returning from abroad are actively monitored by the Child Protection Departments for a period of one (1) year. At the discretion of the social worker, the observation period may be extended, depending on the specifics of the case.

In 2013, the State Agency for Child Protection has worked on 135 cases under the Coordination mechanism for referral and care of unaccompanied Bulgarian children and children victims of trafficking returning from abroad. 73 girls and 62 boys were victims of trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation or have been victims of economic migration. Out of those 135 cases in 2013, 60 children were victims of labour and sexual exploitation, including 32 girls and 28 boys. It should be noted that the number of girls and boys is almost equal. This year is observed an increase in the number of boys involved in labour exploitation through begging.

In order to better protect the children, and as a measure to prevent re-trafficking of persons for labour or sexual exploitation, the chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection has offered to the Minister of Interior the imposition of measures under Article 76 of the Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents for 112 children, including 56 girls and 56 boys.

75 children in 2013 were victims of migration caused by the economic crisis. These children do not attend school, live in squalid conditions, their daily needs are not satisfied, and their security and development is not guaranteed. Their parents have left Bulgaria without secure employment, income and decent living conditions. In 2013, 95 children were repatriated from Member States to Bulgaria, 45 girls and 49 boys.

Under the Action Plan, by the end of March 2016 there should be a single database for victims of trafficking. In relation to the establishment and development of such a database, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings:

- Is implementing the project “Improvement of the national policy to combat human trafficking through the transfer of knowledge, experience and best practices”. The project is in partnership with the Bureau of the Dutch Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings. The following will be agreed in 2014 at national level between institutions, international organizations and NGOs:
 1. General methodology for the collection and analysis of statistical data and making recommendations to improve national policy to combat human trafficking;
 2. Joint handbook for monitoring and analysis of existing policies to combat human trafficking.
- The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings is partner to the international project “Establishment of the Pan-European Monitoring System of Trafficking in Human Beings” (Home/2011/ISEC/AG/THB/400002251), funded by the European Commission, Directorate General Internal Affairs and implemented by the Portuguese Ministry of Interior, Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings, under contract No. Home/2011/ISEC/AG/THB/400002251, ABAC No. 30-CE-0498567/00-35. The main objective of the project is to provide an effective monitoring system using the best practice in terms of harmonization of procedures for the collection, treatment, analysis and exchange of information. This system is based on a reliable web based cooperation platform for the collection and dissemination of information and knowledge about human trafficking, which allows users to decide what to share at minimum cost.

In order to introduce the provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA on Bulgarian legislation in December 2012, a working group was established to the Minister of Justice with the task of assessing its compliance with the Bulgarian legislation and to make proposals for legislative amendments in this regard until 12 February 2013. Members of the working group included representatives of the court, the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Interior, the State Agency for Child Protection, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and an academic representative. In the accomplishment of its task, the working group elaborated a correlation table between the Directive and the Bulgarian legislation and a draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code, which provided the corresponding changes in the Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and the Child Protection Act in its transitional and final provisions. The Law Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code was adopted by the National Assembly on 19 September 2013 and promulgated in SG No. 84 on 27 September 2013.

The amendments to the Criminal Code included a new text — Article 16a (corresponding to Article 8 of the Directive) under which the member states in accordance with the principles of national legal systems, shall take the necessary

measures to ensure that competent national authorities are entitled not to prosecute and not to impose punishments on victims of trafficking when the latter were forced to commit a crime as a direct consequence of the fact that were the subject of human trafficking. Along with the adopted amendments supplements were also made to the offense of human trafficking: adding beggary as a separate self-constituting purpose of the trafficking; and provision of criminal liability in cases where human trafficking is committed by an official in the performance of his or her duties.

Equally important additional provisions are related to human trafficking for the purpose of removal of cells and body fluids. Furthermore, amendments were proposed and adopted on aggravated homicide and injuries were included when the offense is committed for the purpose of organ, tissue, body fluids or cells from a patient.

The approach in defining the term “trafficking in human beings” was unified in the Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings with the editing of the trafficking crimes from the Criminal Code, as the scope of persons who may be granted protection was extended. Currently, this range of persons coincides with the range of persons who are considered to be victims of trafficking crimes under the Criminal Code. Last but not least, the state is obliged to provide training to children of victims of trafficking, not only to the victims themselves.

With regard to the amendments to the Child Protection Act — the range of persons entitled to protection under the Act was extended, as the amendment is focused on enabling protective measures to be taken in respect of persons victims of violence or exploitation, whose age is not known, but from the specific circumstances can be reasonably assumed that he/she is a child (*requirement arises from article 13, paragraph 2 of the Directive*). Thus, by the time of establishing the actual age of the person, there are no more obstacles to take the necessary measures.

In February 2013 a working group was established to the Minister of Justice with the task to assess the compliance of Directive 2011/92/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography with the Bulgarian legislation and to make concrete proposals for legislative amendments in this regard. In the accomplishment of its task, the working group elaborated a correlation table between the Directive and the Bulgarian legislation and a draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code. The draft law was approved by the Council of Ministers during its meeting on 18 December 2013. At present, the draft law is approved on second reading in the Legal Committee to the National Assembly and its consideration and adoption at second reading in plenary is forthcoming.

By the end of 2013, 18 crisis centers for children victims of violence and human trafficking were opened in the country. The center constitutes a state-delegated activity (Social Assistance Agency). They were established on the basis of demand for social services in the municipalities by proposal of the Regional Directorates for Social Assistance and decisions of the local authorities — municipal councils. The main services in the crisis centers are provision of shelter and food, meeting health needs, providing psychological support, social skills, ensuring the participation of the child in school training as preparation for reintegration into family and adequate protection measures for the child. All crisis centers operate in a non-stop mode throughout the whole year, with a capacity of up to ten children, except for the crisis center in Sofia, which has a capacity of 22 children.

Under the Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings, by the end of 2013 two shelters for temporary housing and protection of victims of human trafficking operate to the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

In relation to the coordination of individual cases, expert meetings were organized between the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Social Assistance Agency and the State Agency for Child Protection. During these meetings the need of establishing a new social service called “transitional housing” for the victims of trafficking was discussed. The aim of the transitional housing is to provide victims with the opportunity to live and care for themselves alone immediately after the period of accommodation in shelters, while still not financially and economically stable.

In 2013 joint meetings were held with Sofia Municipality, during which was discussed the possibility of providing property for the construction of a third shelter in the region of Sofia, which is particularly important. On the one hand, the capacity of the two shelters is full almost throughout the whole year. On the other hand, the victims most of the time arrive in Sofia and face a number of logistical difficulties in view of their accommodation and/or transportation to a safe place. Funding the repair of the same building is impossible to be covered by the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings budget and the activity is secured within a project of the Commission under the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme, Thematic Fund “Security”. The project contract is expected to be signed in mid-2014 as the implementation of the activities will begin in the last quarter of 2014.

The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings made a statement on the need of opening another crisis center for the initial needs and interests of victims of trafficking and other forms of violence in Ruse.

(b) Provide adequate assistance and protection to all women victims of trafficking, increase the number of shelters for victims, expedite efforts to establish compensation mechanisms for victims and strengthen programmes for victims’ reintegration into society;

As of March 2014, 18 crisis centers for victims of violence and trafficking operate in the country, with delegated state activities and a total capacity of 190 places located in 14 districts. Ten of the centers are assigned for management to non-governmental organizations under the provisions of Article 37 of the Rules for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act.

Under current law, the social services in the country are decentralized and their management is entrusted to the mayors of the municipalities. The municipality is the body which initiates the development of specific types of social services at the local level based on preliminary studies and analysis of the needs of different types of social services in the community. To ensure a sufficient number of services for victims of violence and trafficking, it is essential to identify the needs at local level.

There are good practices created by the border control to counter human trafficking. General Directorate Border Police disposes of officials trained to use special indicators developed for identification in order to interview victims. The persons get acquainted with the various procedures in Bulgarian legislation relating to victims of trafficking, e.g. period of reflection, protection of witnesses, etc.

In 2014, amendments are planned to be proposed to the Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and the Rules for Operation of Temporary Shelters of Adult Women — Victims of Trafficking, especially concerning the introduction of minimum working standards in the shelters.

Since 2012, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings is implementing the project “Improvement of the national policy to combat human trafficking through the transfer of knowledge, experiences and best practices” in partnership with the Bureau of the Dutch Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, Operational Programme Administrative Capacity (OPAC). The main objective of the project is to increase the capacity of the Commission, its regional offices and NGOs acting in the field of trafficking for good governance through the use of knowledge, experience and best practices of the Netherlands. A joint handbook for monitoring and analysis of existing policies to combat human trafficking will be elaborated.

At the seventh meeting of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking in Human Beings, held on 30 January 2012, the Committee recommended that the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria should perform the proposals in relation to the implementation of the Convention in Bulgaria. The answer of the Bulgarian party to the recommendation was sent on 27 January 2014.

In 2013, the National Council for Support and Financial Compensation to Crime Victims has decided to undertake changes in the Law on Support and Financial Compensation to Crime Victims. The reason for this decision is the practice on the implementation of this special law, which proved over the years that the current regulations do not create the necessary conditions for efficiency in the provision of various forms of assistance and compensation from the state. In mid-March 2014 a working group to the Ministry of Justice was established, which should propose amendments to the Law on Support and Financial Compensation to Crime Victims. The amendments also concern the improvement of the effectiveness of the scheme to provide under the law real financial support for all victims. The possibility of introducing a mechanism to compensate in advance before the end of the criminal proceedings will be also discussed. The working group should complete its work with a proposed law amending and supplementing the Law on Support and Financial Compensation to Crime Victims until 30 September 2014.

In 2013, a number of actions related to the provision of optimal conditions for their functioning and quality care for clients were taken within the shelters for victims of trafficking. In terms of quality care further trainings of teams working directly with the victims of trafficking were conducted. Experience was exchanged with crisis center for children — victims of trafficking and NGO “Lefo”, Vienna, Austria, in view of the large amount of cases from Austria. Parameters of further cooperation and coordination in the transport and subsequent care and protection of victims were agreed.

(c) Broaden cooperation with non-governmental organizations in implementing and monitoring the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in human beings and provide funding for anti-trafficking activities by non-governmental organizations;

Temporary shelters for victims of human trafficking are delegated to NGOs, and in 2014 management procedures will be introduced under the Public Procurements Act.

(d) Pursue a comprehensive approach in addressing the exploitation of prostitution, including by developing strategies to prevent prostitution and implementing programmes to support and provide rehabilitation for women who wish to leave prostitution, and focus on the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those who exploit prostitution.

One of the main strategic objectives set out in the National Programme for Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of Victims is precisely the development of international cooperation through the exchange of best practices in the field of combating human trafficking.

Similar consultations are held with all accommodated women, and more than one consultation is held with each woman.

Paragraph Health

36. The Committee calls upon the State party to step up its efforts to systematically promote education on sexual and reproductive health rights and to target adolescent girls and boys, including in vocational training schools, paying special attention to the prevention of early pregnancy, and to provide adequate family planning services and affordable contraceptives, in line with the recommendations made during the universal periodic review of Bulgaria by the Human Rights Council in November 2010 (A/HRC/16/9, paragraph 80.30). The Committee requests the State party to provide information on access to health care for Roma women in its subsequent periodic report.

In 2012, the State Agency for Child Protection, after signals, carried out two inspections in medical facilities. It was established that there were possibilities for violation of the right to protection consisting in the lack of regulation for notification of child protection authorities in the documents for internal order and job descriptions. The need to improve the interaction between medical institutions and departments for child protection was specified as a key recommendation for the timely notification of cases of children at risk.

The State Agency for Child Protection identified a serious problem with regard to the so-called “early marriages and cohabitation/partnership with minors”. The Agency regularly receives information from the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor’s Office about criminal proceedings in this regard. The results for 2012 are as follow:

1. Total number of initiated criminal proceedings — 307, of which 138 under Article 151, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code and 169 under Article 191, paragraph 3 of the Criminal Code;
2. Total number of convictions — 267 convicted persons, of which 63 under Article 151, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code and 204 under Article 191, paragraph 3 of the Criminal Code.
3. Total number of acquittals — 2 acquitted persons, of which 1 under Article 151, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code and 1 under Article 191, paragraph 3 of the Criminal Code.

In 2013, thematic inspection was carried out in all maternity units. The main aim of this inspection was to collect objective information about the real state of minor and underage births for the period 1 January 2013-30 September 2013, the number and causes of abandonment of newborns in the largest maternity wards in the country with a view to developing policies for the prevention of the problem. The respective Territorial Directorates for Social Support — Child Protection Departments were also inspected in order to track the interagency cooperation and links for prevention of abandonment at maternity ward level.

The following units were inspected:

- 39 maternity wards in the districts Sofia-city, Sofia, Burgas, Varna, Vratsa, Plovdiv and Ruse
- 21 Social Assistance Directorates (SADs) — 8 SADs in the districts of Sofia-city and Sofia-region, SAD –Varna and SAD Ruse, SAD — Plovdiv, SAD — Karlovo, SAD — Asenovgrad, SAD — Parvomai, SAD — Vratsa, SAD — Kozloduy, SAD — Mezdra, SAD — Byala Slatina, SAD — Byala, SAD — Burgas, SAD — Pomorie.

The status of medical institutions is as follows: public — 4 (10.2%); government with municipal participation — 5 (13%); municipal — 18 (46.1%); private — 12 (30.7%).

- Registered 25,162 newborns, including:
 - 24,302 children were born by mothers over 18 years of age
 - 24 children were born by minors — under 14 years of age
 - 836 children were born by mothers in the age group of 14 to 18
- Of all the 25,162 children:
 - 224 children were born with disabilities and/or malformations
 - 197 were stillbirths.
- Child Protection Department/Social Assistance Directorate has not been notified for most of the cases of children with disabilities.
- reports were presented to the Social Assistance Directorate for children at risk of abandonment.
- 470 signals submitted by mothers under 18 years of age.
- 388 is the number of the signals not submitted to the Social Assistance Directorate

The fact that for about 5% of the minor mothers this is a second birth in a row is alarming.

The respective Regional Prosecutor's Offices have been informed for every signal/report received in the Social Assistance Directorates. Refusals to initiate pretrial proceedings have been received for all signals/reports submitted in 2013 by the Regional Prosecutor's Offices.

In 5 cases the Social Assistance Directorate convened the team of the Coordination mechanism of interaction in working on cases of children who are victims of violence or at risk of violence and interaction in crisis intervention.

Of all 39 inspections carried out, 30 hospitals received mandatory prescriptions to remove deficiencies and violations by the managers, containing 94 points to be executed.

The directors of 11 Social Assistance Directorates received mandatory instructions with 44 points to be executed.

In order to increase the health awareness of persons from vulnerable groups, including Roma people and to improve their health status, the Regional Healthcare Inspectorates performed a number of activities such as lectures, broadcasted video and audio films, conducted awareness campaigns on the importance of preventive examinations, vaccinations and immunizations in accordance with the National Immunization Schedule, information for the Roma people on health insurance rights and obligations which they have as patients, on topics related to the damage from the most common risk factors for health and the benefits of healthy life. On these topics in 2013 were conducted: 119 trainings with over 1,280 persons; 9 discussions with 113 persons; 1,034 lectures, covering 4,435 persons; 94 awareness campaigns with over 3,650 persons; 43 films and videos on health issues; 21 presentations; 20,889 materials with health information; Regional Health Inspections in Dobrich and Montana made 229 prescriptions to general practitioners for coverage with polio vaccine for children up to 15 years of age who have incomplete immune status; 1,151 epidemiological studies; 666 preventive examinations; 879 health information events; 63 individual consultations; 2 surveys in Burgas, which covered 200 persons; 9 interactive sessions; 20 radio and 12 TV shows; 63 web publications and 40 press publications.

With the help of mobile offices and teams provided by the Ministry of Health preventive examinations of uninsured persons of Roma origin and examinations of people with limited access to medical facilities were conducted. Offices were located in areas with compact Roma population in order to cover the maximum number of people who have difficulty accessing health services. Activities were implemented through mediators, regional health inspections, obstetricians, general practitioners and paediatricians from local hospitals. Campaigns were organized by the National Network of Health Mediators and the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues to the Council of Ministers. In 2013, with the help of the mobile units for clinical laboratory, ultrasound, mammography and fluorography 11,154 people were examined; 2,333 people (21%) were diagnosed with diseases; 905 children from 0-18 years of age with incomplete immunization status were immunized according to the National Immunization Schedule.

Paragraph Economic and Social Benefits

40. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Mainstream a gender perspective in all poverty alleviation and development programmes to ensure that women fully benefit from such measures according to their needs;**

The gender equality principle is introduced as a horizontal principal under the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development/HRD OP/2014-2020. It

provides both the implementation of specific measures in the field, and respecting the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination at horizontal level at all stages of implementation of the programme.

Paragraph Disadvantaged Groups of Women

44. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, comprehensive statistical data disaggregated by sex on the situation of disadvantaged groups of women, such as ethnic minorities, elderly women and women with disabilities, in all areas covered by the Convention, as well as information on specific programmes. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures, including temporary special measures, with a view to accelerating the realization of substantive equality for such disadvantaged groups of women.

Research and analysis of the policies for the child and family is done by collecting, introducing and summarizing database information for their implementation.

The creation, maintenance and updating of the National Information System (NIS) is carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles and policy guidelines for the protection of the child and in accordance with the principle of prevention of multiple discrimination. The implementation of this activity is the basis for the development of all strategic and operational documents relating to child protection and sectorial children policies.

The basic information in the NIS of the State Agency for Child Protection includes: children who need special protection; children at risk, specialized institutions for children and special schools; gifted children; children for full adoption, information about applicants and approved adopters; information about the candidate and approved foster families, information about the Child Protection Department activities — signals, cases, taken measures, services, problems at work, suggestions, information about NGOs.

In 2012, the State Agency for Child Protection has received statistical information in the form of information cards processed from all sources of data for the previous year about:

- Homes for children deprived of parental care — 143;
- Homes for children and youth and homes for mentally retarded children — 48;
- Homes for medical and social care — 62.

The proportion of children in specialized institutions towards the child population in the country decreased from 0.78% in 2001 to 0.67% in 2005, 0.61% in 2006, 0.58% in 2007, 0.53% in 2008, 0.50% in 2009, in 2010 the children accommodated in specialized institutions are 0.45% as a proportion of the child population, and in 2011 — 0.40%.

- Homes for social services for children and families — 12;
- Centers for temporary accommodation, Centers for work children on the street and shelters for homeless children; Center for family type accommodation; crisis center; SOS — Children's Village — 109;
- NGOs working with children victims of violence — 55;

- Social-Educational Center — 9;
- Day-care centers for children with disabilities — 71;
- Special schools to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science — 72;
- Socio-Educational Boarding School and Correctional Boarding Schools — 8.
- Child Protection Departments to the Social Assistance Agency — effectiveness of the system of child protection, violence against and among children, staff security, etc. — 2,352;
- Closed case files — 1,137.

During the reporting period, the State Agency for Child Protection has received, processed and summarized 4078 information cards in connection with the operation and maintenance of the National Information System.

State Agency for Child Protection experts took part in the development of the terms of reference for the design and development of the National Information System of the State Agency for Child Protection. The overall objective is to improve the conditions for realization of the State Agency's main activities, as well as those related to the coordination of the work of the various bodies for child protection outside the organizational structure of the Agency. Digitalization of the processes of integration and processing of data will lead to increased efficiency in carrying out the policies of the Agency in the field of child protection by achieving better information security management and operations.

Implementation and planning of public policy on child protection is based on information flows, containing information and data on the children and families supported within the State Agency for Child Protection. The ability to monitor the dynamics processes for more than ten years favours the development of measures and activities that are reflected in the drafting of national strategic and operational documents supporting the NGO sector in the preparation and implementation of projects and activities for children.

Under article 17a, paragraph 1, item 9 of the Child Protection Act, the chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection maintains and develops the National Information System for Children, which contains a database of the specialized institutions, residential care services and providers of social services for children and families. The analysis of the situation with children raised in institutions in the country clearly outlines the trend towards reducing the number of children accommodated and kept in institutions from 2001 to 2012. In comparison with 2001 the number of institutionalized children decreased by 8,487 children or 67.3%.

As of 31 December 2013, the number of children from 0 to 3 years of age (healthy and disabled, as some children with disabilities stay until they reach 7 years of age) raised in Homes for medical and social care is 1,183. Compared to 2001, that number of children has decreased by 2,380 or 66.8%. Compared to the previous 2012, the number of children in Homes for medical and social care has decreased by 359 or 25%.

As of 31 December 2013, the number of children from 3 to 18 years of age raised in Homes for children deprived of parental care is 1,388. Compared to 2001, that number of children has decreased by 5,757 or 80.6%. Compared to the previous

2012, the number of children in Homes for children deprived of parental care has decreased by 504 or 26.6%.

As of 31 December 2013, the number of children from 4 to 18 years of age raised in Homes for children with disabilities is 542. Compared to 2001, that number of children has decreased by 1,359 or 71.5%. Compared to the previous 2012, the number of children in Homes for children with disabilities has decreased by 110 or 16.9%.

According to this data from 2001 to 2013 it can be clearly stated that there is a sustainable downward trend in the number of children in institutions. Compared to 2001, the number of institutionalized children has decreased by 9,496 or 75.3%. Compared to the previous 2013, the number of children raised in institutions has decreased by 1,009 or 24.5%. As of 31 December 2013, 88 Center for Family-Type Accommodation raising 1056 children and youth operate in the country.

The Bulgarian National Helpline for Children to the State Agency for Child Protection uses a unique European number 116 111 and provides free call services with national coverage. It aims to offer advice, information and support for children, covering a wide range of problems. Target groups of the line are children, parents, professionals working with children and all citizens who want to report a child at risk or to receive advice on the problems of children.

For the period 1 January 2012-31 December 2012, the National Helpline for Children 116 111 has accepted 100,279 calls. The number of consultations held is 19,541, 17,241 of which were with children. 279 signals for children at risk were submitted to the Child Protection Departments, as the protection authorities at local level have checked the signal and have taken the appropriate actions.

The consultations held through the National Helpline for Children 116 111 are mostly related to emotional and psychosocial problems (relationships with adults, romantic relationships, anxiety, low self-esteem, communication problems), search for information (often for the helpline itself — how it works, what it offers, as well as the resources available to help children and families), child abuse (physical, sexual, neglect), family problems (conflicts between parents and children, relationships between siblings), school problems (bad school grades, conflicts with teachers). The National Helpline for Children 116 111 is an effective source of support and assistance to children, and an ability to identify children at risk and the timely transmission of information to the authorities for child protection. The main purpose of the telephone line is to inform and consult children and to provide support and mediation in case of danger to the health and lives of children.

Another large group of people seeking counselling through the National Helpline for Children 116 111 is the parents' group — 868 of the consultations were held with parents.

In 2013, the total number of incoming calls for the National Helpline for Children is 104,535. The number of consultations held with children is 18,003. The number of signals for children at risk submitted to Child Protection Departments is 408.

Statistics for the period 2012-2013 according to the incoming calls of the National Helpline for Children 116 111:

<i>Period/year</i>	<i>Total number of consultations held</i>	<i>Consultations held in relation to violence</i>	<i>Consultations held</i>		<i>Signals for children at risk submitted to Child Protection Departments</i>
			<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	
2012	19 541	779	9 980	7 261	279
2013	20 358	797	10 509	7 494	408

Paragraph Marriage and family relations

48. The Committee calls on the State party to ensure that the concept of joint marital property extends to intangible property, including pension and insurance benefits and other career assets and that joint property is divided equally. The Committee further recommends that effective remedies enable women to claim and receive child support from their former husbands or partners and that legal aid services be available to women with insufficient means. The Committee requests the State Party to provide, in its next periodic report, information on the implementation of the subsidy payment provided by the State in respect of child maintenance.

Soon, a proposal to include intangible property in the concept of mutual property such as pensions and insurance income and other receipts from work performed by the husband/wife will be formulated; mutual property shall be divided equally; an analysis of the family law covering the support of minor children (from a parent) and women (former husband support) is forthcoming.

Paragraph Millennium Development Goals

52. The Committee emphasizes that full and effective implementation of the Convention is indispensable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It calls for the integration of a gender perspective and explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and requests the State party to include information thereon in its next periodic report.

The topic of gender equality is taken into account in the national positions for the period of development after 2015.

Bulgaria adheres to the position that the full and effective implementation of the commitments on gender equality is a key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The balance of the implementation of Goal 3 “Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women” and the analysis of the remaining challenges indicates that gender equality and the empowerment of women in all spheres of public life should be incorporated as one of the priority individual goals in the preparation of the new strategic development framework after 2015. At the same time, the progress towards gender equality is closely linked to the efforts to eradicate poverty and fulfilment of the remaining objectives of sustainable development. In this context, the gender perspective should be included in all aspects and areas of development policy after 2015.

Paragraph Ratification and other treaties

54. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to consider ratifying the treaties to which it is not yet a party, i.e., the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

In relation to the debates on the ratification of the treaties in the field of human rights, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is not a party yet, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, we would like to note the following:

With regard to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, it should be noted the actual position of the European Union to refrain from joining the Convention. The question relates to the issue of business and human rights, which is discussed among Member States.

The Republic of Bulgaria signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance on 24 September 2008. The political commitment to join the Convention was confirmed by the head of the Bulgarian delegation at the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2012. During the first meeting of the newly established National Coordination Mechanism for Human Rights (30 May 2014) it was decided to complete the ratification procedure, possibly by the end of 2014.
