



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Information received from Bulgaria on follow-up to the  
concluding observations on its eighth periodic report\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## Follow-up information

1. The Bulgarian authorities have carefully studied the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter “the Committee”) on the eighth periodic report submitted by Bulgaria (CEDAW/C/BGR/CO/8). Under paragraph 50 of the Report, the Bulgarian authorities would like to provide the following information.

### I. Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 16 (a) and 16 (b) of the concluding observations

#### Civil society organizations

2. *§ 16 (a) To ensure an environment that is, de jure and de facto, safe and in which organizations working for women’s rights and gender equality*<sup>1</sup> participate systematically in the development and implementation of relevant legislation and policies.

3. Organizations working for women’s rights actively take part in working groups for legislative amendments, round tables, relevant national and regional initiatives. No restrictions or impediments exist for their involvement in the development and implementation of pertinent legislation and policies. Their participation in all working formats is highly valued and has a lasting positive effect.

4. Since 2005, the National Strategy for promotion of gender equality has been implemented through annual National Action Plans for Promotion of Gender Equality. They are adopted by the Council of Ministers and contain specific measures within the competence of various institutions and organizations, proposed by them, concerning priority areas of the Strategy, responsible bodies, financial means and indicators for implementation.

5. The Human Resources Development Programme 2021–2027 (HRDP), funded through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), has confirmed the partnership principle as a key element of good programme management. In accordance with the EU Regulation 2021/1060, the involvement of partners at national, regional and local level is ensured in line with their competences. Among those are public authorities, socio-economic partners, employers, NGOs and organisations promoting social inclusion, human rights, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and the rights of persons with disabilities.

6. The involvement of all stakeholders, including NGOs, is also guaranteed by the specifically created thematic working group for the development of the new Human Resources Development Programme 2021–2027. Representatives of NGOs working in the field of gender equality and non-discrimination participate actively in thematic working groups. These mechanisms provide opportunities for active involvement of all partners in the programming process and allow for everyone’s input into the preparation of the programme.

7. Representatives of social partners and NGOs, as well as other stakeholders will participate also in the HRDP 2021–2027 Monitoring Committee.

8. *§ 16 (b) To financially support civil society organizations that provide assistance to women facing discrimination, gender-based violence and the violation of their rights, while ensuring that the State party retains the primary responsibility*

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<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria considers the term “gender equality” as referring to “equality between women and men”.

*for providing those women with protection, rehabilitation, reintegration and other relevant services.*

9. Under the Protection against Domestic Violence Act (PaDVA), resources are allocated annually to the budget of the Ministry of Justice. Financing is given for projects of non-profit legal entities that carry out activities under that Act. These include the elaboration and implementation of programmes for prevention and protection against domestic violence.

10. For 2020, 18 NGO project proposals were approved. The total amount of funding for the project proposals was about BGN 440,000. For 2021, 19 project proposals were approved with BGN 440,000 total amount of funding. The projects were implemented and reported within the year. The National Hotline for Victims of Domestic Violence was financed under the National Programmes for Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence for 2020 and 2021. The line is operational, and its funding for 2022 will be provided within the framework of the National Program for Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence.

## **II. Follow-up information relating to paragraph 24 (c) of the concluding observations**

### **Violence against women**

11. *§ 24 (c) To amend the Criminal Code to specifically criminalize marital rape as aggravating circumstances.*

12. In 2019, an interdepartmental working group was established at the Ministry of Justice. A Draft Law Amending and Supplementing the PaDVA was elaborated in the course of the activity of the working group. The aim was to improve the legislation in the field of protection against domestic violence and to ensure social support of victims, as well as to synchronize it with the European legislative practices.

13. With respect to the Committee's recommendations, the draft law proposes as well legislative amendments in the Criminal Code regarding the removal of the term "in a systematic manner" in the definition of crimes committed in circumstances of domestic violence, explicit criminalization of marital rape and criminalization of all forms of economic and psychological domestic violence.

14. The draft of the PaDVA was presented for public discussions between 13.01.2021 and 27.01.2021. Due to the political<sup>2</sup> and pandemic situation in Bulgaria in 2021, there was no possibility to adopt the amendments. Since the beginning of 2022, the working group resumed its meetings, in order to incorporate the latest best practices and ideas from the public discussions. The draft law is expected to be finalized shortly.

## **III. Follow-up information relating to paragraph 34 (c) of the concluding observations**

### **Health**

15. *§ 34 (c) Intensify the implementation of health programmes, including inclusive awareness-raising programmes, to ensure the availability of affordable modern*

<sup>2</sup> In 2021, one round of regular parliamentary elections and two rounds of early parliamentary elections as well as two rounds of presidential elections took place.

*contraceptives to all women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged groups and in rural areas.*

16. The Ministry of Health is a beneficiary of “Health for All” project under the Programme “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Improved Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups”, funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2014–2021. The timeframe of the project is 01.11.2021–30.04.2024.

17. The project responds to the need to improve the health status and the implementation of national health policies in places where there are communities living in poverty. The implementation of the project will support the measures in the National Programme for Improving Maternal and Child Health 2021–2030 and the National Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections 2021–2025, ensuring closer coordination between national and local authorities.

18. In the implementation of the project, the Ministry of Health is in partnership with the Association “National Network of Health Mediators”, which unites, trains, coordinates and monitors the activities of health mediators throughout the country. Mediators seek mechanisms for better communication between groups at risk and health institutions at the local level.

19. In addition, with Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria № 333 of April 9, 2021, an Action Plan for the period 2021–2023 to the National Programme for Maternal and Child Health was adopted. Priority activities are implemented related to raising public awareness on issues of reproductive health and family planning, pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.

20. These measures include facilitating access to healthcare and health services for all Bulgarian citizens, with specific focus on vulnerable communities.

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