

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BULLETIN
3/2006

1. THE “POLITICAL HEADLINES”

Bulgarian Labour Ministry Launches Roma Employment Initiative

The Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Agency will hold ten one-day job fairs for Roma citizens countrywide. Local labour office experts will consult the unemployed about state-funded opportunities for retraining. The Labour Ministry will also hold six seminars as part of its program for preparing the Roma population for real participation in the labour market.

<http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/news/news.asp?newsid=7805&catid=1>

After its Regulation No. 4 of 19 January 2005 establishing a Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities at the Ministry of Education, the Council of Ministers has now adopted Rules on the Structure, Work and Organization of the Center. It will employ six experts to develop projects promoting equal access to education to children of all ethnic minorities, and will provide funding and support to similar projects developed at other organizations.

<http://www.ncedi.government.bg/>

National Roundtable on Contemporary State Policy for Equality and Non-Discrimination in Bulgaria.

The national roundtable was attended by representatives of the main government institutions and NGOs in the field of protection from discrimination against ethnic minorities. Participants discussed the adoption of a National Action Plan against Discrimination, which, as Director for Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers Maya Cholakova said, should be ready by end-2006.

<http://www.government.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0021&n=000719&g=>
(in Bulgarian only)

2. LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on protection against Discrimination
Draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on protection against Discrimination was submitted for a second round of parliamentary deliberations on May 12, 2005. The discussed amendments include the modification of the title of the law in order to eliminate the slight inconsistency with the name of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. Some of the amendments concern the status of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination as a legal person with an independent budget. The proposed amendments also provide for the nomination of regional representatives of the Commission and better procedural rules avoiding the flaws in the current legislation which in some cases may cause complete blocks of the Commission's investigations. The Draft Law is still deliberated across parliamentary committees following its first reading in Parliament on June 1, 2006.

<http://www.parliament.bg/bills/40/654-01-62.pdf> (in Bulgarian only)

3. RESEARCH

Ethnic Issues in the European Commission's Monitoring Report for Bulgaria

The European Commission issued its Monitoring Report for Bulgaria on 16 May 2006. The report evaluates the progress made concerning the integration and protection of national minorities for the period October 2005 – April 2006. Several main areas of progress are identified: the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015, the establishment of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the National Programme for Improvement of the Living Conditions of Roma with a budget of some 630 mln euro and the education and labour programmes. The report, however, criticizes the limited budget and the insufficient regulations as main factors impeding the proper implementation of these initiatives. The report recommends further measures to fight intolerance, racism and xenophobia. In its social policy chapter the report notes the limited access of the Roma population to healthcare services, education and the labour market.

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/enlargement/report_2006/pdf/monitoring_report_bg_en.pdf

4. NEWS AND EVENTS

Europe Discriminates against the Roma

Referring to the new EUMC Report Roma and Travellers in Public Education, in its issue of 8 May 2006 Maritsa, a local newspaper published in the region of Blagoevgrad, states that Roma children are subject to discrimination in European schools and comments that the Roma issue will become even more prominent in the EU after Bulgaria and Romania's accession because of the numerous Roma communities in the two countries.

<http://www.cega.bg/news.php?lang=bulgarian&year=2006&cp=1&newsid=40>

Anti-Discrimination Event in Plovdiv

At the event called Chain Reaction against Discrimination, held on 3 May 2006 in Plovdiv, the chairman of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination Kemal Eyup said that some 28% of the complaints filed at the commission concern labour discrimination on ethnic grounds. He quoted household survey data according to which 63.4% of all Bulgarians do not approve that ethnic minority members have the right to run for mayors. Only 2.1% of Bulgarian children do not attend school, while the share of Roma and Turkish children not getting any education is 17.2% and 8.1% respectively.

<http://www.novinar.net/main.php?act=news&act1=detsrch&mater=MTkyOTs2Nw==>

<http://www.ncedi.government.bg/>

Bulgarian Courts Continue to Find in Favour of Romani Victims of Discrimination

In a judgment based on Bulgaria's comprehensive anti-discrimination law, the Plovdiv Court of Appeal has ruled against a company operating a local discotheque for having denied its services to Romani youth. In another case, earlier this year, the Sofia Court of Appeal found an employer liable for race discrimination against a Romani job applicant. These two are the most recent of approximately 16 favourable (as compared to 11 unfavourable) rulings the courts have handed down since the Law on Protection against Discrimination entered into force in Bulgaria in 2004 including rulings against the Minister of Education, against a trade unionist and against a political leader.

<http://errc.org/>