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FLASH REPORT

Country:	Bulgaria
Title:	New Educational Integration Centre Programme
Date:	11 October 2019
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<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	Integrative education policy
Grounds of discrimination:	Racial or ethnic origin
Field of application:	Education
Source:	Policy development
Applicable law:	n/a

Content

Policy development: On 28 August 2019, the government adopted a Programme for the activities of the Centre for educational integration of ethnic minority students (the Programme; the Centre) 2019-2021. The Centre was established by the government in 2005 as a separate legal entity within the Ministry of Education and Science (the Ministry). The Centre's statutory aim is to support the Ministry in implementing the policy for educational integration of ethnic minority children and students. The Centre's main goal is to develop, fund and support projects to promote equal access to quality education and improving educational outcomes for minority students. Originally, the Centre's work was based on the Strategy for Educational Integration of Ethnic Minority Children and Students (the Strategy) adopted by the Minister of Education in 2004. The Strategy was last updated in 2015, for the 2015-2020 period. An Action Plan for its implementation was also adopted in 2015, for the period until 2020. The previous programme for the Centre's activities was for the period 2016-2018. Before, there were other consecutive action plans and programmes. In 2019, the government also adopted a National 'Support for Municipalities to Execute Educational Desegregation Activities' Programme, which the Centre is to implement.

Compared to the last edition (2016-2018), the current programme for the activities of the Centre is similar in terms of programmatic content. In terms of budgeted monies, however, the current amounts are significantly lesser. In 2016-2018, the overall budget was BGN 12 882 000 (EUR 6 583 133), whereas the current overall budget is BGN 8 788 900 (EUR 4 497 575.92) (see below).

In accordance with the new Programme, the Centre will (continue to) fund kindergarten and school desegregation projects to: enrol and keep ethnic minority children and students in multicultural establishments; identify and abolish segregated groups and classes; work with students, parents, teachers and learning/social facilitators to raise awareness of discrimination and negative stereotyping; work with ethnic minority parents on their attitudes towards education and its value; help students at risk of dropping out to overcome learning and social difficulties; develop curricula representative of diverse ethnic identities; enhance teaching staff and learning/social facilitators' qualifications to work with

multicultural/ bilingual children; prevent secondary segregation (white flight); provide civic education to promote dignity and mutual acceptance; organise extracurricular activities to foster communication and community (sports, cultural events, and the like). Kindergartens, schools, universities, regional educational authorities and municipalities (partnering with NGOs) are eligible for such funding. In addition, the Centre will fundraise for purposes of conducting its own independent monitoring and evaluations of the effect of integrative public policies, other relevant research and promoting an exchange of good practices between educators and competent authorities.

In terms of budgeted funds, the Centre is allocated a total of BGN 8 788 900 (EUR 4 497 575.92) for all the above-mentioned activities for the full three-year period (2019-2021). In terms of annual amounts, the monies are distributed as follows: in 2019, BGN 2 960 746 (EUR 1 515 113.37); in 2020, BGN 3 098 528 (EUR 1 585 621.06); in 2021, BGN 2 729 626 (EUR 1 396 841.49).

Key points of analysis: The Programme is based on recognising ethnic inequality and segregation as issues, and equal access to education for minority students as a priority goal. Questionably, the overall budget for the final year, 2021, is lesser than the respective amounts for each of the preceding years, 2019 and 2020. Additionally, it is a matter of concern if any of the amounts are adequate to impact on the issues of pervasive educational inequality and segregation undermining minority students' chances.

Internet link source:

<http://coiduem.mon.bg/2019/09/02/%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%be%d0%b3%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%bc%d0%b0-%d0%b7%d0%b0-%d0%b4%d0%b5%d0%b9%d0%bd%d0%be%d1%81%d1%82%d1%82%d0%b0-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d1%86%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%82%d1%8a%d1%80%d0%b0-%d0%b7%d0%b0-%d0%be%d0%b1-3/> (in BG).