

UPDATED NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA (2012 - 2030)

Summary

STRATEGIC GOAL, PRIORITIES AND DIRECTIONS IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY

1. Vision and Main Principles of the Strategy

People are the most important and precious resource of Bulgaria. They have the right to a worthy existence and adequate participation in society, to good health and productive life in harmony with nature. The right of development is also an integral part of their basic human rights.

All Bulgarian citizens enjoy the full rights and liberties proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the laws of the state, and the international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a signatory. Effective equality is achieved by implementing the relevant legal regulations, without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, origin, language, religion, education, convictions, political affiliation, property status, personal or social status.

The policy of demographic development of the population is an integral part of the overall policy of economic, cultural and social development of the country. Sustainable development is a means of ensuring the prosperity of the Bulgarian citizens – both of the present population and of the future generations. Sustainable development can be achieved by creating a rational and balanced management of population, resources and environment.

The subject of demographic policy is a balanced demographic development of the population and development and improving the quality of human capital.

The object of the demographic policy is the entire population.

The vision of the Strategy encompasses: ensuring conditions and opportunities for an adequate reproductive life in good health to each and every individual.

The Demographic Development Strategy is based on the following main principles:

- **Lawfulness** – conformity of the goals, priorities, measures and specific activities with the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the laws and other legislative acts; exact and identical application of the law for everyone.
- **Prevention** – planning measures and activities for overcoming and/or limiting the action of factors that have a negative influence on the process of demographic development.
- **Continuity** – ensuring the continuous action of the strategy, regardless of changes in government or other social changes.
- **Covering the entire life cycle of human life** – having in mind the characteristics and the specific needs at each of the three phases of human life (youth, active age and retirement age). Each age group has a special place and performs a specific role in socio-economic relations as well as in the and intergenerational relations.
- **Equality** – no groups of the population should be excluded and privileged.
- **Efficiency** – achieving optimal results at minimal cost.

- **Efficacy** – correspondence of the goals, priorities, planned measures, specific programs and expected results to the real social demands.
- **Coherency** – ensuring coordination, mutual commitment and synergism of the effects of the specific demographic policies.
- **Public-private partnership** - active and coordinated participation of the government bodies, citizens and businesses in the demographic policy implementation.
- **Transparency and control of performance.**
- **Sustainability of results** – ensuring a continuous and long-term influence of the results achieved.
- **Public and political consensus for its implementation.**

The goals, priorities and tasks of the demographic policy set in the strategy, are based on the following **specific principles**:

- **All couples and individuals have the right to freely manage their reproductive life and behaviour.** People freely and independently make decisions about the number of children they will have and the time of their birth; they are supported in this by the state which ensures information and conditions for their acquiring an education adequate to the realization and planning of their reproductive life. The state takes care to provide opportunities for maintaining a standard of living favouring the decision of child-bearing and raising children.

- **The family is a basic component of the social system and has to be supported.** In the Bulgarian traditions, way of life and culture, the family keeps and preserves the basic values of society. It is responsible for child-bearing, child-raising and upbringing. Taking pains to prepare young people for living together, forming their consciousness for responsible parenthood, and the provision of adequate living conditions, are fundamental to the demographic policy set in the strategy.

- **Children are a priority of the state and the families.** Each child has the right to a high standard of living, guaranteeing its well-being, as well as the right to the highest achievable standards of health and education. The child has the right to be taken care of and supported by its parents, the family, and society, and to be protected against any forms of physical or mental violence, lack of care, maltreatment or exploitation.

- **Spouses as parents have equal rights and responsibilities in child-raising and upbringing.** Ensuring effective equality of women and men in the family is a basic condition for increasing the birth rate and for giving a chance for complete personal development and high quality of life of children.

- **The opportunities, equal for all, to have adequate socially productive and reproductive life, and also avoiding discrimination based on a variety of or on a plurality of characteristics, is a provision for a balanced demographic development of the population and a sustainable economic development and growth.**

2. Strategic Aim

The main goal for the period 2012-2030 of the Demographic Development Strategy of R Bulgaria is to slow down the rate of decrease of population and achieve its stabilization in the long run; to ensure high quality of human capital, including people with regard to their health condition, education attainment level, abilities and skills.

For centuries the mechanical growth of population has been considered a main goal of national demographic policies, because the defensive, military and economic power of the state relied on it. In recent years scientists and politicians have begun to put the emphasis not

only to the increase of the population in size, but also to its structure and balance according to age, gender and education. This new emphasis is a result of the development of information technologies, globalization and ecological changes, which must be taken into consideration by modern society, as well as of the discovery of the complex correlations between quality of life and population growth.

In present-day conditions, what is of great importance for achieving good quality of life for all citizens is not the size of the population, but the state of human resources, namely people's education, their abilities, skills and health condition, i.e. the human capital. The provision of efficient health care and education, of effective equality between genders, and of opportunities for complete personal development, is regarded not only as an end in itself but also as a means for achieving long-term balanced demographic development of the population.

The analysis of the demographic situation in the country categorically shows that, due to the strong inertia characterizing the demographic processes, a significant increase of population size cannot be a well-grounded policy for Bulgaria in the period through 2030. The future decrease and aging of population has already been programmed, given the existing age structure and the decreased number of women of fertile age.

The realistic strategic goal of the demographic policy up to the year 2030 is to slow down the rate of decrease of the population by purposefully influencing the processes of natural movement (birth rate, mortality, and migration) and simultaneously achieve an optimal balance of the population. Optimizing the balance of the population involves establishing such ratios according to age, education, health condition and gender which would lead to a significant improvement of people's quality of life. In this paradigm the three determinants of the population size and age structure, namely birth rate, mortality and migration, are still considered to be of key importance, but education and health are also being interpolated.

3. Priorities

The Demographic Development Strategy sets the following priorities:

- I. Slowing down the negative demographic processes and the decrease of population size;
- II. Overcoming the negative effects of population ageing, and improving the quality characteristics of human capital;
- III. Achieving social cohesion and creating equal opportunities for an ample and productive life for all social groups;
- IV. Limiting the disproportions in the territorial distribution of the population and the depopulation of some of the regions and villages.
- V. Adaptation and synchronizing the regulatory framework to the public demands for the balanced demographic development of the population and development of quality of human capital.

The accomplishment of the first priority will be achieved through the implementation of a set of measures and means for encouraging the birth rate, increasing average life expectancy, decreasing child and premature mortality, adoption of the two-child family model, creating conditions for reversing the trend of migration processes and strengthening the processes of repatriation of the Bulgarian diaspora. The implementation of this priority will dis-

close through specific quality parameters adopted in the world practice for measuring the general demographic status of the population across different countries.

The accomplishment of the second priority includes taking measures to meet the challenges created by the ageing of population. The measures are directed to overcoming the negative effects of the growth of unfavourable changes in age, e.g. the decreasing size and aging of the active population, the growing burden on the social insurance system and the state budget. The measures help improve the requirements for the quality and extending the scope of health care and social services for elderly people; and also providing better opportunities for education and formal and informal learning as a basis for professional realization on the labour market and a means of development of human resources in the process of life-long education; conducting a consistent policy for encouraging the labour activity of the elder workers.

The accomplishment of the third priority envisages measures and means for creating equal opportunities for the realization of the desired productive and reproductive behaviour and equal access to all informational, health care, educational and other services connected with the demographic development of all social groups. Basic components of the policies for achieving social cohesion in society include ensuring conditions for complete integration of vulnerable groups (children at risk, social groups at risk, disabled people, etc.) and strengthening solidarity among generations with regard to developing and maintaining equality among generations.

The fourth priority is directed towards achieving a more equal territorial distribution of the population and cohesion of the social and economic conditions and quality of life in different regions, as well as in urban and rural areas. The efforts and the measures will be directed towards slowing down the processes of depopulation in the frontier regions and in a considerable number of villages; optimizing the concentration of the population in the capital and several regional centers, optimizing the natural habitat and environment. The accomplishment of this priority is closely connected with enhancing the role of policy at regional level and conjoining the plans for social and economic development with the tasks of the demographic strategy.

The implementation of the fifth priority foresees the introduction of assessment of the impact of each single normative act of the state upon the demographic development and the quality of human capital.

The realization in full of the priorities of demographic development of the country through 2030 is possible in the conditions of macroeconomic stability, continuous economic growth, increasing economic activity, employment, and income of the population. The proposed measures and activities for demographic development are regarded as an element of the general sustainable development concept, according to which the population, environment and economy are tied together and exist in constant interaction. It may be expected that future favourable changes of these conditions will lead to favourable changes in the reproductive processes of the population.

4. Basic Directions of the demographic policy according to its priorities

The specific tasks, measures and activities for the accomplishment of the five strategic priorities lie in the following **12 main directions**:

- I. Slowing down of the negative demographic trends and tackling the decrease of population*

1. Encouraging the increase of the birth rate through the creation of conditions favourable for child-raising and upbringing;
2. Improving the reproductive health of the population and preventing sterility;
3. Increasing the general awareness on demographic issues, as well as sexual and reproductive culture of the population;
4. Improving the overall health status of the population and reducing the crude death rate as well as premature, infant and maternal mortality;
5. Increasing the average life expectancy.
6. Significantly decreasing the number of migrating people at reproductive age;

II. Overcoming the negative effects of population ageing, and improving the quality characteristics of human capital;

7. Adopting an integrated cross-sectoral approach for promoting active and productive ageing in good health. Adaptation of social systems to demographic change and population ageing – namely labor market, pension system, social assistance and care, health, education, culture, etc..;
8. Developing solidarity among generations;
9. Raising the general educational, spiritual and cultural level, qualifications, abilities and skills of the population of all age groups;

III. Achieving social cohesion and creating equal opportunities for an ample and productive life for all social groups;

10. Ensuring equal opportunities for an adequate reproductive life in good health for all social groups.

IV. Limiting the disproportions in the territorial distribution of the population and the depopulation of some of the regions and villages.

11. Limiting the disproportions in the territorial distribution of the population and the depopulation in some regions and in rural areas

V. Adaptation and synchronizing the regulatory framework to the public demands for the balanced demographic development of the population and development of quality of human capital.

12. Introduction of obligatory assessment of the impact of each single newly issued, amended or supplemented normative act of the state upon the demographic development and the quality of human capital.

5. Tasks by main directions

For Priority I. Slowing down the negative demographic processes and the decrease of population size;

Direction 1. Encouraging the increase of the birth rate through the creation of conditions favourable for child-raising and upbringing;

In the conditions of sustainable economic growth and improvement of the situation on the labour market, an increase of the birth rate in the near future will be sought to be achieved in the short term through postponed childbirths, as well as increasing the fertility of women, and decreasing sterility among women and men. For middle- and long-term planning the efforts will be directed towards the creation and development of conditions favourable for childbirth and raising children. The establishment of environment of favourable conditions covering all components of the development and realization of adequate parenthood (family planning, safe pregnancy and parturition, child raising, education, health care, social development of children, combining maternity with labour, housing conditions etc.), will give the couples and individuals a chance to have the desired number of children. The fact that nearly two-thirds of the Bulgarian families consider the two-child family as their ideal reproductive case, but they have either not achieved it, or they do not believe they would ever be able to, due to economic difficulties, provides us grounds for encouraging the birth rate. Provided the accumulation of positive effects from the incentives introduced and the improvement of the conditions for child-raising and upbringing, it may be expected that general fertility will grow and will stay at a stable average value of approximately 1.5 children per woman of childbearing age. The concrete tasks and measures for the creation of conditions encouraging natality may be grouped in the following sub-directions:

- Development of responsible parenthood and equality between genders;
- Financial incentives for bearing and raising children;
- Combining labour and family duties;
- Services to support child-raising, upbringing and the development of children in a family environment;
- Education of children;
- Establishment of housing conditions, living conditions, and infrastructure
- Access to information services, consultations on family planning and health care services on behalf of pregnant women, nursing mothers, newborn babies and children health care;
- Promoting general recognition that the family is a basic component of society by supporting and helping parents raise their children in a family environment incl. through adequate changes in the legal basis;
- Support for realization of the preferred by young people two-child family model..

1.1. Financial Incentives for Child Bearing and Raising:

- Ongoing identifying, reconsidering, and updating of the policy on the types and amount of financial compensations and social aid for child-bearing and child-raising up to three years of age;
- Annual evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the differentiated approach for monthly family allowances for children;
- Introduction of tax concessions for families with children;
- Introduction of crediting preferences for young families;
- Covering the greater part of the costs for child-raising in poor families, giving priority to covering the costs in preschool institutions, free meals in canteens, support with free textbooks, clothing etc.

- Providing access to free of charge consultations and medical health care for pregnant women, women in child-birth and newborn babies.
- Expanding the approaches to providing housing and living condition for child-birth and childcare to young families in need (buying homes at alleviated financial terms, social housing market, etc.).

1.2. Combining Parenthood with Labour/Professional Realization through:

- Broader implementation of the flexible forms of employment (part-time work, modern IT ways of remote exercising of professional duties, etc.);
- Introduce alleviations for returning to work after maternity/paternity leave (reduced working hours, work from home, etc.) Enabling them to participate in training and retraining courses;
- Encouraging employers to actively participate in the policy of ensuring safety and protection for pregnant women and mothers at work;
- Expanding the control system over employers regarding the observing of labour laws in the parts referring to protection of pregnant women and young mothers, as well as prevention of child labour abuse;
- Encouraging the equality between genders with regard to labour realizations as regarding the responsibilities of the family in child-raising and upbringing.

1.3. Education, Health Care and Social Development of Children

- Introduction of preferences in using public services for families with children;
- Improving the social infrastructure and directing it towards ensuring favourable conditions for child-raising and the social development of children;
- Providing an accessible and widespread net of crèches and kindergartens, compatible with the modern character and forms of employment;
- The concern for children's upbringing and development, education and health care for youngsters, is to become a state policy and an investment of the state and society through the creation of a broad range of services as delegated state activities, without thereby diminishing the role of responsible parenthood;

1.4. Establishing the Family as a Basic Component of Society and Encouraging Parents for Child-Raising in a Family Background

- Creating of conditions for cohesion of the reproductive models of women with different educational status, of rural and urban women, of women of various social and ethnic backgrounds, with special attention to responsible parenthood;
- Providing social raising of children and their upbringing in a family-like environment in cases when their parents are not able to perform these duties (due to disease, alcoholism, drug abuse, serving prison terms, etc.);
- Protection of children and women against all forms of violence, including domestic violence, and exploitation;
- Decreasing the number of children in specialized institutions and encouraging the raising of children in a family background;
- Closer binding of the access to social benefits to the encouragement of responsible parenthood;
- Developing positive public attitudes toward the family and children and to the two- child or large family model, along with responsible parenting;

Direction 2. Improvement of the Reproductive Health of the Population

The creation of a highly effective health care system, adapted to the health requirements of the individual, the family, and the nation, comprises the main goal of the ongoing health reform. The positive results of its implementation will inevitably contribute to the improvement of the general health condition of the population and will positively influence reproductive behaviour. The concrete directions and activities for improving the health care system in Bulgaria are the subject of the National Health Care Strategy. The policies and measures, envisaged in the present strategy, are focused on the reproductive and sexual health of the population. The concrete tasks and measures for improving the reproductive and sexual health of the population can be grouped in the following directions, corresponding to the basic priorities in the First Global Strategy of Reproductive Health adopted by the World Health Organization (May 2004):

2.1. Improving the reproductive health care for women and men. Maintaining the good health condition of pregnant women and mothers:

- Ensuring safe pregnancy and birth through a compulsory and free from charge for all pregnant women, regardless of their social insurance status, and ongoing health monitoring during the pregnancy (female and child health consultations);
- Providing free postpartum maternal health care, especially as concerns nursing and the health status of newborns and mothers;
- Strengthening the control over the observance of labor legislation and the providing safe working conditions for pregnant women, nursing mothers, young mothers, and mothers of infant children;
- Carrying out of informational campaigns aiming to familiarize young women (as early as of school age) with their rights and the measures for protection of maternity and ensuring safe working conditions for pregnant women, nursing mothers and young mothers, as provided for in labor legislation;
- Prevention and treatment of infertility in women and men. Development of assisted reproduction combined with child adoptions;
- Prophylactic of oncological diseases of the reproductive system for men and women.

2.2. Encouraging and developing family planning:

- Introducing a national family planning program covering the entire health system and creating a network of appropriate structures for family planning (clinics, centers);
- Training of general practitioners and educators in family planning;
- Active involvement and support of non-governmental organizations for promoting and implementing family planning;
- Including a training in family planning in secondary school.

2.3. Significantly decreasing the number of abortions and extramarital births of children not acknowledged by the father:

- Raising the contraceptive culture of the population and meeting their needs in means and methods of contraception;
- Providing easy access to contraceptives through general practice/family doctors;
- Maintaining the prices of contraceptives at a level affordable for the mass population, by means of subsidizing or by implementing other measures;
- Prevention of abortions performed for medical reasons and also a significant

reduction in the number of abortions as a means to terminate unplanned pregnancies, especially at a young age for girls and women;

2.4. Prevention and treatment of infections of the reproductive organs and limiting the risk of spreading AIDS in the country:

- Implementation of best practices and standards of medical activities, complying with the guidelines by the World Health Organization and the Council of Europe;
- Maintaining the low prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country through capacity building in the health and social sectors for prevention of HIV/AIDS;
- Establishment and functioning of a second generation National System for Epidemiological Surveillance;
- Strengthening and promotion of services for voluntary medical counseling and testing;
- Prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections among risk groups (intravenous drug users, representatives of ethnic minorities, sex workers, young people in and out of school, etc.);
- Providing of adequate and accessible medical treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS;

Direction 3. Improvement of the general demographic awareness and of the sexual and reproductive culture of the population

The issue of reproductive health of the population, first raised at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), was also in the centre of discussions on all subsequent international forums and it forms the core of all action plans and recommendation documents related to the demographic development of various international organizations. **Reproductive health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all areas relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.** It implicitly recognizes the assumption that people possess the capability to reproduce and the right to decide if, when and how often to use it. Implicit here is also the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of birth, not contradicting the law, and also the right of access to health services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth. **Reproductive health care also includes sexual health, and is aimed at increasing life expectancy and improving interpersonal relationships.**

Reproductive health is determined by the overall general health status of the population.

3.1. Improvement of the general demographic awareness and of the sexual and reproductive culture of the population

- Providing support to the families and enhancing parents' capacity, with a view to broader engagement of parents in the preparation of their children for sexual partnership, family life, and responsible parenthood;
- Introducing special training programs in the mandatory level of education for acquiring systematic knowledge in the sphere of human intimacy;
- Systematic inclusion of demographic issues, incl. those concerning sexual and reproductive culture, into the program of the important national electronic media, the daily and periodic press.

Direction 4. Improving the overall health status of the population and reducing the crude death rate as well as premature, infant and maternal mortality

The levels of several general demographic indicators provide clear evidence of deterioration in general health state of the population and of its reproductive health in particular, for the last 20 years. Bulgaria has some of the highest levels of all European countries in such important demographic indicators as perinatal mortality rate (comprising the number of stillbirths, and of infants born alive, and having died in the first 6 days per 1000births); and also the infant mortality rate, the rate of mortality by age, and crude mortality. The country rates among the lowest in average life expectancy of all European countries, and the rates of its increase are rather too slow.

An important feature, characterizing the health status of the population is provided by the indicators of frequency and structure of registered diseases. The total recorded disease incidence rate continues to hold at high levels. The existing difficulties in the access of the population to health services, the self-restraint on their use, the absence of mass health examination screening, give reason to assume that there is a significant volume of unregistered morbidity with all the ensuing negative consequences on the individual and public health.

Tackling the problems of demographic change requires some measures, targeting all processes of natural population development, to be taken. Along with encouraging of birth, the Strategy envisages a set of measures aimed to positively influence the basic factors which affect life expectancy and life expectancy in good health, in close connection to the reform of the health system and to expanding the access to quality health services for all Bulgarian citizens. The following **specific measures** and **tasks** are of extreme importance:

- 4.1. Improving the life standard and the quality of life.
- 4.2. Accelerating the increase in average life expectancy and in life expectancy in good health.
- 4.3. Decreasing the crude mortality rate:
 - Improving the curative-diagnostic and expanding the prophylactic-preventive medical health care services for the population. Emphasizing promotion and prophylactic activities;
 - Undertaking action for providing mobile medical assistance to the population in remote regions and to specific groups;
 - Overcoming and discontinuation of the negative health trends for disadvantaged persons;
 - Overcoming and stopping the negative trends in the health condition of disadvantaged people;
 - Elaboration of a National Program for a healthy way of life of the nation.
- 4.4. Decreasing child mortality and maternal mortality: Opening of female and child health centres, ensuring legal and financial provision for expanding the functions and range of and introducing compulsory free of charge examinations of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and newborn babies;
 - Opening of female and child health centers, legal and financial provision for expanding the functions and range of and introducing compulsory free of charge examinations of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and newborn babies;
 - Introducing measures for ensuring access to quality medical services for pregnant women, young mothers, and children living in rural areas

- 4.5. Reduction of premature mortality, especially among men;
- 4.6. Decreasing of the overall morbidity and prevention of socially significant diseases, incl. diseases of the cardiovascular system, cancer diseases, diseases leading to permanent disability, etc.
 - Creating conditions and purposeful programs for decreasing the socially significant diseases that have become the main causes for premature mortality;
 - Limiting the risk factors leading to cardiovascular diseases, which are the main causes for men's premature mortality, especially at the age of 41 – 59;
- 4.7. Introducing effective control over the respect for labour legislation and more complete implementation of the requirements for safe and healthy labour conditions;
- 4.8. Improvement of the controls over labor legislation, working conditions and employment.
 - Applying more effective control on the observing of the labor legislation, and the full implementation of the requirements for health and safety at work;
- 4.9. Improving the quality of the natural environment (pure land, water, air).
 - Securing on harmful pollution sources - landfills, manufacturing waste and sewage etc.
- 4.10. Improving the quality and purity of food.
 - Enhanced control and sanctioning of the production of food and raw materials of low quality and harmful for the health;
 - Maintaining high standards of quality for food and drinks.

Direction 5. Elaboration of an adequate migration (internal and external) and immigration policy

Rational management and monitoring of the effects of migration processes is an essential prerequisite for a balanced demographic development of the population.

With the convergence in quality of life and working conditions in European countries and in regions across the country, in the medium and long term, the migration flows will normalize.

There are expectations for the near future, of moderate increase of the inflow of immigrants, most of whom will be at an active age. Given the present unfavourable demographic trends of decreasing and ageing of the labour resources, immigration might have a positive effect on the labour market and on economic growth. The vision of the state and society about the place and role of immigrants in the social and economic development of the country, expressed through an adequate immigration policy, would be of determining significance for the rate immigration flow and the results it will have.

The following tasks in the areas of migration (internal and external) and immigration should have priority:

- 5.1 Improving the monitoring of internal and external migration;
- 5.2 Developing immigration policy for attracting Bulgarians living abroad to return to the country;
- 5.3 Implementing of special measures and activities addressing ethnic Bulgarians living abroad, incl.:
 - Facilitating the procedures for obtaining Bulgarian citizenship;
 - Providing scholarships for children of ethnic Bulgarian origin from other

- countries, wishing to study in Bulgaria;
 - Activating and expanding the spheres of cooperation with Bulgarian emigrants abroad;
 - Elaborating a policy for bringing back into the country of ethnic Bulgarians and encouraging their entrepreneurship within Bulgaria.
- 5.4 Developing of administrative capacity and conducting of public debates concerning the assessment of the impact and the role of migration for socio-economic development of the country;
 - 5.5 Periodic review of the existing legislation and maintenance of a unified legal framework, regulating migration issues;
 - 5.6 Improving the supply of information and creating an administrative registry of migrants and immigrants in the country;
 - 5.7 Creating conditions for cultural, educational and social integration of the immigrants and members of their families into Bulgarian society;
 - 5.8 Regulating the procedures for granting legal recognition of the education and professional qualification of the immigrants;
 - 5.9 Conducting information campaigns among the population for spreading knowledge about the manners and customs, traditions and culture, and the problems of immigrant communities residing on the territory of the country.

Direction 6. Significant Decrease in the Number of Emigrating Young People of Reproductive Age

The prevention of further emigration of young people of reproductive age requires the united efforts of many institutions and the implementation of a complex approach directed towards improvement of the quality of life of young people in all aspects – education and qualification, labour and professional realization, family and children, housing and living conditions, personal development and participation in civil society, etc.

Hence the creation of conditions encouraging young people to seek the realization of their long-term life strategies inside the country, will also be achieved through accomplishing of the goals, objectives and measures envisaged in the strategic government documents set out for the management of long term policy and strategic documents in the fields of employment, income, social support, social security, health, education, economy, information and communication technologies development, etc., which should offer a vision, set the priorities and propose concrete measures and define future activities of the state bodies, local authorities, employers, trade unions, NGOs and other potential social partners, aiming to create opportunities for an adequate labour and social realisation of young people in Bulgaria. Such documents would meet EU recommendations for tackling the problems of young people in the member states, as set in the draft European Youth Treaty (2005).

The concrete measures and tasks for decreasing the number of emigrating young people at reproductive age will be in the following directions:

- 6.1 Providing employment and reducing unemployment among young people, incl.
 - Ensuring equal access to quality education and opportunities for life-long learning. Providing conditions for their transition from school to work without a period of unemployment;

- Broadening of the existing active programs and measures on the labor market aimed to address and prevent long-term unemployment among young people up to 30 years of age (including disabled young people);
- Including into the secondary education a training in the field of labour/insurance rights and obligations and ways of searching for a job;
- Encouraging the interaction between educational institutions and employers to expand the opportunities for apprenticeship of the students and their subsequent occupying a workplace;
- Elaborating specialized policies and programs of social skills and capacity for certain activities aimed at ensuring employment, social integration and realization of the groups of disadvantaged youths on the labour market (young people, marginalized groups, homeless children, children coming from social institutions, and children with limited opportunities for social adaptation);
- Elaborating measures and programs for encouraging the return of young people who have graduated from universities abroad and appointing them to state administrative positions (especially in units working on European integration matters);
- Elaborating measures and programs for encouraging foreign companies, corporations banks, and international institutions to appoint young people who have graduated in the country or abroad.

6.2. Improving working conditions, remuneration and quality of employment;

6.3. Ensuring equal access to education of good quality and providing opportunities for life-long learning;

6.4. Creating conditions for alleviations in crediting for the purchase of housing, furnishing and improving the dwelling conditions;

6.5. Creating conditions for overcoming poverty and social isolation among disadvantaged youngsters;

6.6. Creating conditions for adequate social development of young people (incl. family formation, child-raising and upbringing and active participation in civil society).

*For **Priority II**. Overcoming the negative effects of population ageing, and improving the quality characteristics of human capital;*

Direction 7. Adopting an integrated cross-sectoral approach to promote active and productive ageing in good health. Adaptation of the social systems to the demographic change and the population ageing - of labour market, pension system, social assistance and care, health, education, culture, etc.:

7.1. Development and implementation of a National Concept for promotion of active ageing

7.1.1. Adaptation of the labor market to the aging of the population and to the necessity of improving the quality of life of older people

- Elaborating measures for preserving and developing the labour potential as an element of the overall concept for the development of human resources in the country.
- Encouraging life-long learning and accelerating the activities of vocational training at the working place.

- Introducing flexible forms of employment for retired persons, yet avoiding the creating of disproportions on the labour market and intergeneration conflicts.
- Overcoming the negative attitude of employers towards older workers and encouraging the longer performance of their working experience and skills.
- Developing social entrepreneurship, "silver" economy and establishing economic sectors with the potential to create new jobs, adequate to the available ageing workforce.

7.1.2. Adaptation of the social insurance system to the ageing of the population and to the necessity of improving the quality of life of older people

- Improving the insurance culture of workers and officials;
- Encouraging the voluntary insurance of the population in covering the insurance risks;
- Improving the control on the insurance payments and preventing the unlawful receiving of pensions (especially disability pensions due to a general disease);
- Widening the range of insured persons and limiting the scope of informal employment;
- Improving the Bulgarian pension model and ensuring financial stability of the pension system through the introduction of more just and flexible forms of participation in the pension system;
- Creating a Silver Demographic Investment Fund for financial support to the pension system;
- Strengthening the role of the second and third pillar of the pension system;

7.1.3. Adapting the system of social services to the ageing of the population and to the necessity of improving the quality of life of older people

- Priority development of social services for the elderly at household abode and in the community, instead of services provided in specialized institutions, introduction of regulative standards;
- Developing the "Silver economy" to provide services to the elderly;
- Improving the quality of life of elderly people living in specialized institutions;
- Ensuring opportunities for elderly people for access to recreation, sports, tourism, and participation in cultural life;
- Priority development of the training of social workers specialized in taking care of the elderly;
- Encouraging the participation of NGOs in the care and provision of social services for the elderly;
- Establishing of integrated regional centers for the elderly, capable of providing all services required for maintaining their activity, job skills, health, education, information and communication, etc.;
- Developing the public-private partnership in the provision of services for the elderly.

7.1.4. Adapting the system of health care services to the ageing of the population and to the necessity of improving the quality of life of older people

- Optimizing, modernizing and rationalizing of the ever-rising costs of health care, with view of the needs of the workforce getting older;
- Financing and development of additional health services, aimed at the elderly;
- Introduction of multi-level health care service for the elderly;

- Increasing the health awareness among the elderly;
- Promoting healthy lifestyles throughout the entire human life cycle with a special emphasis on people over 50 years of age;
- Establishment of closer cooperation between the health care system and the social protection system in the provision of social services for the elderly.

7.1.5. Adapting the system of education and training to the ageing of the population and to the necessity of improving the quality of life of older people

- Developing a long-term strategy, aimed at increasing the participation in lifelong learning activities, for all age groups;
- Promoting the access of the elderly to education and training, to information and communication technologies that will allow them to remain active and fully participate in public life; Strengthening the measures aimed at the development of computer and technology skills by elderly people as a means of improving the prospects of achieving a knowledge-based society;
- Promoting learning in the workplace;
- Developing tools for the identification and assessing of knowledge, skills and competences, acquired through informal education and learning;
- Improving the applicability of education and training to the needs of specific target groups, including the elderly, as well as to the needs and requirements of the labor market;

7.1.6. Development of volunteering, of intergenerational solidarity, of positive public image and of understanding of the social value of elderly people

- Encouraging the voluntary participation of people of retirement age in the social life of the community and in civil society development
- Promoting volunteering of young people for the benefit and support for the elderly.

7.2. Development and implementation of a National intersectoral program for promoting the active ageing.

Direction 8. Developing of intergenerational solidarity.

Along with the ongoing the increase of life expectancy the number of elderly people, and especially those over 70 years of age, living alone, will be on the rise. Thus, the number of elderly people who would have lost their self-reliance and would need intensive care towards the end of their life, will rise. As a result of the extension of working life and high mobility, the possibilities of many families to care for their old parents will be quite limited. And the necessity of developing the social services and networks for solidarity and care will increase. The measures for developing solidarity among generations will be aimed at:

- 8.1 Distributing and diversifying the responsibilities connected with the long-term care for elderly people;
- 8.2 Active inclusion of people at retirement age in volunteer networks for solidarity and caring for the very old;
- 8.3 Elaboration of schemes for passing on the experience of the elderly to younger people;
- 8.4 Cultivating social sensitivity and understanding to the problems of the elderly;
- 8.5 Forming a sense of responsibility and close monitoring of the impact of policy and administrative decisions upon the future of younger generations.

Direction 9. Raising the general educational, spiritual and cultural level, qualifications, abilities and skills of the population of all age groups.

For solving the problems in education, from the point of demographic development it is necessary to unite the efforts of education specialists, with those of the institutions dealing with the organization and management in the economic and social sphere. For ensuring modern quality of human capital is essential for achieving economic prosperity and social well-being.

Overcoming illiteracy and raising the lowest levels of education among the young and future generations, especially among the illiterate and less educated women, is a prerequisite for change in their demographic behavior. It is an important condition for overcoming the social isolation of compact population groups and for their complete integration and mobility in the labor market, for the consolidation of society, for achieving a less risky and less conflict-ridden society and improve social relations.

The current Strategy includes objectives and measures related to education and directly related to the demographic development aimed at increasing the overall educational, spiritual and cultural level of the population:

- 9.1. Creating conditions for the full inclusion of children in kindergarten and pre-primary education;
- 9.2. Providing equal access of all children to education at all levels of education, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, origin, religion, social status, etc.;
- 9.3. Broader inclusion of students in compulsory education and prevention of dropping out of the education system;
- 9.4. Eradicating illiteracy among the poor and disadvantaged groups;
- 9.5. Providing high quality education by improving the content of educational process and equipment, improving the qualifications of teachers and providing the schools with information technology means;
- 9.6. Building skills for working with high technology;
- 9.7. Building habits for lifelong learning, providing the best conditions for continuing professional education, and developing the system of training, retraining and continuing education;
- 9.8. Taking measures aimed at socializing and providing conditions for the integration of students with special educational needs and specific disabilities into mainstream schools;
- 9.9. Creating the favourable conditions for convergence of educational models of the inhabitants of large cities and those living in small towns, especially in the poor rural areas;
- 9.10. Increasing the effectiveness of education provided in specialized schools for children with mental retardation ;
- 9.11. Overcoming social exclusion through educational programs;
- 9.12. Restructuring and reforming of Correctional Boarding Schools (CBS) and Social child care boarding schools (SBS): redirecting the existing capacity and resources to alternative social services;
- 9.13 . Taking special measures to develop into students their sense of national identity and belonging to the Bulgarian nation;
- 9.14. Priority introducing of measures for the cultural centers to turn into centers of spiritual growth and development of people's cultural identity;
- 9.15 . Formation of knowledge –based culture.

For Priority III. Achieving social cohesion and creating equal opportunities for an ample and productive life for all social groups;

Direction 10. Creating equal opportunities for an ample and productive life for all social groups.

This direction will be realised through measures and activities in two main areas:

- **General measures**, aimed at improving the legislative, institutional and resource basis to ensure equal opportunities for all;
- **Specific measures**, to address specific socially disadvantaged groups.

The target groups that will be addressed through the specific measures for ensuring their equal opportunities, are social groups and their representatives, who are at risk of unequal access to rights, goods, commodities and services for social advancement, or of unequal treatment and discrimination, incl. by one or multiple features such as: gender, age, ethnicity, religion and belief, disability, sexual orientation, social status, etc.

The Specific tasks and measures include:

10.1. Development and implementation of a system of indicators and benchmarks to monitor the status and trends in relation to equality and equal treatment;

10.2. Conducting of a straightforward labor market policy targeted to social and economic integration of disadvantaged groups and to removal of their unequal treatment in the workplace;

10.3. Creating conditions for improving child welfare and deinstitutionalization of children, of persons with disabilities and of elderly people living in institutions, by providing community-based services;

10.4. Creating conditions for improving the quality of life of people with mental problems living in institutions;

10.5. Ensuring the achievement of higher criteria and standards in social services for vulnerable groups in order to improve their quality of life and their successful inclusion and realization in life;

10.6. Formation of an effective media strategy for zero tolerance to acts of bigotry, segregation and discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity and disability;

10.7. Improving the mechanism of social support and enabling the transition from welfare to social investment in education, training and the creation of new jobs;

10.8. Decentralization of the provision of social services;

10.9. Development and implementation of unified state policy to support families with children at-risk. Development of foster child care.

*For **Priority IV**. Limiting the disproportions in the territorial distribution of the population and the depopulation of some of the regions and villages.*

Direction 11. Limiting the disproportions in the territorial distribution of the population and the depopulation of some of the regions and villages.

Overcoming territorial imbalances requires the mobilization of substantial institutional and organizational resources aimed at optimizing housing policy, urban planning, infrastructure and others. The realization of this priority is closely linked to strengthening the role of regional policy and linking the regional development plans with the normalization of internal migration. Specific tasks in this regard include:

11.1. Reducing of disparities between regions through decentralization and the creation of

capacity for dynamic economic development;

11.2. Revival of rural areas;

11.3. Mobilization of regional and local institutional capacities and resources in the implementation of regional development policy ;

11.4. Rational distribution of regional(local) infrastructure and services to ensure balanced growth of the regions, introduction of the cluster approach to economic development and the business environment;

11.5 . Conducting a differentiated regional policy in the underdeveloped areas;

11.6 . Issuing a comprehensive program of economic and social development in the border and mountain areas, with an emphasis on attracting of investment and development of cross-border cooperation between the settlements on both sides of the border;

11.7. Development of sustainable, dynamic, cohesive and interconnected urban centers contributing to the prosperity of the surrounding less urbanized areas;

11.8. Optimization of the concentration of population in major cities and the capital;

11.9. Developing a program to solve the problem of "ghettoisation" through urban plans in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, rehabilitation of these areas, provision of technical infrastructure, etc.;

11.10. Sustainable improvement of the living conditions of Roma people by guaranteeing the implementation of action plans and programs to improve the living conditions of the Roma;

11.11. Promote employment and investment in rural areas to retain young people and reverse the trend of population aging in them;

11.12. Improvement of transport, trade, social and other service infrastructures in the rural and border areas to keep the population in them. Linking concessions with sustainable contribution to local development, infrastructure and population.

11.13. Conservation and maintenance of ecological and ergonomic environment for living;

11.14. Development of regional and/or municipal demographic strategies according to the specifics of the demographic development of the population;

11.15. Developing a long-term renovation and use of buildings in regions and areas with significant population and depopulation trends, development of pilot projects for building regional centers for the elderly.

*For **Priority V**. Adaptation and synchronizing the regulatory framework to the public demands for the balanced demographic development of the population and development of the quality of human capital.*

Direction 12. Introducing a mandatory assessment of the impact of any new, amended or supplemented government act upon the demographic development and on the quality of the human capital.

12.1. Annual monitoring of legislation with assessing its impact on the demographic processes (fertility, mortality, migration) and on the quality of human capital. Inclusion of the monitoring review into the Annual Monitoring Report on the the implementation of the National Strategy for Demographic Development;

12.2. Maintaining the compliance of Bulgarian legislation with EU law in the fields of demographic development, equal opportunities for all and health and safety at work;

12.3. Refining and complementing the regulatory and methodological framework in view to establishing conditions for a balanced demographic development of the population and enhancing the quality of human capital.