

ROMA INTEGRATION IN BULGARIA

Current Policy Challenges and Opportunities for International Support

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The current government programme

Roma and minorities are largely absent from the programme.

No specific priority or measures

Roma and minorities are not explicitly addressed.

Education gaps

Desegregation, educational integration and intercultural education are not included; educational mediators are mentioned once.

Lacking institutional reform

No reform is envisaged for the National Council on Ethnic Issues.

Civil society support is limited

No dedicated section and no specific support measures.



A shift in visibility after EU accession

Before EU accession

- Explicit Roma integration measures in government programmes
- Roma integration seen as an asset for meeting Copenhagen criteria

EU accession

After EU accession

- Explicit references to Roma and minorities largely disappear from government programmes after 2009
- Roma strategies and EU-funded measures continue



Does Bulgaria have a Roma policy?

YES but it is not a strong political priority.

Much of the policy is now delivered through broader frameworks:

“vulnerable groups”

“social inclusion”

mainstream education
measures

This approach can deliver real progress, but it also makes Roma-specific needs less visible.

Mainstreaming: progress and limits

REAL ADVANCES

- Educational mediators
- Financial support for schools with vulnerable students
- Roma-related measures within EU-funded programmes

IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS

- Desegregation
- Preserving ethnic identity
- Other issues requiring explicitly targeted measures

Why international engagement matters

Explicit Roma-targeted measures are often connected to European frameworks and external support.

EU funds

Targeted
investment

European Roma Strategic Framework

Policy direction

EC support

Institutional
leverage

NGO advocacy

Evidence &
accountability

Support by the EC, embassies, Switzerland and Norway/EEA can help keep Roma inclusion visible on the policy agenda.

PRIORITY AREAS

Where GARI support could make a difference



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- | | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| 01 | EU funds 2028–2034 | Keep a Roma investment priority in the new programming documents, with appropriate measures, budgets and NGO participation. |
| 02 | National Roma Strategic Framework | Support adoption by Parliament and reform of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues. |
| 03 | Proven initiatives | Support valuable measures such as educational mediators. |
| 04 | Civil society space | Counter restrictive anti-NGO measures and address barriers to NGO participation, including de minimis rules and lack of prepayment. |
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A focused international role

**Keep Roma inclusion
visible, explicit and actionable.**

Support policy commitments • protect civic space • sustain proven
measures

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Thank you