

National Conference

"Successful Practices and Models for Overcoming Discrimination in Education"

10:00 – 16:00, 8 April 2025

Dear Deputy Prime Minister Zafirov,

Your Excellency Ambassador of Germany,

Dear Ms. Sukova, (*Deputy Director General of DG Employment*)

Dear Mr. Stoychev, (*Executive Director of "Open Society Institute"*)

Dear Mr. Kolev, (*Executive Director of Amalipe*)

Dear Partners and Friends,

It is a great honor to join you **today on the International Roma Day**, at this conference that unites key national and international partners to discuss **effective practices and models for overcoming discrimination in education**.

Education is a fundamental human right. It enables children and adolescents to grow, gain knowledge, values, and skills, develop their full potential, and play an active role in their communities and societies. **Every child has the right to learn.**

Bulgaria has a **solid legal framework and policies** to ensure equitable access to education and promote an inclusive, prejudice-free learning environment for all students. Yet, challenges remain in effectively implementing these policies. Some of these challenges are highlighted in the **Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child** on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Bulgaria.

The Committee has urged Bulgaria to:

- **Address inequalities in educational attainment and educational outcomes**, particularly in respect of literacy and numeracy, for children in disadvantaged situations, including Roma children.
- **Address the segregation of students on ethnic grounds and disparities in access to education in enrolment, in completion rates and in performance** between children from different regions and socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds, in particular Roma children.

It is an honour for UNICEF to partner with the Government, local authorities, and civil society to address some of these challenges and ensure the inclusion of all Roma children in quality education.

- In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, NGOs and the Regional Centres for Inclusive Education, we have tested **inclusive practices for participation, learning and diversity** and have invested in **capacity building for teacher and specialists**.
- We have supported the Ministry of Education and Science in **developing and assessing the interinstitutional mechanism for enrolment and inclusion of children at mandatory pre-school and school age** and **provided training to the enrolment teams** for identifying and supporting children out of school and at risk of dropping out.
- UNICEF has partnered with the European Commission and the Government of Bulgaria and six other countries in **the pilot testing of the European Child Guarantee**. The pilot project in Bulgaria was focused on Roma children and children with disabilities and informed the development of the National Action Plan.

The ECG is a powerful instrument for **breaking the cycle of disadvantage** and aims **to go the “last mile”** to reach the most deprived children and give them an equitable chance in life. We highly appreciate that some of the innovative approaches and practices, tested under the pilot project, have been scaled up with national and ESF+ funding.

This conference provides a great **platform for exchanging knowledge and good practices, fostering collaboration, and driving impactful change for all children**.

UNICEF is committed to work with national partners **for providing all children, including Roma children, with quality learning opportunities, from early childhood through adolescence, and to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive**.

Thank you and wishing you very fruitful discussions!