



Center Amalipe

Monthly newsletter

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FOCUS

"BE INFORMED, TO NOT BE HIV INFECTED!" MARKED THE WORLD AIDS DAY IN VELIKO TARNOVO. CIEDT AMALIPE COMMEMORATES THE WORLD DAY FOR COMBATting AIDS

Traditionally, the World AIDS Day in Veliko Tarnovo was



commemorated by volunteers' Club K7 of Center Amalipe in partnership with the Regional health inspectorate (RHI) - Veliko Tarnovo and the Youth Center. At 11 o'clock in front of the Town Hall in the old capital with a special interest by the citizens, young volunteers conveyed their message to Veliko Tarnovo that says "Prezervatiray se!" (it's a made-up word like Condomize yourself) which calls for regular and proper use of condoms during sex because the condom is the most reliable and universal way of preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancy. Pedestrians of all ages wanted to get condoms and educational materials part of which are designed by the young people from K7 Club - Veliko Tarnovo. They drew an informational brochure that gives basic information about



volunteering, how to prevent infection and what are the ways of contracting HIV, and contacts through which anyone who wishes to become a volunteer at Club K7. Along with the condoms citizens received a red ribbon, which is a symbol of the global efforts to combat AIDS. A little later the same day Red Cross volunteers distributed condoms supplied by Center Amalipe to citizens traveling in the public transport. Focus of the campaign in front of the municipality, which visualizes the fight against AIDS was the sculpture (installation) of the red ribbon called "Getting To Zero", which was two meters high, and its aim was to let pedestrians write on it their thoughts about AIDS and the World AIDS Day. Some passers-by wrote messages on the theme of responsible and safe sexual behavior, tolerant attitude towards people living with HIV, love and others. Another key element of the campaign was the already traditional concert of young talents and artists. "Be informed, to not be HIV infected!" was the message that the concert sent to the crowded hall of the European Centre that evening. The audience was blown up by the performances of popular and beloved artists in the city - Drunk, Krum, MJ, Rushi, Kalina and Christian, and the latino dancing skills of "Un beso" dancing school, "Fresh Air Crew", "Turnovche" folk dances and others. As part of the program



Център Амалипе Ви пожелава весели празници и една много успешна и щастлива 2012 година!

volunteers from Club 'K7' presented their work through theatrical sketches and skits, and held educational and entertaining games for the audience related to HIV and AIDS. Naturally there were lots of prizes - for those who knew most about the subject. Innovation in the campaign this year was the opportunity to all visitors to the concert to get tested for HIV anonymously and free on site. Dozens of young people aged over 16 years underwent testing that works with rapid tests and the result is ready in minutes. Other events that preceded and accompanied the World AIDS Day Amalipe held in the days around December 1, Innovative practice, which was held jointly with the Regional Health Inspectorate (RHI) was anonymous and free HIV testing in two villages in the Municipality of Pavlikeni - Batak Varbovka. Both villages have predominantly Muslim Roma. In both villages, open talk about sexuality and STIs is not typical because of conservative community, and usually RHI's efforts for intervention in such regions were unsuccessful. The collaboration of RHI with Amalipe however, lead to a very successful campaign for anonymous HIV testing. Other initiatives that accompanied December 1 were anti-AIDS campaign in the town of Pavlikeni carried out by volunteers of Center Amalipe who distributed condoms and educational materials for citizens, also a number of courses and lectures on topics of sexual health and contraception were organized in the Center for Parents "Happy Mums", Center for family counseling and support, SOS Kinderdorf dormitory in Veliko Tarnovo, "Hr. Botev" school in Veliko Tarnovo, Complex for Social Services - Pavlikeni and others. Amalipe calculations show that only on the occasion of World AIDS Day volunteers have distributed 10,000 condoms.

On December 1 - World Day to Combat AIDS, Centers for Community Development, joined to the international campaign and the community moderators held the following events: The community moderators from the Center for Community Development - Byala Slatina in cooperation with the Regional Health Inspection -



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ROMA HEALTH
**ANALYSIS OF HEALTHCARE REFORMS AND THEIR
IMPACT ON THE ROMA COMMUNITY IN THE
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA, DECEMBER 2011**
**NHIF AND BMA SIGNED THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK
CONTRACT NFC-2012**

The Governing council of the Bulgarian Medical Association (BMA), the Bulgarian Dental Association (BDA) and the Supervisory Board of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) signed the basic texts of the National Framework Agreement for medical activities in 2012. The negotiation of the prices and volumes of medical activities between the professional organisation and the NHIF is already a separate contract to the framework agreement for 2012 and an integral part thereof. In primary care the most significant change relates to more opportunities delegated to general practitioners. Now they will carry more dispensary observation of diseases in the field of endocrinology, cardiovascular and other diseases and will also be able to recruit highly specialized activities of the chronically ill. With regard to outpatient care, the new change allows 10% of patients to go directly to a specialist without direction. If you require further research and consultations with other specialists, they will be free and will be appointed under the Health Insurance Fund. In the hospital this year the NHIF assumes new clinical procedures for hemodialysis and chemotherapy and dispensary observation of cancer patients. Changes were made in some clinical trails.

NEW HEALTH INSURANCE RIGHTS

Recent amendments to the Law on hospitals will lead to a real reduction in the number of hospitals that work with the NHIF. It will have the right to choose which hospitals to work and the right to determine its own criteria for selection of hospitals. What these criteria are, however, is not clear yet. At present the NHIF gathers an interagency committee that will determine the criteria that will make out the regulations for this choice in 2012.

**THE TREATMENT OF PATIENTS WILL BE CLOSELY
MONITORED**

The NHIF will introduce a new control mechanism for physicians working in outpatient and inpatient medical care. Experts will develop criteria for monitoring treatment outcomes for patients. Monitoring will be carried out by data from the Integrated Information System of the NHIF. With its help one can trace the status of the patient after his/her hospitalization, can trace rehospitalisation and when they have occurred, is there a degree of disability, etc. In outpatient care the results of prevention, the formation of risk groups and dispensary patients will be followed. The new aspects of the control will enable to track whether patients are provided with timely quality medical services.

HOSPITALS WITH DAILY REPORTS TO THE TREASURY

Hospitals that have contracts with the NHIF will reported daily to the institution. For this purpose the website of the NHIF has a new service "Daily reporting of accepted / discharged patients." Information that hospitals will submit for the patients also includes data about them, about the name of their disease, registration number and name of the hospital, foster diagnosis and whether the patient was admitted for elective or emergency doctor and who has directed him or her to the hospital.

**NHIF REIMBURSES VACCINE AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER
FROM 2012**

12 year old girls will be vaccinated against cervical cancer in 2012, the Parliament decided on the second reading of the budget of the NHIF. For this purpose, the health fund will receive transfers from the health ministry of EUR 2 million. Probably NHIF will pay 50% of the vaccine. Thus Bulgaria has become the 23rd European country which has taken measures to prevent cervical cancer: the second frequency cancer disease among women.


ROMA HEALTH

Cervical cancer is one of the five most common malignancies among Bulgarian women. Every year, over 1100 new cases are registered and over 340 women a year do not survive the disease. Currently, the vaccine against human papillomavirus (HPV), causing this type of cancer is included as recommended in the immunization calendar among girls of 12 years. It shall be applied prior to sexual activity. The Vaccine is 100% reimbursed in many countries such as Germany, Greece, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal and Romania. In Belgium, Slovakia, France and Sweden it is partially covered by the State. Austria is the only country where the vaccine is applied to both sexes.

30,000 ARE NOT ENOUGH NURSES IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria is lacking 30,000 nurses according to the Bulgarian Association of Healthcare Professionals. According to statistics in Europe 750 out of 100 000 people are nurses while in Bulgaria they are just 425 out of 100 000. Nurses who are accepted annually in eight schools in Bulgaria are 370. Therefore, the Association has offered to increase the number of newly admitted students, and the name "nurse" to be changed to "medical assistant" since in Europe one third of the members of this profession are men.

**EVERY SECOND BULGARIAN: OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
IS POOR**

Every second Bulgarian is clear that healthcare in the country is poor, according to a study presented by the Bulgarian coordinator of the International Programme for Social Research Professor Lilia Dimova. She refers to a survey conducted in the period August-September 2011 among 1003 people in one hundred cities. Bulgarian health has the worst score in Europe. According to 45% of the people health system does not work well, and 41 % believe it needs radical changes. The study indicates that doctors and nurses have earned the trust of every third Bulgarian, but pharmacists are the most trusted. Nearly 37% of Bulgarians surveyed believe our physicians are good and highly professional, but 45 per cent believe that the medical skills of doctors are not as good as it should be. The analysis of the study shows that patients do not trust the health system as a whole, but give high marks to the work of individual doctors. Every tenth patient who has been in the hospital is not satisfied with the treatment. One fifth of the Bulgarians are using self-treatment and just in extreme cases go to the doctor. At the same time according to Bulgarians, doctors and nurses are underpaid.

BIRTHRATE

Until early 1990s the level of childlessness in the country was 6-8 per cent, while since 1990 it has increased almost double - 12 per cent, according to the "Demography" Department at the Bulgarian Academy of Science. Since 1990 the average age when women with university degree give birth for first time is 24 years and about 15 percent of the former are to remain childless. At the same time, women with secondary education give birth of the first child at the average age of 21 years and about 6 % are likely to remain childless. Among low-educated women, the average age for first child is 20 years, 6% are likely to remain childless. In Bulgaria, highly educated women more often prefer to stay with one child than those with lower education.

GPS NUMBERED 1.62 MILLION UNINSURED BULGARIANS

The Bulgarian citizens without health insurances are 1,620,000 shows the estimation of the National Association of General Practitioners in Bulgaria. The sample was made by study of 94 medical practices in Sofia, Sofia Region, Pazardjik, Vratsa, Kardjali, Smolyan, Razgrad, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo. Nine areas were selected at random. People without health insurances in these practices are 22%. It can be expected according to the data from this sample that the uninsured persons in the country are about 1.62 million people.

OBSERVER**NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM DISCUSSES ROMA INTEGRATION**

Work session on the issue of inclusion of the Roma Integration Theme into the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (2009 - 2014) was held on 25 November at the Council of Ministers, Sofia. The meeting was attended by Zsolt Tostsegi (Manager of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for Bulgaria and Romania), Anelia Grozdanova (Head of "Monitoring of EU Funds" Directorate within the Administration Unit of the Council of Ministers), Svetla Semerdzhieva (Manager of the "Financial Mechanism of EFTA" Program at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway), Georgi Krustev (Deputy chair of NCCEII), representatives of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice. Deyan Kolev took part on behalf of CIDT Amalipe. A more goal-oriented (targeted) approach to support Roma integration is necessary, states Zsolt Tostsegi in his memorandum. Thus, in the memorandum of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism signed by the Bulgarian and the Norwegian governments on June 17 is envisaged that 10% of funds allocated for five programs will be used for projects targeting the Roma. These Programs are targeted at children and youth at risk (Program Coordinator: Ministry of Education, Youth and Science), Public Health (Program Coordinator: Ministry of Health), domestic violence (Program Coordinator: Ministry of Internal Affairs), NGO Fund. Mr. Tostsegi pointed out that funding for these programs should be used to support the National Strategy for Roma Integration. Deyan Kolev emphasized that Roma organizations need to participate actively in setting priorities in the aforementioned areas - otherwise could the priorities or approaches chosen prove irrelevant. On account of this, Kolev insisted on involvement of Roma organizations in working groups on each of the five areas above. He stated that to the Action Plan for implementing the National Roma Strategy a special Annex with Programs will be enclosed to facilitate the document implementation. Some of them can be funded through various operational programs, others - from the state budget, but there are also several programs that could not be supported by any of the two funding sources. It is exactly these Programs for which funding through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism shall be provided, suggested Kolev. From the talk with the different program coordinators became clear that they differ in terms of preparation to start their activity. Ministry of Health has just begun work on setting priorities and deciding on calls for proposals. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are still discussing on benchmark priorities, but not yet come to a decision. The Ministry of Education has decided to take efforts in the northwest region of Bulgaria in the field of early child development. On the question set from Deyan Kolev why it has not discussed it in advance with Roma organizations, the Head of Directorate "European Funds" in the Ministry of Education Mrs. Milcheva said that talks have been already conducted with the "Drom" Foundation - Vidin and the Association of Health Mediators.

THE NUMBER OF ROMA LABOR MEDIATORS WILL INCREASE

On its session on December 28, the Council of Ministers approved National Action Plan on Employment for 2012. It sets the priorities and main programs of the active labor market policy in Bulgaria for the next year. The Plan will be financed by the state budget with 73 mln BGN. The suggestion of Center Amalipe for further extension of the National program "Activation of inactive people" that employs Roma labor mediators is included in the National Action Plan on Employment. In 2012 the existing Roma labor mediators will be re-employed and their salary will be increase with small amount. Thirty new Roma mediators will be employed. Thus the number of Roma labor mediators employed within National program "Activation of inactive people" will reach 100. Another 100 people will be hired as labor moderators for work with unemployed Roma who are registered in the labor offices. This will be done with financing of Human Resources Development OP: in

OBSERVER

November the Monitoring Committee of HRD OP approved suggestion for this submitted by the Labor Agency and the representative of Roma NGOs Deyan Kolev.

THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ADOPTED THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ROMA INTEGRATION

At its summit on 21 December the Council of Ministers adopted the National Strategy for Roma Integration and the adherent Action Plan for its implementation. A Program Plan has also been adopted in support of the National Strategy for Roma Integration, which will be financed with EU and state budget funds within the current and the next programming period. The strategic goal of NSRI is to create conditions for equal integration of Roma and Bulgarian nationals from other vulnerable ethnic groups living in disadvantaged social and economic conditions by providing equal opportunities and equal access to rights, benefits, goods and services, participation in all public spheres and improving the quality of life applying the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The National Strategy integrates the measures available in current documents in the sphere of education, healthcare and housing conditions, by suggesting a wholesome approach to address issues related to Roma integration. Besides this, other priority areas within it are employment, the rule of law and non-discrimination, the culture and the media. An Operational document which enables the Strategy execution is the adherent to it Action Plan. It will be implemented in two phases - until 2014, when the implementation of the National Action Plan for the international initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 will be completed, and 2020, coinciding with the next programming period of the European Union and the OPs of Bulgaria. As financial support measures in the Action Plan are envisaged funds from the state budget and the EU financial instruments. The Annex "Support Programs of the National Strategy for Roma Integration" provides funds for execution of the document.

The strategy will be proposed for discussion in Parliament. The National Roma Integration Strategy has been prepared pursuant to the European Commission Communication "EU Framework for National Strategies for Roma Integration." The document was prepared by a working group of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues which involved representatives of the main institutions of the executive body and Roma organizations. In October, CIDT Amalipe in partnership with the Roma Academy for Culture and Education - Sliven, "World Without Borders" - Stara Zagora, The "New Road" - Hayredin and "Roma - Lom" Foundation organized conferences to make specific proposals to the document. As a result of this conferences, the Annex "Support Programs of the National Strategy for Roma Integration" has been elaborated, a consensus about the name "National Strategy for Roma Integration" was reached and the suggestion to propose the document for adoption to the National Assembly was made.

UPDATED LIST OF PROTECTED SCHOOLS

At its meeting of November 23, 2011 the Council of Ministers approved an updated version of the list of protected schools for 2011-2012 school year. It includes 17 newly added municipal schools having 1,171 students. From the list has been exempted one school on account of completed road repairs. The total number of protected schools this year is 119 the number of students taught 10,719. Additional subsidy of nearly 170 000 BGN for newly included schools until the end of this year will be provided by relocating costs in the budget of the Ministry of Education. Funds for next year are envisaged in the draft budget for 2012.

Decision N 848/24 November 2011 with an updated list of protected school is available at: <http://www.government.bg/>

KHERE(AT HOME)

START OF THE FIRST ACTIVITIES UNDER "TO TOUCH THE UNTOUCHABLE: COMBATING TRADITIONAL AND NEW ANTI-ROMA STEREOTYPES" PROJECT

The main activities of the project "To touch the untouchable: combating traditional and new anti-Roma stereotypes" financed by the European Commission under the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme was launched on regional level in the six pilot districts: Veliko Tarnovo, Shumen, Bourgas, Pazardjik, Sofia - region and Vratsa. There were organized the first modules of training of health, social and educational field workers. In parallel with trainings, Joint Task Forces/JTF – mobile groups started and concrete work on the problems in the Roma communities in these regions, in order to show on practice the collaboration between educational, social and health institutions. In every number of our bulletin we will inform you about the project activities we carried in the two of the six geographical areas. Will make a close follow-up on the different modules of trainings already realized. In this number we would like to bring to your attention the launch of the first module of the trainings in the regions of Burgas and Vratsa, as well as the results of the work of JTF groups. The first module was on the topic "Roma and and Roma groups". Participants in the training were 30 representatives from Regional Health Inspectorate, Regional Direction "Social assistance" and Regional educational inspectorate Bourgas respectively 10 by institution. The idea of the project is that once chosen for the first module, participants to attend at all 7 modules in order to be trained for trainers. At that first module the participants represented themselves and also there have been made the first acquaintance with the project. Training in the both areas began with presentations of the objectives and activities on it. The presentations were professional and prepared by the representatives of JTF groups. Training has continued with presentation of the Roma and Roma groups in Bulgaria. The information presented in this module helped participants to orientate themselves in the concept of Roma community, which is their target group of activity. The presentation was greeted with great interest and accompanied by many questions. The training continued with a discussion on provision of support to the field workers in resolving the problem cases related to Roma community in the field of education, health and social activities.

The discussion was followed by practical work in groups with the participation of moderators from the centers for community development in Kameno and Byala Slatina. An extremely important moment of already launched project activities is the work of JTF groups on specific cases. With pride we can say that for a such short period of the launch of the project, concrete results have already been achieved. The work of one of the regional groups was concentrated on case of children /2 brothers/ (9 and 7 years) who have never visited an educational establishment. In parallel with the educational problem there was a problem with domestic violence over the two children was as well as problem with development of strong aggression in one of them directed to the other children. The international group, in close cooperation with Agency for the protection of the child, managed after the work with the mother and with the Director of one of the local schools to register their children to visit school. As a sustainable result we can show the fact, that the team does not terminated its work with the listing of the children in school, but continue to follow closely the further development. Since there is a serious conflict with the parents of the other children from class because of the exceptionally aggressive behavior of one bother, the group held numerous and consecutive meetings with their parents and School's team and currently the children are not in risk of a drop-out of the school. The work of other JTF groups was concentrated on 3 women, who can receive social benefits for heating, but because of weak literacy, live without any such benefits. The team of the group, after many meetings with them and with the institutions involved in the process succeeded to register these 3 women for receiving social benefits. The sustainable result in this case is in the fact that the team has not simply prepared and sent all related documents, but the 3 women were informed for their rights as well as for all the necessary steps to be done in this kind of situations. Very important contribution for solving these cases was the contribution of the moderators from Centers for Community development.

"LET'S CLEAN AROUND US"

The community moderators from the Center for Community Development – Byala Slatina initiated cleaning of the park which is situated in the Roma neighborhood of the town. "Let's clean around us" operation was held on December 15 and was carried out by Roma children and youth as well as passers-by who joined with enthusiastically in the cleaning. They didn't leave until the cleaning was completed. To conduct this campaign Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" Veliko Tarnovo provided gloves, garbage-sacks, T-shirts and more.

The conducted cleaning will not be single in its kind. The idea of CCD-Byala

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Slatina is that this initiative repeats in the spring of 2012 when the support of the Municipality of Byala Slatina for the entire reconstruction of the park will be required. The envisaged reconstruction of the park will be conducted with volunteers from CCD – Byala Slatina.



YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THREE VILLAGES HELD CHARITY CONCERTS FOR KIDS FROM THE LOCAL KINDER GARDENS FOR CHRISTMAS

Young people from the community development centers in the villages of Batak, Vodoley and Varbovka with the support of Center Amalipe on two consecutive days held Christmas charity concerts to their fellow citizens in community centers and the villages of Batak and Varbovka. On 17th of December (Saturday) at 18:30 young artists presented their program to the festive crowd in Batak and on 18th of December (Sunday) 13:00 o'clock in Varbovka. The concerts were for charity reasons to raise funds to purchase toys for children from local kindergartens, gifts and goodies for Christmas. Concert program included comedy show "Wedding" fashion show covers versions of famous Bulgarian songs and dancing. The audience applauded the young talents and sang along with them. Lots of joy, Christmas mood and countless smiles accompanied the program. We express our gratitude to all who donated money for the cause. The collected funds amounting to BGN 240 became an amount of great joy for children who received multiple interactive, educational and entertaining toys and 3 DVD players to allow kids to enjoy their favorite children's characters in front of the TV at the kindergarten.

TRAINING ON PREPARATION OF THE PROJECT PROPOSALS UNDER OPRHR

On 09th, 10th and 11th of December 2011, in the resort place "Bryasta" near Veliko Tarnovo was held a training seminar on "Preparation of Project Proposals



for Educational Integration under OP HRD." The training was organized on the initiative of CIDT "AMALIPE" - Veliko Tarnovo and "Open Society" Institute - Sofia in relation to the announced program grant schemes BG051PO001-4.1.05 "Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities" and BG051PO001-4.1.06 "Reintegration of school dropouts in the educational system." The seminar started on 09.12.2011 at 14.00 It was attended by 56 participants, amongst whom teachers and school principals, including those involved in the three-year program of CIDT "Amalipe" for decreasing the dropout rate of Roma students, representatives of NGOs, regional coordinators of the schools involved in the program above. Focus of the seminar was introduction into the Structural Funds Operational Program "Human Resource Development" - financing, executive and controlling bodies of the Program, budget items, application deadlines, application requirements, eligible and ineligible activities and costs, preliminary preparation, justification, indicators. A significant moment within the seminar was giving a precise definition of dropout student. The borderline age of the target group was also a matter of discussion among participants on grounds since the formulation of the educational integration program scheme allows for multiple interpretations. Gloria Kostova employee in the "Department for Child Protection" - Razgrad held practical work session - the participants divided into groups had to define problems in schools, identify the causes and consequences of not addressing these problems and find solutions as foundation for future projects.

The trainer Theodora Krumova - Deputy Chair of CIDT "Amalipe" made a detailed overview the application form and explained and exemplified different activities that could be included in the project proposals. She assisted the participants into defining the categories of activities and costs envisaged in their project proposals. Special attention was paid to the various items in the budget section, the formulation and differentiation of costs that fall within each item section. Guest of the seminar was also Vanya Grigorova from "Open Society" Institute - Sofia, who introduced a PLATFORM and an opportunity for schools, municipalities and NGOs to benefit from free counseling services when preparing projects targeting Roma integration.

KHERE(AT HOME)

INTERNATIONAL MEETING STARTED A PROJECT FOR ROMA EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Minister for management of EU funds – Tomislav Donchev, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Policy – Deyana Kostadinova, Walter Wolf and Kiril Kiryakov from DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, European Commission, representatives of non-government organizations and experts in the field of employment from Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece discussed how to increase levels of employment and social inclusion of young people from Roma communities in rural areas. This happened at the kick-off meeting on "Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized groups of the Roma community in rural areas" The project is supported by the PROGRESS Program of the



European Commission and will be implemented by the Centre Amalipe - Bulgaria, the National Roma Center in Kumanovo - Macedonia and Liga Pro Europa - Romania. The meeting was held on 1-2 December in Sofia, Bulgaria. "Roma in rural areas are the most vulnerable to poverty and to exclusion group and we hope that Amalipe and its partners will find suitable activities to increase levels of social inclusion and employment among this particular group. Therefore PROGRESS Program and DG "Employment" of European Commission has high expectations on this pilot project and it will support it by all means", announced in his address Walter Wolf. He pointed out that rural development should not be perceived only as development of agriculture. It also includes development of appropriate social services, better education and training so that young people from these regions can be realized in the best manner, wherever they choose to live – on the national and even on the European market. Walter Wolf emphasized the strong Roma-attitude among the administration and recommended more efforts to overcome this. Minister Donchev stressed out that the National Roma Strategy (which is going to be accepted nowadays) should include not only good goals and measures but also to provide resources for their implementation. Of particular significance for the strategy implementation is the level of public support and in this respect we have a serious problem. The majority of the Bulgarian society is indifferent and often hostile to the integration measures whereas we need actively to support it. Therefore our joint task is not only to convince everyone that integration has no alternative but also that it is necessary for the progress of Bulgaria. Progress and development are related not only to investments in small and medium enterprises, but also to the Roma integration, Donchev said. He pointed out that Roma are not only subject in the integration but also active participants in this process. Successful NGOs are one of the elements of this participation and there are needed measures to develop the other elements too. Youth unemployment is one of the most acute problems throughout the European Union and the young Roma are most vulnerable in this process, said in her address, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mrs. Deyana Kostadinova. She listed the measures which the Employment Agency is taking to increase employment levels in the Roma community (for example: Roma employment mediators, forthcoming appointment of 100 and others.) stressing that there are still needed new measures which to lead to a systematic pattern. In this regard, MLSP will rely on the expertise of NGOs and will facilitate the implementation of the Amalipe's pilot project. Kiril Kiryakov, team coordinator of DG "Employment" European Commission for Bulgaria congratulated Amalipe for being able to proactively detect the most pressing problems of the community and to propose innovative solutions. He emphasized the opportunities which European funds are giving and during this program period there are a lot of operations targeting Roma (announced mostly because the activeness of the Roma NGOs.) and for the new program these possibilities will increase. European Commission puts the existence of National Roma Strategy as a pre-condition (ex-ante conditionality) to any government that wants to use any funds from the European Social Fund. In addition there is offering at least 20 % percent of the fund to be used for social inclusion. LEADER approach associated with activation of local communities will be brought in all the programs funded by the European Social Fund, Kiryakov said. This provides a real chance for serious funding of Roma integration policies. In particular - if this pilot project found a model for increasing levels of employment and social inclusion of Roma in rural areas, this model can be financed in the new program period. The Chair of Amalipe Center, Mr. Deyan Kolev said that choosing as a target group Roma young people from rural areas is very specific and the project partners are aware that there is going to

KHERE(AT HOME)



be done a lot of hard work filled with challenges. Regarding the Roma integration so far we have a lot of successful models for improving access to education and health but employment remains a major challenge and the success stories there are too scarce. The model we are going to build and check its effectiveness is associated with activation of the Roma community recourses and building partnership with local institutions and business in order to develop an integrated plan for the municipal development. The model includes the establishment of centers for community development as a form of raising young people's self-organization and development of municipal plans for inclusion of specific economic solutions, Kolev said. During subsequent discussions, Mrs. Julia Grigorova, member of the Monitoring Committee of the Rural Development Program presented the process of creation of the Local Active Groups under the LEADER approach and the current barriers that prevent the integration of Roma in the local active groups. She identified specific steps to overcome these obstacles and expressed conviction that in the pilot municipalities selected for this project Roma community will be intensified in order benefit from the program for rural development. Their experience presented the community moderators from the Centers for community development in Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina, Targu Mures and Peshtera. Their presentations and stories sparked great interest among all participants. Although they were formed only 5 months ago, they have already solved many cases of early marriages, returned to school, children, children enrolled in kindergarten, etc. For example the community moderators from Kameno only for 3 months have done mapping of all the families in the town, 5 children dropped out of school are back to school, 20 parents were motivated to allow their kids to visit kindergarten and there was made agreement with the local authorities for asphalted the neighborhood's streets. Although these centers are designed to develop social services in the Roma community, the approach they use gives results on rising levels of employment, agreed participants in the meeting. Tashka Gabrovska presented the experience of JOBS-center's Program on creation of job-places in Roma communities in Burgas and Pazardjik. The experience of the "Earth - a source of income" NGO was presented by Ivan Penev. Natalia Miteva presented the programs of the "America for Bulgaria" directed to employment of young Roma. They all expressed their willingness to support the implementation of the project "Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized groups of the Roma community in rural areas". Representatives of municipalities Lyaskovets, Strazhitsa and Kaspichan expressed willingness to be included as pilot municipalities within the project.



"Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural Roma communities" With the financial support of the European Union, Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS - 2007-2013 (YS 2011) 019

TEAM BUILDING OF CENTER AMALIPE WAS HELD IN KMETOVTSI

On December 5-6, 2011 in the picturesque village of Kmetovtsi (Gabrovo district, Bulgaria) was held a team building of all the employees of Center Amalipe. The aim of the two-days gathering was a strategic planning of the activities of Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe - Veliko Tarnovo; synchronizing the efforts on common issues and debating the faced difficulties on our way to solve them. "What are the reasons to work in Amalipe?" This question had to meet each participant at the beginning of the meeting. Furthermore the employees of Amalipe from the two offices of the organization in Veliko Tarnovo, to the meeting joined also the regional educational coordinators from "Reducing the dropout of Roma students" Project who arrived from the four corners of the country. Tsveta Antonova (Southwestern Bulgaria), Yonka Danova (Northwestern Bulgaria), Neli Nikolova (Northeastern Bulgaria) and Pavlina Koleva (Southeastern Bulgaria) explained about the challenges they encounter in their work. Presentation on the project's ideas was represented by the project's team in Tarnovo: Tanya Vanova and Svetlana Boyadzhieva. Activities under the project "Community monitoring and access to health services" were presented by Gabriela Danailova, Tanya Andreeva, Anka Andreeva and Valentin Angelov. The same team presented the project activities under K5 "Prevention of Tuberculosis". Momchil Baev - Program Coordinator for Component 7 (K7) - "Prevention of HIV/AIDS" presented the activities of the project led by him. Silvyia Boyanova and Atanas Stoyanov presented the results under the project "Promotion of traditional fieldwork among marginalized groups within the Roma community". There were also discussed the "Emergency Fund" and "To touch the untouchables: struggling with old and new anti-Roma stereotypes" represented respectively by Stefka Blagoeva and Gergana Daskalova. Discussions were led by Deyan Kolev – Chair of Amalipe and Teodora Krumova –Deputy Chair of Amalipe. "We do not just work on different projects: to have a real effect on what we do we need to look at the whole picture, so synchronization between activities is important to us," stressed during the meeting Mr. Kolev.



OBSERVER

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTER: "250 % IS THE INCREASE OF NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH HIV IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (EECA)". TRAINING-OF-TRAINERS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR MOST-AT-RISK ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOOK PLACE IN ANKARA

The number of newly diagnosed with HIV in EECA went up with 250 % said Prof. Tomris Turmen – a Chairman of International Children's Center (ICC). She shared this data during a Training-Of-Trainers course on providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for most-at-risk adolescents and young people that took place at ICC in Bilkent University of Ankara, Turkey from 8th to 14th of December 2011.

Center Amalipe was represented by Momchil Baev who works on the issues of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), quality of service providing targeting most at risk young people (MARYP) and adolescents. The other participants were social workers, medical doctors, psychologists and service providers in the field of SRH from Turkey, Albania, Macedonia, Moldova and Georgia.



The UNFPA EECA Regional Office and the International Children's Centre in Ankara have been collaborating on a long-term training strategy in the adolescent/youth field. Coordinator of the training course is Dr. Aysegul Esin – a public health Specialist and Reproductive Health Research Adviser at ICC. The long-term training strategy

on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services for most-at-risk adolescents (MARA) and young people (MARYP) was focused on building capacity of national counterparts in comprehensive SRH and addressing SRH needs of most-at-risk adolescents and youth; establishing a systematic approach in training on comprehensive SRH services for most-at-risk adolescents and youth; setting up quality standards for the EECA region on SRH services for most-at-risk adolescents and youth; establishing competency standards for trainers; assessment and certification of trainers and monitoring and evaluation of training results and impact.

The purpose of the training-of-trainers (ToT) on comprehensive SRH of most-at-risk adolescents and youth is for trainers to be able to build professional skills of national counterparts to provide quality services to the targeted populations according to recognized standards and to disseminate knowledge in the region.

Some of the classes that the trainees had, covered Epidemiological Methods and Data Specific to Youth Health – Qualitative and Quantitative Research, Developing Standards for SRH Services, Issues in Managing HIV and other STI's among MARYP, Assessment of Access and Quality of Services for MARYP

Leading co-trainers were experienced professionals Dr. Graham Nielsen, Thailand, Dr. Evert Ketting, Consultant, Senior Researcher, Pré Communicatie, The Netherlands, and guest trainers were Prof. Dilek Aslan, Hacettepe University, Turkey, Mr. Adem Arkadas, Child Rights Programme and Advocacy Officer, International Children's Center.

On the last day of the training an essential part of the curriculum were two site visits – Hacettepe AIDS prevention and Investigation Center at the university hospital of Hacettepe University of Ankara and Skin and STI hospital. Prof. Serhat Unal who is a Director of the Infectious disease department at Hacettepe University shared interesting information that

shocked the audience. Firstly he spoke of the year of 1985 when the first HIV positive was registered in Antalia. Since then in many cases HIV testing became compulsory. Before a surgery, during pregnancy, before compulsory military service everyone must take HIV test. Since 1986 in Turkey the Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is available and free of charge for the



OBSERVER

patients, Prof. Unal says. He recalls that back in 1992 he was the only doctor trained in HIV management; he just came back from Harvard University the same year and started working in the first HIV treatment and care center in Turkey. Nowadays there are about 20 centers that follow patients around Turkey. Prof. Unal disclosed that in the next three months the Turkish government would publish the National Guidelines for HIV treatment as he shared that Turkey is following the worldwide and American tendency to start ART at level of CD4 count 350 to 500, not 200 as it is in the region now. Not only the treatment itself has world-class standards in this university hospital. Seems like confidentiality of patients is very important and regarded issue in this traditional and largely religious country. Only three doctors in the entire hospital would know if someone is HIV positive. When patients come, they never pronounce the word HIV, they speak of it as "the weird disease" HIV/AIDS is still strongly stigmatized by the traditions and religion. Most people still believe that HIV is the homosexuals' and sex workers' disease. In 1993 was established the AIDS Prevention Society of Turkey, because "HIV is not just a medical disease, it's a social reality and we have to handle the patient altogether", Prof. Unal said and added that they have established a special care unit within the hospital to handle opportunistic conditions of their HIV positive patients. For example every newly diagnosed is seen by a psychiatrist to help the patients understand the diagnose or every female patient is seen by a gynecologist.

Hacettepe is one of the biggest private universities in the country that attracts students from around the country. Prof. Unal still assures us that 99 % of them have no idea what is sex, what is STI, what is relationship or birth control.

The idea of Sexual and reproductive health education would be a revolution for Turkey but Prof. Unal shares that many colleagues of him – professors and medical doctors whose sons study at Hacettepe call him and ask him to teach their sons about "those things". But he can not do that for the female students...

The professor also shared that following the example of Hacettepe other five universities established special units or centers that deal specifically with HIV. About 85 % of the population is under the health insurance system and about 12 % is under the special system called "Green card" for uninsured people. According to Prof. Unal 5000 HIV positive patients are registered in Turkey, 1000 of them are no longer alive. About 1700 of them are on ART and the number of children living with HIV is a 100. After Hacettepe University the trainees headed to the Skin and STI clinic for female sex workers also located in Ankara in one of the most marginalized



neighbourhoods where a lot of female sex workers live. Dr. Nermin Percin hosted the group and she shared how the system of the clinic works with sex workers. The hospital provides treatment (HIV and other STI's), care, prevention and vaccination for its patients. There are 40 officially registered female sex workers in Ankara. All of them are required by law to visit the clinic twice a week for genital exam and to take an HIV test every three months. All services at the

clinic including testing and treatment is covered by the state budget regardless of the health insurance status of patients. Turkey has a specific law for primary level of care with allocated budget for that. All patients who test positive for HIV are being referred to a university hospital for special care. Nevertheless, the entire staff at the STI clinic is trained in HIV counselling which is an essential service for every newly diagnosed patient in the process of understanding the new condition. Dr. Percin says that the clinic is visited by 50-60 people daily for counselling. About 50 are the transgender patients that are registered at the clinic. Part of the female sex workers (FSW) in Ankara are registered and the law connects the permit for sex-working with the drug adherence and STI screening. In other words if the FSW do not comply with treatment (when needed) and with regular STI screening she loses her permit to be a sex worker. According to the official statistics Turkey has a very low HIV prevalence compared to other countries in EECA region. The total population of Turkey is about 70 million people.

ROMA HEALTH

CENTER FOR ROMA, POOR AND ILL WILL BE OPENED IN DUPNITSA

New medical center for poor, disabled and Roma will be opened in the building of the polyclinic in Dupnitsa. It will host the administrative body of 3 medical centers: two in the Roma neighborhoods of Tzenevi and Gizdova mahala and one in the neighborhood of "Spartacus". They will provide free medical services covered by the health insurance fund. All this is possible through a project of Dupnitsa municipality, financed by the World Bank amounting to EUR 18 million, said Deputy Mayor Krasimir Georgiev. (Source: Struma newsletter)

BULGARIANS LIVING ABROAD WILL NOT PAY HEALTH INSURANCE

Nearly 800,000 Bulgarian citizens who have left the country can be exempt from paying health insurance contributions at home including past periods if they have not lived in Bulgaria at that time. This is made possible by a change in the Health Insurance Act which was enacted with the budget of the National Health Insurance Fund for 2012. In practice, the new provisions facilitate the Bulgarians who live mostly abroad but are still included in the registers of the health system in the country. With the changes the people who have left Bulgaria before 31 December 2011 and have not notified in advance the NRA will be able to do so until December 31, 2012. They must submit an application and declaration form to the territorial directorate of the NRA. The easiest and quickest way to do that is documents to be mailed. The change in the law shall take effect from the beginning of 2012. Further information on the procedure can be asked at infocenter@nra.bg.

STATE POLICY FOR 2012

The merging of public hospitals will be a priority for state policy in the health sector over the next 2012 year. The Ministry of Health is preparing changes so that each area in the country would have the maximum number of specialized and general hospitals within which the National Health Insurance Fund could sign contracts and agreements and use resources from the state budget. The state would thus introduce a competition between general hospitals which would have to compete for a contract with the NHIF.

WE CONTINUE THE FIGHT WITH TUBERCULOSIS

On December 21, 2011 within the Component 5 of the program "Strengthening the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in Bulgaria", developed by Amalipe in the area of Veliko Tarnovo district from 10:00 in the village of Kamen is going to be held a health campaign for lung diseases by medical representatives of the Specialized Hospital for Active Treatment of pneumo-physiatric diseases "Dr. Treyman" and the staff of Center Amalipe Veliko Tarnovo

THE NUMBER OF HIV POSITIVE PEOPLE IN BULGARIA IS GROWING IS EVERY YEAR

Two new HIV positive patients are registered this year in Veliko Tarnovo Region
The number of registered HIV positive people in Bulgaria has grown up to 1438 as of November 13th, 2011. On November 30th the Ministry of health issued annual data on the prevalence of HIV infection in Bulgaria. According to the National Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV / AIDS of the Ministry of Health the number of newly registered HIV positive since the beginning of 2011 is 166 persons – 135 of them are men and 31 are women, i.e. number of newly registered men is almost 4 times greater than the number of newly diagnosed women.
Data analysis by age shows that infected people in very broad age range - between 17 and 80 years. For comparison, the lower age limit in 2010 was

ROMA HEALTH

critically reduced to 15 years. This year, for the first time trends show reduction of the number of newly infected young people age up to 29 years. Data shows that 38% (or 63 persons) of newly registered HIV positive this year are young people aged 17-29 years. For comparison, in 2010 young people in this age group were 55% of newly registered HIV positive persons. In 2011, an increase by 14% of the newly registered HIV-positive persons in the age group 30-49 years is evident in the statistic. During the reporting period 6 pregnant women were registered as carriers of the virus and 2 HIV-positive children were born by HIV-positive mothers. It is vital for all pregnant women to be tested for HIV in the first and third trimester of pregnancy to determine their status. Ministry of Health provides free antiretroviral prophylaxis to prevent transmission of virus from HIV-positive mother to her child.

Such timely and quality prophylaxis helps new born child to remain HIV negative in over 98% of the cases. According to the path of transmission of infection this year again we identify two particularly vulnerable groups - approximately 34% (56 persons) of newly registered in 2011 were IDUs and 26% (43 persons) are men who have sex with men. While in the group of people who use injection drugs there are no significant change, in the gay community, it tends to increase with more than 6%. Approximately 60% of the new HIV cases were detected at the centers for anonymous and free counseling and testing for HIV / AIDS (KABKIS) and NGO sub-recipients of funds from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF). The data shows that by the end of October 2011 a total of 59,837 persons have undergone HIV test at KABKIS or NGOs - sub-recipients of funds from the GF. Over 60% of them are young people aged up to 29 years. During their visit at KABKIS over 70% reported that they had risky sexual behavior. Most of HIV positive persons registered in 2011 are in Sofia - 72 persons and the Plovdiv region - 27 persons; Varna - 12 persons and Pazardzhik - 11 persons.

Ministry of Health provides advanced treatment for patients with HIV / AIDS in Bulgaria. Modern antiretroviral therapy (ART) is available to everyone who needs treatment and is supposedly available at 5 HIV screening and treatment sectors in the country, which are situated at the Clinic for Infectious Diseases in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Plevan and Stara Zagora. For some reason the Plevan center is refusing to serve, treat and screen HIV positive patients and the staff turns them away to other centers. As of October 31st, 2011 the number of people living with HIV / AIDS, who are under screening and receive medical services is 705. 432 persons of them receive antiretroviral therapy. Data show that 70% of newly registered HIV positive patients in the past 5 years do register at the HIV centers for treatment in the first 3 months after they are being diagnosed.

ART is provided by the Ministry of Health, and in 2011 it has delivered a total of 21 types of medications worth of 7.9 million BGN. To ensure continuity of treatment with funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria the Ministry of health has established a reserve of drugs worth about 1 million BGN. As a major achievement of the implementation of ART we can point the extension of life of patients on treatment. Data show that nearly 70% of the people who started therapy 10 years ago still continue their treatment. Thanks to ART we now observe improved immune status of patients which is a prerequisite for improving the quality of life of people living with HIV and secondary prevention of transmission of the virus. In the city of Veliko Tarnovo the center for anonymous and free counseling and testing for HIV / AIDS (KABKIS) has been working for 8 years and since the beginning of 2011 until November 29th 1597 persons have tested for HIV. 932 were males and 665 females. The age picture shows that the people were from 15 to 82 years old. During the same period 2 HIV positive persons were registered in the Veliko Tarnovo district and 24 received syphilis as a diagnose.

Data on the prevalence of HIV infection worldwide is still alarming. According to recent calculations of the UNAIDS, at the end of 2010 33.3 million people living with HIV and between 25-33 million people died from diseases associated with HIV infection. Every day immunodeficiency virus is infecting about 7,100 people. The fastest growing epidemic is in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and North Africa. Globally, 26% of newly infected persons are girls aged 15-24 years - the AIDS virus is the main cause of death for many young women in reproductive age.

250 % is the increase of the newly diagnosed with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region (EECA).

FOCUS

continued from page 1

FOCUS

**"BE INFORMED, TO NOT BE HIV INFECTED!"
MARKED THE WORLD AIDS DAY IN VELIKO**

**TARNOVO. CIEDT AMALIPE COMMEMORATES THE WORLD
DAY FOR COMBATTING AIDS**

Vratsa on December 1 organized a free testing for HIV/AIDS in the building of the former polyclinic hospital in Byala Slatina. Local community was informed about the essence of the free testing and that they are free and anonym. Also informational materials were given. Cabinet for anonymous and free counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS was attended by 17 people. Comparing the previous year this cabinet was visited only by 3 people. Throughout the day in the courtyard of the policlinic, in the city center and in the neighborhood, volunteers distributed condoms, brochures and calendars. Same was the situation in Etropole where after distributing condoms and brochures The Center for community Development in Etropole in cooperation with Child Protection Department – part of the Social Assistance Directorate – Etropole organized a massive campaign. All day long there were given condoms and brochures in the center of the town and in the Roma neighborhoods. In the evening of December 1, between 7 pm and 8.30 pm in the building of "Peyo Yavorov" High School was organized a special discussion on the health issue. In Kameno, near the Black sea, the community organized discussions with 14-18 years old youngsters to explain them the ways of getting AIDS. There was screened the movie "It's your turn" aimed at AIDS prevention. The movie has already won several international awards. In Novi Pazar the community moderators from the Center for community development initiated a discussion with 8-graders from the local schools and with students from the special school. During the day there were distributed condoms and brochures provided by the Regional Health Inspection – Shumen. In Peshtera the event was held on December 2 instead of December 1. Anyway the activities of the community moderators there faced the citizen's great interest. At 10.30 am started the discussion "Showing empathy to the victims of AIDS". Later in the day in the municipality hall was opened an exhibition with paintings of the pupils. All they long in Peshtera worked also the Cabinet for anonymous and free counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS.

SCHOOL

**A COLOURFUL WORLD AT IVAN VAZOV
SECONDARY COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL**

AMERICA FOR BULGARIA
FOUNDATION
Организация Америка за България



In the spirit of the festive mood the students from "Ivan Vazov" Secondary Comprehensive School decorated the new school building with their own works from the exhibition 'Colourful World'. The children worked hard and with delight under the supervision of their primary school class teachers. Thus, their dreams of 'Planet of Goodness', 'Rain of Colorful Balloons' and 'I do it well' prize and 'Celebrating Together' prize and 'I am Tolerant' prize have been fulfilled. The whole school is shining, illuminated by flashing lights and the bright Christmas star, inviting us to open our hearts for love, kindness and mercy. The messages of children's

works imply of the desire to create a better world where there are no poor, abandoned, starving, forgotten...

**50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF N. Y. VAPTSAROV
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NOVI PAZAR**

On 7th of December in the overcrowded and decorated with colourful balloons hall of "Hristo Botev" Primary School in Novi Pazar, the 50-year anniversary of the school has been celebrated. Still from early morning the school yard has been busy with people. The school staff made a warm welcome greeting to its guests including the town mayor, former and present students and teachers. Most heartily met were the young guests from the schools in Varbitsa town and the villages and Dibich and Smyadovo. The meeting of children was provided for under Project "Decreasing the Dropout Rate among Roma Children" of CIEDT "Amalipe" of which their schools are partners. One cannot describe the emotions seen on the faces of guests and hosts. This was followed by a splendidly made program. The performances of the hosts and their visiting friends have been met with applause. Song-greetings and exciting

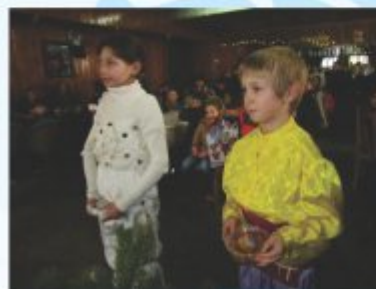
SCHOOL



dances from the towns Varbitsa and Smyadovo have been received on occasion of the anniversary by the host. This is how the children from Dibich addressed their peers from the host school: We are here because you are with us! We are here because you gave us a helping hand! We are here because you opened up to us! We offer you our greetings with gratitude and respect! Here we are in front of you, children of different names with different looks ... One with blonde curls, others with black eyes, other with big ears, yet another - with a naughty little hand! But we are all children - children of our land. And we may look different in appearance and growth, and clothing, but the same children's hearts beat within! "Mnogaya leta" hymn sounded against the impressive light show, with which the program ended. The children parted ... but not with sad hearts, because this is only the first of many meetings ahead.



**CHRISTMAS SPIRIT IN "VASIL LEVSKI" PRIMARY SCHOOL
SMOLYANOVTSI**



On 23.12.2011 "Vasil Levski" Primary School Smolyanovtsi was held the traditional Christmas celebration. Leading role in it took in children from primary school level. They made a performance that showed the traditions of Christmas Eve and Christmas. The multi-cultural element made difference this time - there were guests from Turkey, Russia, Kosharnik neighborhood, Romania, Amerika. The participants were primary school pupils dressed up in folk costumes, typical for their country. They recited poems in foreign languages, sang songs to represent their home country. Thus, the pupils showed that we should be a tolerant and hospitable nation, that everyone is welcome in our homes. Another important part of our Christmas celebration have been the awards given for two competitions at the school - a competition for the best decorated tree in the school yard and competition best Christmas and New Year greeting card or drawing. The pupils who took first, second and third place received certificates and other prizes. The celebration ended up with a party - delicious pastries and juice, disco with lots of singing, dancing!

**SCHOOLS WORKING UNDER THE PROJECT "DECREASING THE
DROPOUT RATE OF ROMA CHILDREN " WISH YOU - "LET THIS
YEAR ALL WISHES AND DREAMS COME TRUE! LET IT BRING
MUCH LOVE AND KINDNESS! "**

On Christmas Eve, country, schools participating in the "Decreasing the Dropout Rate of Roma Children" in the school year 2011 - 2012 performed alone or together with other schools from their regions on occasion of the Christmas and New Year Holidays. Restoration of Jesus Birth, storytelling, songs, rhythmic dancing, decorating Christmas trees, exhibitions of paintings, handmade Christmas cards, poems, contests and more ... Schools are part of a three-year program to reduce



dropout rate of Roma children, currently implemented in 90 schools in the Center "Amalipe" and "America for Bulgaria" Foundation. The celebrations were held in school halls or community centers in over 35 schools across the country. Guests were invited prior to the celebration by handmade cards and met with a very carefully prepared children performances, homemade dishes and felt the magic of Christmas emotions ...

AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE

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