

**NATIONAL STRATEGY  
FOR  
PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY  
  
FOR THE PERIOD 2009-2015**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2009 – 2015 has the objective of effective application of the policy of the Bulgarian government aimed at improving the quality of life and achieving a high level of consolidation of society in the Republic of Bulgaria, providing equal opportunities for women and men for full and active participation in all fields of public life without gender discrimination.

The strategy outlines the specific objectives which have to be achieved in order to eradicate all obstacles for achieving actual equality of women and men in the country.

The state policy of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of gender equality and non-discrimination by gender unites the efforts and the actions of the executive at all levels, as well as that of local self-government. The Bulgarian state works on the matters of equality of women and men in active and close cooperation with the non-governmental sector and the social partners.

The National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2009 – 2015 is adopted in compliance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the strategic documents of the European Union – Roadmap for Equality between women and men for the period 2006-2010, European Pact for Gender Equality, the good practices of EU Member States, and the principles underlying the UN conventions on human rights and the rights of women, among others.

### **1. Challenges before EU and the Member States**

The citizens of united Europe share the values of the democratic choice and fundamental rights and freedoms of every individual to have a personal and career realisation according to his or her desires and abilities. The European model, based on social and human rights, continues to develop intensively in order to provide every European citizen with the opportunity to take his or her part as an equal participant in society.

The new millennium faced united Europe with a number of political, economic, social and technological opportunities and challenges. Globalization, migration, the changes in employment and unemployment, as well as the demographic crisis set new requirements before the development of human resources and potential in Member States and exposed European social and economic management to pressure.

The promotion of equality and non-discrimination, which are priorities of the European Union in compliance with Article 13 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community, are constantly in the focus of attention of both European structures and Member States. Article 2 of the EC Treaty defines promotion of equality between men and women as a task of the Community, and Article 3 provides that in all its activities the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women. In turn, Article 23 (1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.

The *acquis communautaire* determines the requirements and serve as the basis for the development of a comprehensive European and, respectively, national anti-discrimination policy. This requires that authorities at national and local level improve the coordination of their efforts for applying Community and national legislation and apply a uniform approach to the promotion of equality and non-discrimination, which will simultaneously cover all grounds for discrimination, including gender.

## **2. Gender equality in Bulgaria**

There are a number of achievements in the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of equality of women and men in respect to social and political life. The state is putting efforts for the protection of the political and social rights of women and men, and equality in the sphere of employment, payment of labour and social insurance, professional qualification and career growth, reconciliation of family and professional life, and the right to parental leave are encouraged.

The promotion of equality between women and men has a direct impact on the formation of quality human resources. As regards the sphere of equality between women and men, 2005 marked the beginning of annual planning of measures to achieve equal opportunities for both sexes, as well as a process of consolidation of the national structure for equality of women and men. Civil society and interaction with the social partners have an essential role for the development of this process.

According to the latest social surveys, commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the summer of 2008, the view that women and men in Bulgaria have equal opportunities for professional and personal development is shared by the public as a whole. Drastic cases of gender

discrimination are rare in this country. Nevertheless, there still is a following of old stereotypes as regards the role of men and women in both public and personal life, which largely condition the existence of certain differences between the position of women and men. Certain attitudes still exist, according to which certain occupations, roles in the family or spheres of activity are more appropriate for one of the sexes than the other. Vertical and horizontal gender segregation is observed in many sectors. Although the public mind does not believe that the labour of women is cheaper, there are nevertheless certain differences in the labour pay of both sexes. The reason for this is that labour pay is lower in the sectors where women prevail (education, health care, services, public administration), or because women hold lower paid positions, the difference in payment between the total of women and men in some sectors even reaching 30 %. In addition, women are those who more frequently and for more prolonged periods are absent from the labour market due to maternity leave or raising their children or care of dependent family members, which is reflected in both their labour pay and the amount of their pensions. Gender inequalities in employment, combined with the peculiarities of the social security system create a situation where poverty disproportionately refers to women or is “feminized”. Sometimes, because of the fears and prejudices of some employers in respect to young women who are yet to have children it is more difficult for them to begin work.

In the first implementation report on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3 Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women) Bulgaria set out concrete targets and indicators which the country should achieve by 2015:

- Eliminate the disproportion between the income of men and women - Pay of women as a percentage of the pay of men should reach 80%;
- Ensure the participation of women in governance – The proportion of women in the National Assembly and in Municipal Councils should reach 40%.

Goal 3 aims at eliminating gender inequality and promoting gender equality. The adaptation of this goal for Bulgaria provides for the attainment of two targets: social and economic equality of women. To achieve these two objectives Bulgaria should work on eliminating inequality of women and men in the governance and the economy of the country. At the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 the progress made on achieving Goal 3 seemed partial. And although the participation of women in the labour market increased from 47.5 % for 2007 to 56.7 % for 2008 and the goal of the Lisbon Strategy, which aimed at achieving women’s employment in the EU close to 60 % by 2010, seems achievable,

in respect to the second target concerning the empowering of women the changes are negative rather than not. After the number of women in the 38<sup>th</sup> National Assembly more than doubled and women held 26 % of the seats, in the 40<sup>th</sup> National Assembly this figure dropped to 22 %. In August 2007 Bulgaria ranked 42nd worldwide, losing its 19th place from March 2003. In October 2007 out of 240 members of Parliament in the 40th National Assembly, only 53 were women.

The representation of women in the executive and local authorities is even worse. By November 2008, out of 19 government ministers only 5 were women; out of 28 regional governors only 6 were women.

Certain positions are less accessible to women – particularly in the field of local self-governance, where the share of women mayors of municipalities barely reached 9 % at the 2006 local elections. The representation of women in the National Assembly exceeded 20 % only in its last two mandates. This is a favourable trend for the successful further development of which public movements and political parties are responsible.

Equal participation of men and women in sharing public labour and work at home provides the opportunity for full-fledged participation of both sexes in the sphere of social and professional realization. Women, however, still have less free time than men, due to the insufficient development of a number of public services they are burdened exceedingly, both with unpaid work at home and mainly childcare and care for elderly and dependent family members. There is a trend for young men to perceive their role as fathers with considerable responsibility and to take part in childcare. Approval of sharing family obligations, including care for children, care for elderly family members, house chores, etc., however, is shared by about 65 % of the population, while in some EU countries this figure exceeds 95 %. Obviously, the public debate in respect to the equality of women and men, their roles and positions, is yet to be held. Education and the media, as well as the entire public government, which should serve as a model of the values shared by society, have a particularly important role in changing the existing unfavourable stereotypes and attitudes.

### **3. Legal framework: Community and national legislation, international commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria**

A large part of the national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria related to the equal opportunities of women and men was adopted in relation to the process of approximation of national legal provisions with

the achievements of European Community law (*acquis communautaire*). In this process, national provisions were aligned with EU primary and secondary legislation, particularly in the field of equal treatment of women and men, equal opportunities for all and the fight against all forms of violence on the basis of gender.

The principles of gender equality and non-discrimination are laid down even in the provisions of the Constitution of the Bulgarian Principality adopted on April 16, 1879.

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are laid down in the *Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria* (Promulgated, SG No. 56/1991). The *Labour Code* (Promulgated, SG No. 26/1986) absolutely bans any form of discrimination, privileges and limitations on the basis of gender and introduces the principle of equal pay for the work of women and men. Anti-discrimination provisions related to gender are included in the *Employment Promotion Act* (Promulgated, OG No. 112/2001), the *Social Assistance Act* (Promulgated, OG No. 56/1998), the *Higher Education Act* (Promulgated, SG No. 112/1995), the *Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria Act* (Promulgated, OG No. 112/1995) and others. The *Family Code* (Promulgated, OG No. 41/1985) is based on the principle of "...equality between men and women...". The *Social Insurance Code* (Promulgated, OG No. 110/1999) introduces the principles of mandatory and universal insurance, as well as of equality of the insured persons. The *Criminal Code* (Promulgated, OG No. 26/1968) qualifies as crimes against the person rape, soliciting towards prostitution and trafficking of people, as well as forcing towards sexual actions by using the official or material dependence of a person. The *Protection against Discrimination Act* (Promulgated, OG No. 86/2003) to a large degree achieves transposition of the *acquis communautaire* in the field of equal treatment, equal pay, equality in respect to employment, protection of pregnant women and the burden of proof. The *Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Act* (Promulgated, SG No. 46/2003) introduces measures for prevention and protects people victims of trafficking in compliance with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and abides by the additional Protocol to the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons, particularly women and children. The *Protection against Domestic Violence Act* (Promulgated, SG No. 27/2005) regulates the relations involving domestic violence and provides measures for protection against it, as well as assistance for the victims. According to the *Ombudsman Act* (Promulgated, SG No. 48/2003), the Ombudsman intervenes when citizens' rights and freedoms have been violated by actions or omissions of the state and municipal authorities and their administrations, as well as by the

persons assigned with the provision of public services. Effective legislation to date still lacks a separate law providing for the mandate, functions and structure of a national mechanism for implementing a gender equality policy.

The process of approximation of national legislation with the European concerned separate sectors of public relations, mainly where primary and secondary legislation (soft law provisions) of the Communities sets minimum requirements or specific obligations of Member States in respect to equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and the fight against violence on the basis of gender. The equality of sexes and equal opportunities for women and men are proclaimed in the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997, 1999) as a continuation of the provisions of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). The Treaty of Amsterdam concentrates on countering all forms of discrimination and guaranteeing equal opportunities for men and women. These provisions are developed further by the decisions of the Treaty of Nice (2001), which stress the need of national action plans for the promotion of gender equality. The secondary legislation includes directives in the field of: equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions; the access to and supply of goods and services; in matters of social security, in occupational social security schemes, the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood; the framework agreement on parental leave; the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on gender and others.

At the same time, however, the soft law provisions (containing rules incorporated in instruments that are not legally binding but may have an indirect legal effect and aim at or have a practical effect) regulate the application of the integrated approach towards the equal treatment of women and men (the so-called gender mainstreaming). The soft law provisions take into account the specifics of variety in the application of the new policies in Member States, such as the gender equality policy is. The *European Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006 - 2010)*, adopted on the basis of the *Framework Strategy for equality between women and men for the period 2001-2005* reaffirms the dual approach for achieving equality – based on gender mainstreaming, on the one hand, as well as on promotional measures to one of the two sexes – on the other. The Roadmap constitutes the commitment of the European Commission to work in the field of gender equality and the guidelines for boosting cooperation with Member States in this field. In March 2006 the equality of women and

men became the common goal of the new streamlined open method of coordination in the field of social protection and social inclusion, when the European Council adopted a new framework for the integration of the three fields of the policies for social integration, pensions, health and long-term care through a parallel vision aimed at the future. This objective enhances the importance of gender equality for the process as a whole, one that was previously promoted separately by the three components and was developed to a different degree in each of them. The commitments to the approach for equality of the sexes were supported by the European Council in March 2006 with the adoption of the European Pact for Gender Equality. This pact underscores the need of interaction on the part of all stakeholders to fulfill EU ambitions on gender equality as mentioned in the Treaty, particularly in employment and social protection by gender, as well as to meet the challenges of globalization and the demographic crisis faced by united Europe. The pact underscores the need of strengthening the governance of the policy through gender equality strategies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and by improving control and monitoring of their implementation.

The Republic of Bulgaria is party to the implementation of a number of international conventions (of the UN, ILO and others), as well as of international legal acts on human rights. In the field of gender equality, the most significant ones, which also determine the future strategic framework of the policy in this field, are the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (ratified by Decree No. 1944 of the State Council, published in SG No. 76/1981, effective for Bulgaria since 10.03.1982, not promulgated and constituting part of domestic law in the sense of Decision No. 7/ 1992 of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria).

An important aspect of the country's international commitments in the field of gender equality is reporting on the international legal acts to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party and on which periodic reports are due.

In October 2004 Bulgaria presented before the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) a *Governmental Report on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action* (1995), adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the Outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000).

According to the commitments undertaken on the basic international instruments, this country is also obliged to report to the specialized bodies within the system of the United Nations:

- To the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- To the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- To the Human Rights Committee on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Reporting on these international legal acts and conventions should continue as a result of public consultations and regular monitoring of the respective policies with regard to the opportune implementation of Bulgaria's commitments in this field.

#### **4. Arguments on the need of adopting a National Strategy on Gender Equality**

In spite of the existing provisions for equal treatment of men and women in separate laws, conditions for guaranteeing equality of women and men in all spheres of public life have yet to be created in full. Matters not provided for include a mechanism for coordinating a uniform national policy of equal opportunities for women and men and the fact that legislative framework has not been created to achieve real equality or equality in essence by the application of special measures in this field.

The studies, surveys and analyses conducted to date show that there are cases on inequality or disrupted balance in the participation of women and men in various fields of public life in Bulgaria like employment, education, political representation, or in private life, which finds expression through violence on the basis of gender, etc.

The existence of solid European standards on the problem of the equal treatment of sexes is in itself an indicator of the need to develop a separate and special national policy for creating guarantees for equal treatment, equal access to the resources of society and equal participation of women and men in the Republic of Bulgaria in decision-making with a view to their successful personal and social realization.

Application of the principle of gender equality in all policies is a necessary condition and a guarantee of good governance and advancement of society.

Coordination is necessary for the development and implementation of a uniform and target-oriented state policy to create stimuli for equality of

women and men in all spheres of public, economic and political life of the country.

## **II. EXPECTED RESULTS**

**The main objective of the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2009 – 2015 is to create guarantees for equal treatment, equal access to the resources of society and equal participation of women and men in the Republic of Bulgaria in decision-making with a view to their successful personal and social realization, as well as promotion of equality of women and men in all spheres of public, economic and political life of the country.**

In implementation of the main objective of the Strategy, formulated in such a way, the actions of all public authorities should have several specific goals:

- Exclusion of discrimination on grounds of gender in all fields of public life;
- Overcoming consequences of past discriminatory actions by undertaking active measures in respect to groups of women and men, victims of multiple discrimination, including on grounds of gender, as well as groups of women and men on whom the burdens of transition have had an unfavourable effect;
- Equalizing not only the rights of Bulgarian citizens, which are protected by the Constitution and the laws of this country, but also the opportunities of all individuals living on the territory of the country to enjoy these rights.

The leading vision is to achieve a real social change through anti-discriminatory legislative measures and consolidation of the institutional mechanisms for endorsement of gender equality and equal treatment, combined with social promotional measures for learning new models of conduct. Equality of opportunities will also be achieved by increasing public awareness and intolerance of examples of unequal treatment and discrimination on grounds of gender, of unfavourable, stereotypical and humiliating presentation of women and men in the media.

Public authorities and institutions express a clear and definite will for full enjoyment of the human and political, economic and social rights of women and men, equal treatment and equal participation of women and men to achieve social justice and prosperity, as well as their solidarity with countering violence, poverty, violation of their human rights and discrimination on grounds of gender across the world.

### III. PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY OF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2009 – 2015 is developed in compliance with legislative acts and national strategic documents and is aligned with up-to-date studies on the subject: National Action Plan for Promotion of Equality between Women and Men (2008 – 2009), the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2008 – 2015), the Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Report on the Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria 2008 – 2010, the Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2007 – 2013 and others.

The following are the leading principles at the development and application of the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality (2009 – 2015):

- Abidance by human rights;
- Equal rights, equal participation, equal treatment and equal access to public resources for women and men;
- A balanced representation of the sexes in decision-making;
- Partnership;
- Social dialogue;
- Implementation monitoring and control.

Overcoming of stereotypes in respect to the sexes and increasing the sensitivity of society to unfavourable and intolerant attitude and discrimination on grounds of gender, promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in the separate spheres of public life through concrete measures and actions, are achieved along two main lines:

- **General systematic measures**, aimed at improving the legislative, institutional and resource base which guarantees gender equality for all Bulgarian citizens by application of the integrated approach, and
- **Specific encouraging measures** in respect to separate groups of women and men in a vulnerable or unequal position on grounds of gender.

The integrated approach of equal treatment for women and men was provided for even in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) as an approach by which the goals set down for each critical area of concern set down in the platform will be achieved:

*“... Governments and others should promote an active and visible policy on mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.”*

The Council of Europe defines the integrated approach for equal treatment of women and men as reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of the process of formulation and application of policies, so that gender equality be included in all phases and by all participating parties which are usually engaged in the process of policy development and decision-making.

This is achieved by the establishment of a *national institutional mechanism* at the highest level of governance which has a clearly defined mandate and authority. The elements definitive for its function are adequate resources, opportunity for political influence and for the adoption of legislation, development of analysis of policies, development of communication, coordination and evaluation of the policy implementation.

The development of an effective system for management of the gender equality policy requires taking into consideration the fact that it is a *horizontal policy* and concerns a multitude of other policies. On the one hand, its application requires the incorporation of gender equality in all other policies and programmes, and on the other – the opportunity should be provided for the application of specific promotional measures aimed at women or men, depending on the spheres in which inequality between the two sexes exists. These specifics define it as a decentralized sector policy. An important stage is the definition of a general set of indicators which allows:

- Ex-ante evaluation of the impact of the policy;
- Measurement and reporting progress in the process of its application;
- Evaluation of the final effect in comparison with expected results.

The implementation of the Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2009 – 2015 requires a change in the cycle of formulation and implementation of policies in the Republic of Bulgaria, which is related to the application of impact assessment by gender, the development of monitoring criteria and evaluation of its implementation.

#### **IV. STRATEGIC GOALS AND FIELDS OF ACTION**

The general strategic goal of the gender equality policy in the 2009 – 2015 period will be achieved by means of the following objectives:

##### **Objective 1. Achievement of gender equality in the economic and social field**

1. Attainment of Lisbon Strategy goals in the field of employment

2. Eradication of differences in pay for men and women
3. Overcoming horizontal professional segregation
4. Encouragement of women's enterprise
5. Gender equality in the policies and measures aimed at rural development
6. Gender equality in social protection systems and in the measures for fighting poverty
7. Gender accounting in the field of education and health care
8. Eradication of discrimination on the work place
9. Countering multiple discrimination, which also includes the gender indicator.

**Objective 2. Promotion of reconciliation of professional and family obligations**

1. Development and application of more effective policies for reconciling professional and family obligations for men and women (in the public and in the private sector)
2. Encouraging use of parental leave on the part of fathers
3. Development of flexible forms of employment and flexible working hours, which is favourable for workers with family obligations
4. Improvement and expansion of the scope of social services (public, municipal and private) for children and dependent family members.

**Objective 3. Promotion of gender equality in governance and decision-making**

1. Equality in representation and participation of women and men in politics
2. Equality of women and men in holding managerial positions in economy (for overcoming vertical segregation)
3. Equality of women and men in the authorities making decisions in the field of development of science

**Objective 4. Eradication of gender violence and human trafficking**

1. Increasing the effectiveness of measures against domestic violence
2. Responsible parenthood

**1. Objective 5. Change of stereotypes existing in society based on gender in the sphere of education, culture, the media and labour.**

1. Eradication of gender stereotypes in education and in the sphere of culture
2. Eradication of gender stereotypes in the field of the labour market

3. Eradication of gender stereotypes in the media

**Objective 6. Promotion of gender equality in the policy of good neighbourly relations and the development policies**

Support for the political, economic and social reforms in partner states, including with a view to abidance by human rights and the promotion of gender equality.

**Objective 7. Gender equality in the security system:**

1. Consideration of the principles of gender equality and eradication of discrimination by gender in the processes and measures for peacemaking and peacekeeping and restoration, including in military conflict zones

2. Increasing participation of women in decision-making in the sphere of security

## **V. STRATEGY APPLICATION**

### **1. Responsible units**

The strategy is applied by means of two instruments in compliance with good European and international practices:

- **Application of the integrated approach for equal treatment of women and men:** the approach includes actions for encouraging equality, mobilization of all basic policies and measures to achieve equality by active and open alignment of the stage of planning their possible impacts on the position of men and women (taking the gender perspective into consideration). In order to achieve this, it is necessary to account for the gender indicator in all policies, programmes and strategies, legislation and the provision of services on the basis of gender analysis, which would establish where the structures, systems and stereotypes in society lead to inequality on grounds of gender.

- **Application of encouragement measures** in fields where inequality exists. The measures are undertaken on the basis of analysis by gender and have clearly defined target groups. They are applied temporarily until their objective is achieved. The measures will be set down in action plans on the strategy, with arguments in support of their application and the target groups.

The effective functioning of the system of gender policy management requires administrative capacity of the institutional mechanism, systematic, analytical, coordinated and integrated efforts in the highest degree.

The factors which determine the environment in which the system could contribute to the application of the effective gender equality policy are:

1. The political will and commitment of the executive.
2. The obligations undertaken by the state under international agreements and conventions guaranteeing gender equality.
3. The national legal framework favouring gender equality and the coordination in the system.

Key factors in respect to human resources of the system include:

1. Administrative capacity engaged adequately in the process of planning, coordination, evaluation and monitoring of the system, capable of administrating it.
2. Training of the experts engaged in it with the objective of increasing their information and awareness, but also their training under specialized programmes on gender equality and macroeconomic planning, development of policies and training of trainers.

The key knowledge and skills for building the capacity of the administration to apply the policy on gender equality include:

1. Understanding on the part of all civil servants that correct application helps prevent disparities between the objectives (political vision expressed in a strategy) and reality;
2. Good management of the resources for providing compliance with the deadlines for application;
3. Ability to foresee correctly future events and possible obstacles;
4. Experience in budgeting.

## **2. Reinforcing the national institutional mechanism (legislative framework; material and financial support; institutional capacity)**

The development of an effective system for management of the national policy on gender equality requires reinforcement of the national institutional mechanism on gender equality. It is necessary for this reinforcement to be preceded by change of the present legislation. The functions of the units in the structure and the mechanisms for achieving and guaranteeing equality are:

➤ Definition of qualitative and quantitative indicators to be monitored, controlled and evaluated by authorities determined to that end (of the executive, the National Statistical Institute and others);

➤ Definition of the opportunity and means for the application of promotional measures to achieve gender equality in the hypotheses of disrupted balance. Promotional measures are undertaken in all spheres where unequal treatment exists;

➤ Gender analysis and incorporation of the principle of gender equality in all laws, programmes and plans adopted and applied by the authorities of the executive and local self-government.

Development of a more effective system of management of the national policy on gender equality requires the existence of:

A mandate for:

- Encouraging, monitoring, coordination and evaluation of the process of application of the principle of equality in all sector policies and programmes;

- The application of specific policies and actions, including encouragement measures, where that is pertinent, in critical fields for encouraging the less represented or unequally placed gender and for implementation of a gender equality policy.

Defined functions for:

- Drafting government decisions – draft bills and action plans in respect to gender equality;

- Monitoring and control of execution and guaranteeing the application of the policy of gender equality;

- Execution of responsibilities related to research, training, initiation of actions and projects related to gender equality;

- Coordination of the activity of authorities of the executive and the Council of Ministers;

- Application of a policy on gender equality at local, regional, national and international level.

Structure:

- **Authority in the system of the executive at central level** for formulation and control of the state policy on gender equality – Council of Ministers;

- **Leading ministry** to produce the application of the policy – Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

- **Coordinators** in the leading ministry and the authorities of the central and local executive to effect constant monitoring of the application of the policy and possibly follow-up evaluation if the leading ministry decides such is needed;

- **A network of experts on gender equality** in all bodies of the executive and of local self-government, which carry out the state policy on gender equality at operational level and are guided methodologically by the coordinator;

- **A system of coordination and interaction** between the existing or future bodies of the different authorities empowered in the field of gender equality (the Subcommittee on Women's Rights with the Committee on Human Rights and Religious Affairs at the National Assembly, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the Ombudsman, the National Council on Equality between Women and Men with the Council of Ministers, the National Anti-Trafficking Commission with the Council of Ministers and others).

- **Coordination and interaction with the non-governmental sector** engaged with the problems of equality. Dialogue with civil society and its support enhances the legitimacy of the national institutional mechanism since it is based on shared public interest.

### **National action plans**

The strategy is implemented by means of actions plans which define the activities of the individual bodies of the executive on overcoming gender inequalities according to their spheres of competence. The action plans define the objectives of the separate bodies, the expected results and the types of measures for two years in advance with a view to achieve the general goals of the strategy. The compilation of the plans is coordinated by the leading institution and they are adopted by the Council of Ministers.

**The sector ministries** responsible for the application of the strategy **distribute the different tasks** in the structures of their administration and, where the need arises, within the framework of other administrations which share the responsibility for the daily application of the policy in compliance with the two-year plan. **The reports on execution** of the tasks are submitted to the leading ministry and contain information about the activities implemented, as well as information about the gradual realization of the policy in compliance with the two-year plan.

### **Material and financial support:**

The national budget of the country reflects the social and economic priorities of government policy. The gender indicator is taken into consideration during the entire process of formulation of the government policy in all spheres, as well as during the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of performance.

### **3. Methods and techniques of Strategy application**

- Definition of qualitative and quantitative indicators to be monitored, controlled and evaluated;
- Definition of the opportunity and means of application of promotional measures to achieve gender equality;
- Systematic gender analysis and evaluation of impact by gender;
- Introduction of budgeting by gender.

### **4. Development of Strategy monitoring and evaluation system**

At national level, monitoring and evaluation of the ends of the strategy shall be done by the National Council on Equality between Women and Men (NCEWM) with the Council of Ministers (CM). The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy summarises and presents to the National Council periodic reports from the sector ministries and other bodies of the executive, including the regional administrations. The results of the monitoring are summarized by NCEWM in an annual report, which is submitted for approval by CM no later than March 31 of the respective calendar year.

The annual reports are published in the specialized Website for the policy of equality of women and men of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

At local level, monitoring of the policies of gender equality is carried out by authorized bodies of local governance which submit annual report on monitoring to the municipal councils.

The Strategy will be updated in the fifth year of its implementation with a view to streamlining the objectives and results achieved, as well as its alignment with Bulgaria's obligations of membership in the European Union in respect to the implementation of the multi-annual strategic framework of the Community in the field of gender equality.

Both the European indicators for monitoring the equality of women and men and additional indicators for evaluation of results in the context of

national specifics are used for monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy implementation.

### **5. Public consultations on the Strategy and its implementation**

Public consultations are effected by discussion of the project prior to its submission to the Council of Ministers, within the framework of:

4. The National Council on Equality between Women and Men with the Council of Ministers

5. The Consultative Committee on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men and Disadvantaged Groups on the Labour Market and Social Policy

6. An official Website for public consultation

Public information is provided about the results of the public consultations on the strategy and the draft plans for its implementation.

The respective procedure is applied at the discussion of the annual reports on the implementation of the strategy, as well as its planned updating.

## **VI. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF STRATEGY**

The main sources of funding the activities in execution of the strategy are the state budget and the municipal budgets. The Structural Funds of the European Union, by means of the relevant operational programmes, as well as other target-oriented Community programmes, are additional sources for financing this policy.

## **ANNEXES**

### **1. Legislation**

- Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria
- Labour Code
- Employment Promotion Act
- Social Assistance Act
- Higher Education Act
- Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria Act
- Family Code
- Social Insurance Code
- Criminal Code
- Protection against Discrimination Act
- Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Act
- Protection against Domestic Violence Act
- Ombudsman Act

## **2. List of abbreviations**

EC – European Commission

ICESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

EU – European Union

ILO – International Labour Organization

CM – Council of Ministers

NCEWM – National Council on Equality between Women and Men

UN – United Nations

BDPA – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

RB – Republic of Bulgaria

CE – Council of Europe

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women