

ANNEX 1:

MULTI-ANNUAL PROGRAMME

EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND

MEMBER STATE

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY

***STATE AGENCY FOR REFUGEES WITH THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND DEPARTMENT***

PERIOD

2008-2013

1. SITUATION IN BULGARIA

1.1. The situation in Bulgaria and the migratory flows affecting it

Following its accession to the European Union in 2007, Bulgaria was faced with new responsibilities in terms of strengthening the capacity of the country as an external EU border, as well as in terms of the implementation of the European acquis, further improving reception conditions and the application of asylum procedures, and ensuring a favourable environment for refugees' integration in Bulgaria.

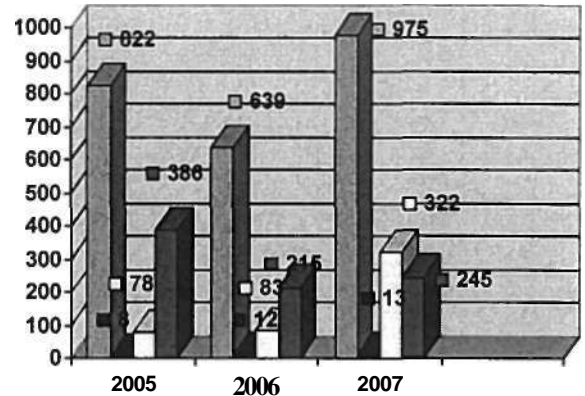
The State Agency for Refugees was designated as the competent authority for ERF in Bulgaria pursuant to Art.53, para 12 (new, SG No 52/2007) of the latest amendments to the Law on Asylum and Refugees adopted by the National Assembly and promulgated in the State Gazette No 52/29.06.2007. As a result of the latest amendments, the national legislation has been brought fully in line with the EU acquis in the area of asylum. The current migration environment in the Republic of Bulgaria can be described as having the parameters of the migration environment in the new EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, which evolved from emigration states to become immigration ones.

As regards asylum-seekers, Bulgaria still remains mainly a country of transit, the expectations being for this situation to change now that the country is an EU Member State. The specific geographic location of Bulgaria makes it vulnerable to routes used for human trafficking, which are used mostly by nationals of Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, stateless persons and people from Middle East countries whose prevailing population is Muslim. The routes used by asylum-seekers to reach Bulgaria run most often through Turkey, and more rarely through Romania and Greece.

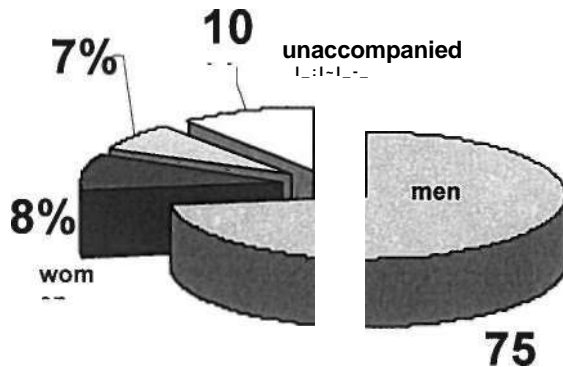
975 asylum applications were filed by asylum-seekers from 44 countries in 2007, compared to 639 asylum-seekers from 36 countries in 2006; this marks an increase by 52%. The highest numbers of asylum-seekers in 2007 come from Iraq - 533, followed by stateless persons - 80, Afghanistan - 77, Armenia - 64. Bulgaria does not yet have an objective and representative data base which can be used either to define the trend in terms of the numbers and countries of origin of asylum-seekers or to make forecast analyses of potential migration flows.

**Information regarding protection applicants and decisions passed
for the period 01/01/2005 - 12/31/2007**

Year	No of protection applicants	Refugee status granted			Total number of decisions
		Humanitarian status ¹ applicants	granted	Rejected ²	
2005	822	8	78	386	472
2006	639	12	83	215	310
2007	975	13	322	245	580
Total	2436	33	483	846	1362



• No. of protection applicants • Refugee status granted
• Humanitarian status granted • Rejected applications



Year	No of protection applicants	Men	Women	Children	Unaccompanied children
2005	822	570	51	42	159
2006	639	482	55	29	73
2007	975	755	98	99	23
Total	2436	1807	204	170	255

Breakdown of applicants by gender

The current trend in terms of the number of third country nationals who seek asylum or another form of protection on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, given the relatively small number of these individuals, is not such as to influence the labor market, the social welfare system, the health care system or any other social processes. Nevertheless, measures need to be undertaken to improve the living conditions of asylum-seekers and protection of applicants, and ensure prerequisites for their successful integration in the Bulgarian society.

The ERF target group consists of the following alien groups:

- Any third country nationals or stateless persons who are refugee status holders under the Geneva Convention and have been allowed to reside in their capacity of refugees in one of the Member States;

¹ Humanitarian status within the meaning of Art. 18 of Directive 2004/83/EC: "Granting of subsidiary protection status: Member States shall grant subsidiary protection status to a third country national or a stateless person eligible for subsidiary protection in accordance with Chapters II and V. " This Directive is also implemented in Bulgarian legislation via the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

² Proceedings regarding rejected applicants are entirely within the competency of the Migration Directorate with the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria. There have been several cases of voluntary return which have been supported by the UNHCR Representation in Bulgaria,

- b) Any third country nationals or stateless persons who have been granted some type of subsidiary protection within the meaning of Directive 2004/83/EC;
- c) Any third country nationals or stateless persons who have applied for any of the protection forms referred to in items (a) and (b);
- (d) Any third-country national or stateless person enjoying temporary protection within the meaning of Directive 2001/55/EC;
- (e)³ Any third-country national or stateless person who is being or has been resettled in a Member State.

1.2. Measures undertaken so far

The Bulgarian Law on Asylum and Refugees stipulates and guides all procedures and mechanisms for granting asylum, refugee and humanitarian status as well as coordination among national and international authorities (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Red Cross) pertaining thereto.

Based on Art. 2 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees: "(1) The President of the Republic of Bulgaria shall grant asylum; (2) (Amended, SG No. 52 of 2007) The Council of Ministers shall grant temporary protection as introduced under a resolution of the Council of the European Union; (3) The Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees shall grant refugee status and humanitarian status under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967, the international human rights instruments and this Law."

According to Art. 3(2) "The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees shall, through his/her representative in the Republic of Bulgaria, have the right to information, as well as to access to any stage of the procedure for granting refugee status, humanitarian status and temporary protection. He/she may get acquainted with any file and give a written or oral opinion on each specific case."

The latest 2007 amendments to the Law on Asylum and Refugees⁴ (promulgated in State Gazette No 52/29.06.2007) brought the Bulgarian legislation in line with the latest EU asylum Directives

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³ As explained in detail in point 3.3 below, at the present moment the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria has no policy on resettlement; thus, the target group described in Article 6e) of Decision 573/2007/EC is not included in the programming documents. Should the Government take such a decision, the actions under this priority will be planned in future national programs and the budget will be adjusted accordingly.

⁴ In force since 1 December 2002; Prom., State Gazette No. 54, 31 May 2002, amend., SG No. 31, 8 April 2005, amend., SG No. 30, 11 April 2006, amend., SG No. 52, 29 June 2007.

⁵ COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted; COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification; COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers; COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof; COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No. 2725/2000 of 11 December 2000 concerning the establishment of "Eurodac" for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention; COUNCIL DECISION of 26 June 1997 on monitoring the implementation of instruments adopted concerning asylum; COUNCIL DECISION of 4 March 1996 on an alert and emergency procedure for burden-sharing with regard to the admission and residence of displaced persons on a temporary basis; JOINT POSITION of 4 March 1996 defined by the Council on the basis of Article K.3 of the Treaty on European Union on the harmonized application of the definition of the term 'refugee' in Article 1 of the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 relating to the status of refugees.

Thus, significant issues such as unaccompanied minors under the legal age (Article 33), family reunification (Article 34), minimum standards of temporary protection⁶ and reception of asylum-seekers⁷, have been brought up to the latest international legal standards.

As far as external border control and immigration are concerned, these are issues directly managed respectively by the National Service "Border Police" and Migration Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior. The latter cooperate with the State Agency for Refugees when matters of asylum and reception of asylum-seekers are concerned. Based on Art. 88b. (new - SG 39/03) of the Regulations for Implementation of the Law for the Ministry of Interior National Service 'Border Police' shall: "(1) implement co-operation and interaction with the customs administration and with the other departments of the border control through exchange of information, joint checks etc.; (2) ... co-operate and interact with the departments on the issues of asylum, the refugees and the stay of foreigners for implementing of effective migration control; (3) the interaction of para 1 and 2 shall be implemented on the basis of annual bilateral and multilateral agreements, signed by the chiefs of the services and the departments and approved by the respective Ministers."

As of 1 January 2007 the Republic of Bulgaria has fulfilled its commitments in relation to the practical implementation of Dublin II and Eurodac. The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) has operational Dublin II and Eurodac departments; the main network links and the necessary software are in place. On 28 December 2007, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted an Ordinance No 332 which lays down the responsibilities, the procedure and tools for the cooperation among the institutions involved in the application of the Dublin procedure: the State Agency for Refugees, the Migration Directorate of Mol, the Border Police DG, and the Research Institute for Criminal Studies and Criminology where the national Eurodac office is based.

The above ordinance regulates the responsibilities within the framework of the Dublin procedure. The actions undertaken in respect of the incoming and outgoing transfers in conformity with the provisions of the Ordinance prove the adequate functioning of the inter-agency cooperation.

⁶According to Article 11 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees: "(1) (Former provision set out in Article 11, amended, SG No. 52 of 2007) Temporary protection shall be granted in the event of a mass influx of aliens who are forced to leave their country of origin or residence as a result of an armed conflict, civil war, foreign aggression, large-scale violations of human rights or violence within the territory of that state or in a specific area thereof and who, for those reasons, cannot return there; (2) (New, SG No. 52 of 2007) Temporary protection shall be granted for a period of time as determined in the decision of the Council of the European Union."

⁷ Para. 1/9(e), Sub-para. 1(a) of the Additional Provisions in the Law § 1a. of the Law on Asylum and Refugees (New, SG No. 52 of 2007) based on Council Directive 2003/9/EC laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers.

Regulations for Implementation of the Law for the Ministry of Interior http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/FC70BFFB-F945-462D-9040-909FCDD67BC9/0/01_Rules_Law_Mol_EN.pdf Prom:

SG. 113/30 Sep 1998, amend. SG. 37/22 Apr 1999, amend. SG. 70/6 Aug 1999, amend. SG. 62/28 Jul 2000, amend. SG. 92/10 Nov 2000, amend. SG. 8/22 Jan 2002, amend. SG. 28/19 Mar 2002, amend. SG. 39/25 Apr 2003, amend. SG. 37/4 May 2004, amend. SG. 65/27 Jul 2004, amend. SG. 16/18 Feb 2005.

⁹ Ordinance on the responsibility and the coordination among the government authorities which perform actions in relation to the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national; Council Regulation (EC) No 1560/2003 of 2 September 2003 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national; Council Regulation (EC) No 2725/2000 concerning the establishment of 'EURODAC for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention of 11 December 2000; and Council Regulation (EC) No 407/2002 laying down certain rules to implement Regulation (EC) No. 2725/2000 concerning the establishment of 'EURODAC for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention of 28 February 2002.

Out of the total of 975 protection applications registered for the year 2007: 140 are Dublin cases, under Art. 21 of the Regulation as follows:

- 125 are incoming requests to the Republic of Bulgaria;
- 15 are outgoing requests for re-admission);
- 29 incoming transfers of asylum-seekers to Bulgaria have been made;
- no outgoing transfers to other member-states have been made.

A bilateral agreement has been signed with Austria and a bilateral agreement with Romania has been drafted within the framework of international cooperation under the Dublin II and Eurodac Regulations.

Registration-and-Reception Centers for Refugees

The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) has two registration-and-reception centers for Refugees based in the city of Sofia and in the village of Banya, Nova Zagora region.

The Sofia Registration-and-Reception Center for Refugees was legally established as a separate structure by force of a legal act in 2001, and became effective within SAR in 2002 as soon as the payroll staff, the operational framework and the logistics were made available. This Center is part of the overall facilities used also by SAR's administration. While the nominal capacity of the Center is 430 aliens seeking protection, it has so far been used by 300-350 aliens seeking protection due to the need to observe a number of requirements with respect to:

- gender
- religion
- marital status
- national incompatibility and intolerance
- vulnerable groups.

The Banya Registration-and-Reception Center for Refugees is located in Southern Bulgaria at a distance of approx. 300 kilometers from Sofia; while the Center's nominal capacity is 80 aliens seeking protection, its effective capacity is 50 (due to the same reasons as the above ones).

The operation of both centers is funded entirely from SAR's budget.

Capacity and Activities Related to Service Provision for Aliens Seeking Protection

The capacity for aliens' reception is a maximum of 15 people/day, and the asylum application processing from registration until decision includes the following operations over a period of time depending on the type of procedure:

- Eurodac Fingerprinting;
- Registration of the asylum seeker - entering data into the electronic system [automated information system (AIS) for refugees];
- Initial medical check;
- Accommodation;
- Dublin Interview;
- Issuing an ID;
- Dublin decision;
- Accelerated procedure;
- Decision under Accelerated procedure;
- Refugee Status Determination Procedure;

- Decision on the asylum request in substance.

The accommodation capacity of SAR will be increased via the opening of the new territorial unit - a Transit centre located near the Bulgarian-Turkish border which is in its final construction phase. The construction of the centre is funded by a project under the Phare National Program - **BG2003/004-937.08.05 Strengthening the Accommodation Capacity of the State Agency for Refugees** - and it will be located in the village of Pastrogor.

This center will strengthen the capacity of the State Agency for Refugees as it will provide for reception and accommodation of 300 asylum seekers. Since the majority of asylum seekers enter Bulgaria through Turkey, the opening of the Transit Centre will reduce the costs for transportation of asylum seekers to the two already existing centers in Sofia and Banya.

PROCEDURE, LEGISLATION - TRANSPOSITION OF EU DIRECTIVES

The Law on Asylum and Refugees (Prom. SG, issue 54 of 2002, as amended, issue 31 of 2005 and issue 30 of 2006) has been in force since December 1, 2002. The law is in line with the relevant international legal instruments in the area of the protection of foreign nationals' fundamental rights and freedoms.

The topic of asylum and aliens' international protection was a part of the negotiation process with the European Union under Chapter 24 "Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs". The requirements set forth in Article 63 of the Amsterdam Treaty and the Conclusion of the Tampere Summit regarding the establishment of a common asylum system have pushed forward the dynamic development of the EU asylum and refugee acquis over recent years. In 2003-2005, the EU institutions have adopted two regulations and four new directives on matters related to refugees and other categories of aliens in need of international protection. As the Bulgarian legal framework was to respond to this dynamic development, a Law for Amendments to the Asylum and Refugees Act was drafted. The updating of the changes made was done with the support provided by experts from the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Netherlands within the framework of a Phare twinning project BG2005/017-353.08.06 *Implementation of the EU Asylum Acquis - Dublin II and Eurodac*.

The main purpose of the Law for Amendments to the Law on Asylum and Refugees is to ensure the implementation of the relevant European legal instruments into the domestic legislation both in view of the country's accession to the EU and the so called Dublin procedure for determining the state responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in an EU Member State by a third-country national.

The provisions of the following EU legal instruments have been taken into account in drafting the Law:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national (Dublin Regulation);
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1560/2003 of 2 September 2003 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national;
- Council Regulation (EC) No 2725/2000 concerning the establishment of 'EURODAC for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention of 11 December 2000 (EURODAC Regulation);
- Council Regulation (EC) No 407/2002 laying down certain rules to implement Regulation (EC) No. 2725/2000 concerning the establishment of 'EURODAC for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention of 28 February 2002;
- Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a

balance of efforts between member states in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof;

- Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers;
- Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification;
- Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third-country nationals and stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection;
- Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 01 December 2005 on minimum standards on procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status.

The transposition of the Reception Directive, the Qualification Directive and the Asylum Procedures Directive into national legislation, was accomplished through one act of the National Assembly - the adoption of the Draft Amendment to the Law on Asylum and Refugees. The last amendments to the Law on Asylum and Refugees (*in force since 1 December 2002 Prom., State Gazette No. 54, 31 May 2002, amend, SG No. 31, 8 April 2005, amend, SG No. 30, 11 April 2006, amend, SG No. 52, 29 June 2007*) bring the national asylum legislation completely in line with the asylum Directives, as their transposition is controlled by the EU institutions through special procedures. Particular amendments of practical importance are specified below:

The Qualification Directive

The inclusion of criteria for determination of the subject of persecution and protection, of the substance and the act of the persecution itself, the possibility for internal alternative flight, as well as the necessity for international protection *sur place*. The legal definitions of basic notions regarding the refugee status are included in the Additional Provisions of the Law.

The grounds for rejection, cessation and suspension of the different types of protection, as well as the grounds for cessation of the status determination procedure has been specified in order to achieve full compliance with European standards. Article 16, criticized by the EC and UNHCR has been removed. More detailed regulations of procedures have been introduced with regard to the cessation and suspension of the status determination procedures, as well as the cessation and withdrawal of refugee status.

Reception Conditions Directive

The amendments to Chapter 4, section I-III are related to the differentiation of some rights of certain categories of aliens, who are in status determination procedure. They refer to the right of guardianship of unaccompanied minors, the access to education for different categories of aliens, access to labour markets during the status determination procedure, right to accommodation and the cases where this right has been denied.

Asylum Procedures Directive

Directive 2005/85/EU implements minimum standards with regard to the interviewing of the asylum seekers. These standards are reflected in the new provisions of Chapter Six, Section I, which shall be applied to all the procedures under the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

As soon as the Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU came into force, the Dublin Regulation and the EURODAC Regulation - which are to be directly implemented in the Member States - became part of the domestic legislation.

As a result of this, the new Section 1(a) of Chapter 6 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees lays down

norms regarding the competent national authority and the acts it will pass, the opening of the Dublin procedure and the proceedings on the substance, the transfer of aliens, and the coordination between SAR and Mol.

The Dublin Convention and the Dublin Regulation, which replaced it in 2003, establish common criteria for determining the state responsible for examining an asylum application lodged within the EU. Art. 15 of the Dublin Convention provides for the setting up of a common system for determining the state responsible for processing of asylum applications on the territory of the EU.

The State Agency for Refugees carries out procedures for granting protection and is therefore the institution responsible for the implementation of the Dublin Regulation obliged to supervise the precision of the implementation of regulations for working with the EURODAC system. The State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers is responsible for entering, correction, blocking and early deletion of information on persons seeking protection.

The Eurodac Regulations provide for the functioning of the automated system EURODAC, ensuring proof in procedures under Regulation No. 343/2003 (Dublin II) based on fingerprints coincidence of persons seeking protection with those already entered in the central European database. The regulations stipulate the categories of persons whose finger prints will be taken, the demographic information to be stored on them, the terms and conditions for storage and erasure of information, the obligations of the Member States and the operation of the central European station (Central Unit).

It is provided that the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers take fingerprints, through its centers, and transmit them immediately to the Bulgarian national point for access to EURODAC (located at the National Forensic Science and Criminology Institute with the Ministry of the Interior) through the data transfer network which was established between SAR and Mol in the framework of the Phare project BG 2005/017-353.08.06 "Implementation of the EU *acquis* in the field of asylum - Dublin II/EURODAC".

As for the measures undertaken at national level in relation to the common European Program "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows," a National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria on Migration and Integration has been approved by the Bulgarian Government on 5 June 2008. The individual sections of the Strategy provide for measures aimed at the social adaptation and integration of asylum-seekers and refugees, and the development of resettlement programs.

A 2008-2010 National Program for the Integration of Refugees - a follow-up to the 2005-2007 Program - has been approved on 17 April 2008 via Protocol No. 16 issued by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The 2008-2010 National Program for the Integration of Refugees ensures both the equal treatment of refugees in the Bulgarian society and their successful integration.

The following integration measures have been designed for newly recognized refugees within the first year after being granted refugee or humanitarian status:

- Bulgarian language training and vocational training;
- Involvement in social adaptation and cultural counseling sessions;
- Material support in the course of training;
- Health insurance;
- Cash assistance for accommodation;
- Professional training and retraining;
- Social advice.

Special measures have been planned for disadvantaged refugees - training tailored to their special needs and capacity, additional services and consultations, psychological advice.

1.3. Total national resources allocated.

In 2007 the total national co-financing allocated amounts to EUR 143.546,90.

In 2008, SAR's budget - the only government authority which ensures both the refugee status determination procedure and all the relevant activities for asylum-seekers' reception, accommodation and maintenance, and the integration measures for refugee or subsidiary protection holders- amounts to EUR 1.885.500. Each subsequent annual budget is drafted on the basis of the outcomes of the analysis of the Agency's current state of affairs and needs.

Additional resources are earmarked under the programs of other agencies and institutions, such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Bulgarian Red Cross, The State Agency for Child Protection, and NGOs who work with asylum-seekers and refugees.

For the period 2008-2013 the allocations from the SAR's budget, other than the ERF National co-financing, represent an indicative total of **4 960 284 BGN (approx. 2 536 191,83 EUR)**, and are broken down as follows:

- Improving the conditions of reception, accommodation and initial adaptation of asylum-seekers: **1 234 500 BGN (approx. 631 134, 97 EUR);**
- Ensuring optimal conditions for the efficient implementation of the Dublin procedure: **1 145 000 BGN (approx. 585 378, 32 EUR);**
- Ensuring the observation of the minimum standards within the RSDP:
 - interpretation services: **1 250 000 BGN (approx. 639,059,30 EUR);**
 - information regarding the rights and obligations of asylum seekers: **31 000 BGN (approx. 15 848, 68 EUR);**
 - purchase and maintenance of necessary hardware/software: **500 000 BGN (approx. 255 623,72 EUR);**
 - staff training and qualification improvement: **238 500 BGN (approx. 121 932,52 EUR);**
- Providing asylum-seekers with social activities aimed at facilitating their preliminary social adaptation: **102 500 BGN (approx. 52 402, 86 EUR);**
- Providing additional support for costly medical treatment and medicines which are not on the list of reimbursable clinical paths of the National Health Fund; for the time being the funds allocated to minimum medical insurance for refugees and asylum seekers is **458 784 BGN (approx. 234 552,15 EUR).**

N.B. Legal services provided to asylum seekers, the COI Resource Center establishment as well as the comprehensive national awareness campaign as described in the 2008-2013 programming period represent an added value to refugees and asylum-seekers as no such funding had been foreseen in the national budget so far. These activities have been introduced in Bulgaria via the ERF co-funding and programming.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE REQUIREMENTS IN BULGRARIA

2.1. The requirements in the Member State in relation to the baseline situation

The State Agency for Refugees, in its capacity of the authority designated for the management of ERF funds, will continue to play its role in terms of reception, including the refugee status determination procedure, integration and in the future perspective - resettlement - and will further enhance the administrative capacity needed for the efficient management of these resources.

The needs in view of the baseline situation can be broken down into several lines:

2.1.1. The need to improve the reception and accommodation conditions for asylum-seekers.

Pursuant to Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers (32003L0009), a high priority on SAR's agenda in the long term is the gradual and sustainable renovation of the existing facilities for asylum-seekers' reception and accommodation, thus bringing them in line with EU standards. Despite the measures, which have been undertaken along this line, due to the lack of financial resources, basic issues related to the living conditions in the Agency's reception-and-accommodation centers in Sofia and Banya have not been resolved: bad living environment, old furniture, lack of an accessible environment for disabled people.

In addition to the need to improve the basic living conditions, measures should be designed for the initial adaptation of asylum-seekers by means of their active involvement in a variety of social activities. This requires the provision of spaces for leisure and recreation activities, access to the internet, social clubs, and separate premises for the accommodation of unaccompanied minor and underage asylum-seekers.

2.1.2. The need to improve the quality of the refugee status determination procedure in order to ensure the implementation of the minimum standards and the relevant EU asylum acquis.

a) Sharing knowledge amongst all stakeholders in the Dublin procedure is an ongoing process and should continue on a regular basis. The implementation of Ordinance 332, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 28 December 2007, should continuously be reviewed. Conferences should be organized in order to inform the higher management of the organisations involved about the current situation on the implementation of the Dublin II and EUODAC Regulations and the Common European Asylum System (green paper).

b) The difficulties with ensuring reliable translators/interpreters with some of the rare languages for the purpose of both the RSDP at SAR's territorial units and in court proceedings require the development of a sustainable system for translators' training and recruitment. Another reason for the need to expand the existing network of translators/interpreters is the forthcoming opening in the short run of the new territorial unit (the Transit Centre in Pastrogor) of SAR near the Bulgarian-Turkish border. At present, translation with rare languages is ensured at the Sofia registration-and-reception center by means of SAR's involvement in the GDISC "Interpreters' Pool Project 2007". Within the framework of this project, the Agency has the opportunity to use interpretation services from another Member State via a video conference link in case no translator with the particular language is available in Bulgaria. The option of using video conference interpretation can be further expanded to be applied at the other two territorial units of the SAR (the Reception Centre in Banya and the Transit centre in Pastrogor) and the court. It is expected that, in the long-term, using the videoconference method of interpretation will contribute to decreasing of the expenditures for interpreters as the remote centers do not dispose of qualified interpreters and this induces additional business travel expenses. Furthermore,

this improves the quality of the RSDP as this helps for quick identification of asylum seekers' origin and facilitates the examination of the request.

c) The provision of legal assistance at any stage of the procedure is a guarantee for a fair and efficient procedure and a safeguard for asylum-seekers' rights under Art. 15 of Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005 on Minimum Standards on Procedures for Granting and Withdrawing Refugee Status in Member States (3205L0085). At present, irrespective of its legal bases in the legislation, the practical provision of legal assistance is impeded by the insufficient financial resources. Due to insufficient financial resources, there is lack of: printed materials in the main refugee languages which will raise asylum-seekers' awareness about their rights in the course of the various procedures, a reception room for free legal consultations and legal representation in the procedure. In addition to the detailed clarification of the rights and obligations provided in writing and with accessible wording, at any stage of the procedure asylum-seekers should be informed about the option of voluntary repatriation into the country of origin.

d) A system for monitoring the RSD procedure which will ensure the full application of the EU asylum and refugee *acquis* needs to be developed. The findings from the monitoring process will be used as a basis for drafting annual reports for the evaluation of the current state of the refugee system and for making recommendations for measures aimed at the improvement thereof. These reports will also be made use of for the annual programming for ERF resources.

e) The existing system for analyzing and handling COI information needs to be improved by means of the establishment of a Resource Center. This center will collect, process, update and store information about the countries of origin, as well as samples of the various documents issued in these countries. The resource center will also be used by the court. SAR's resource center may be linked to the common European COI portal.

f) The already existing Automated Information System "Refugees" which enables the processing of all data regarding the asylum seekers does not correspond to the latest development of the asylum system and the requirements of the procedure. On one hand, there exists a separate automated system from the one mentioned above, which is used for Dublin cases processing; on the other hand, the gradual processing of the asylum cases (starting from the Dublin procedure, going through the Accelerated and Standard procedures until reaching final decision) requires implementation of an integrated electronic processing system. The latter should be adequately secured and encrypted and interconnected with the respective services of the Mol and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Having mentioned all of the above, the capacity of SAR's existing automated refugee system needs to be expanded. All organizations involved both in the Dublin procedure and the RSD procedure should be provided with faster means for communication like high-speed connections (2Mbps) and computer hardware, because of the short time frames in the Dublin Regulation. The upgrading of the system will shorten the time limits for information exchange and will thus speed up the process of decision-taking on protection applications. The latter will enhance the overall quality of the procedures, which will result in cost reduction. In terms of future development, SAR's information system can be linked to the information systems of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in view of the exchange of data about aliens residing in the Republic of Bulgaria.

g) Programs for theoretical and practical training in the field of asylum and refugee legislation of newly recruited staff, and programs for improving the professional qualification of the staff need to be designed. The systematic improvement of the skills and competences of those members of the staff who are directly involved in refugee cases will facilitate the more efficient implementation of the procedures and EU standards.

2.1.3. The need to develop specialized projects in the field of integration.

The effective legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria provides for refugee status holders the same rights and obligations as those of Bulgarian nationals with a number of exceptions listed in the Law on Asylum and Refugees - Art. 32, para 1, items 1-4. The aliens who hold humanitarian status enjoy the rights and obligations of aliens who hold a permit for permanent residence in the Republic of Bulgaria. While the effective legal framework is comprehensive and well developed, there are some practical difficulties with the integration of refugee or humanitarian status holders. Hence, there is a need to design and apply integration measures with respect to specific groups:

- a) **Program for the social inclusion of young refugees.** A substantial part of asylum-seekers and refugees in Bulgaria are single young men. In order to prevent their social isolation, specific measures should be undertaken to ensure the equitable inclusion of this particular group into social life. In particular, those young men who come of age during the procedure or soon after being granted protection should be included in the national protected shelter program, which will facilitate their social integration.
- b) **Specialized programs for separated children.** Being a particularly vulnerable group, these children are in the focus of attention both of SAR's staff and of the relevant units of the child protection departments with the Social Assistance Offices and the State Agency for Child Protection. Improved coordination between the individual institutions and a wider involvement of NGOs are needed in order to ensure the best living environment and psychological comfort for children in the course and after the RSD procedure.
- c) **Enhanced care should be taken of refugee women, in particular those who are without their family, in order to find durable solutions to their burden.** At present, refugee women are taken special care of by SAR's staff. There is an operational integration center at the Agency where women and children refugees enjoy priority treatment in terms of vocational training in hairdressing, beauty services, fashion design, etc.
- d) **An overall policy with respect to vulnerable refugees should be developed and financed.** While efforts have so far been made to properly attend to their needs, the issues are being addressed on a case-by-case basis: provision of medical treatment, psychological assistance, hospitalization and registration of personas with chronic diseases, accommodation assistance.

The Health Insurance Act treats asylum-seekers and refugees as a group that enjoys the same rights to medical services as Bulgarian nationals. However, the budget of the national health system does not allocate resources either for costly treatment, prostheses, implants, etc. or for some medicines. The same is true of dental services for which the annual allocation covers a limited scope of service provision.

There is a need to organize and conduct a campaign for awareness-raising and promoting the intercultural dialogue. The problems of refugees and asylum-seekers have been off the focus of the public interest. Building a positive attitude towards the involvement of people with a different national, religious and cultural background at all levels of social life, promoting interest in cultural differences and interactions and countering all forms of discrimination will be a step forward along the line of overcoming the social isolation of the individuals included in the target groups. Cultural differences should be more widely advocated, which will allow the host community to better understand and accept people with a different ethnic, religious and cultural background.

In-depth research studies should be carried out to address the range of issues related to the asylum-seekers' reception and adaptation and refugees' integration. Bulgaria has a 15-year experience with the reception of asylum-seekers and the delivery of the RSDP - this a relatively short period compared to

most European states which have applied the Geneva Convention for over 50 years. Due to the relatively small number of applicants - which does not have any significant implications for social life - refugee issues have not been in the focus of researchers' interest. It is only in recent years that some research efforts have been made, which, however, are not comprehensive enough. An overall review should be made of the state of affairs with a representative sample, which will allow a more focused and efficient planning of activities.

Refugee issues should be included more comprehensively in university curricula. The underlying reasons for this problem are the same as for the above one. While over recent years a substantial number of higher education establishments have made asylum- and refugee-related topics part of their curricula, there is still a low level of interest in career development in this field among university alumni. Following Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the lack of qualified professionals in this particular area may become an inhibitor to the development of a stable and well functioning protection system.

2.2. The operational objectives of the Member State designed to meet its requirements.

- Improve the conditions for asylum-seekers' reception and maintenance by ensuring the renovation of the existing facilities at SAR's territorial units as well as provide conditions for asylum-seekers' adaptation by ensuring spaces for social activities within the territorial units, and developing specialized programs;
- Provide conditions for the efficient delivery of the Dublin procedure, including efficient and timely transfers with other Member States, and improve the system for information exchange among institutions;
- Expand the options for using interpretation services by means of a video conference link among SAR's territorial units as well as provide qualified translation for the purpose of the RSD procedure by means of programs for translators'/interpreters' selection and training;
- Safeguard asylum-seekers' rights by securing legal assistance at all RSDP stages;
- Ensure provision of all relevant information to asylum-seekers in relation to their rights and obligations in the course of the different procedures;
- Develop a system for RSDP monitoring and produce annual reports on the RSDP system development. The independent monitoring will be outsourced to an independent organization and funded by the ERF;
- Improve the quality and efficient use of COI information by establishing a COI resource center;
- Upgrade the capacity of the existing information systems used for the RSDP;
- Develop programs for systematic improvement of the competences of the staff who deal with refugee cases;
- Provide social adaptation measures for the asylum-seekers as well as integration activities which are not included in the National Integration Program:
 - Bulgarian language training for asylum-seekers;
 - Clothes tailoring and design;
 - Computer literacy;
 - Hair dressing;
 - Cosmetics;

Painting, arts and hand-crafting;

Summer camps and green schools for the children of asylum-seekers and refugees;

- Provide additional health, psychological and dental services to asylum-seekers and refugees when such assistance is needed;
- Develop and carry out a long-term awareness campaign aimed at improving the attitude of Bulgarian society towards refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as at successful integration of persons benefiting from protection in Bulgarian society. Until now, the PR activities were part of the responsibilities of a specially appointed PR Officer, therefore no purposeful awareness campaigns are conducted so far;
- Design university and research programs on asylum and refugee topics.

3. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

3.1. Priority 1. (Application of the principles and measures laid down in the EU asylum acquis, including the ones related to integration)

This priority will be addressed throughout the whole program period. The investment key actions (depreciation only) will be carried out throughout the first implementing year. The latter are targeting improvement of reception conditions for refugees and asylum-seekers. The rest of the actions under this priority will be carried out during the entire five-year period.

The resources from the European Refugee Fund will be used to finance activities that will contribute to attaining the following operational objectives:

3.1.1. Improve the conditions for reception, accommodation and initial adaptation of asylum-seekers by enhancing the reception capacity; ensure an accessible environment and conditions for meaningful social activities and contacts.

a) Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions:

1. Renovation and improvement of the reception and living environment at the two existing Reception centers;
2. Improvement of the existing and construction of new premises at the two existing Reception centers for activities aimed at the social adaptation of the asylum seekers;
3. Creation of facilities aimed at easing the access of disabled asylum seekers to all services provided by the two Reception centers;

b) Target group concerned - asylum seekers

c) Indicators used:

- 122 rooms in total for accommodation of asylum seekers renovated and refurbished;
- 3-room medical facility and a 2-room facility for sick persons renovated and refurbished at the Sofia RRRCR;
- 15 rooms for social adaptation activities renovated and refurbished at the Integration Center;
- 2 premises equipped for urgent medical care;
- building 2 ramps for disabled persons;
- building/renovation of 2 sports playgrounds for social activities;

3.1.2. Ensure optimal conditions for the efficient implementation of the Dublin procedure; improvement in practical terms in order to accelerate the process of transferring asylum-seekers between Member States by means of enhanced coordination among the institutions concerned: MOI, SAR, MFA and the court;

a) Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions:

1. Organizing of regular annual meetings of national high-level management, as well as meetings among Romanian, Bulgarian and Greek Dublin Heads aimed at improving both the national and international cooperation in the implementation of the Dublin procedure;
2. Organizing annual training sessions for judges aimed at improving the quality of the decisions on Dublin cases; 5 training sessions for judges;
3. Enlargement and integration of the Dublin IT system with the systems of the Ministry of Foreign affairs (the Visa Centre), the Ministry of Interior and the Administrative Courts; annual Dublin IT system upgrades & IT maintenance sessions;

b) Target groups concerned - asylum seekers whose cases are examined under the Dublin Regulation

c) Indicators used:

- improvement of the quality of the Dublin decisions;
- shortening the time of the Dublin transfers between the MS;
- improvement of the electronic processing of Dublin cases;
- cost-reduction of the expenses involved.

3.1.3. Ensure the observation of the minimum standards within the RSDP by means of qualified interpretation services, legal assistance and information provision about asylum-seekers' rights and obligations, and by enhancing the professional competences of staff who are directly involved in the identification of asylum-seekers and the determination of their applications;

a) Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions:

1. Improvement of the interpretation service quality via annual training sessions for interpreters/translators;
2. Enhancement of the interpretation capacity via enlargement of the possibilities of the videoconference method of interpretation; purchase (depreciation costs only) of VC equipment for the Banya RRC and the Pastrogor Transit Center (1 piece per facility), as well as one piece of VC equipment for the Supreme Administrative Court, the Sofia, Sliven, and Haskovo Administrative Courts each; training sessions on using the VC equipment for respective staff;
3. Ensuring legal assistance free of charge for the asylum seekers during all the stages of the RSDP;
4. Provision of written information in 10 languages regarding the rights and obligations of the asylum seekers during the RSDP;
5. Regular training of staff dealing with asylum cases aimed at improving the definitions and procedures applied for identification of the persons in vulnerable situation who are seeking protection;

b) Target groups concerned - asylum seekers

c) Indicators used:

- quality improvements of interpretation during the RSDP;
 - easier identification of persons whose origin cannot be identified by the available interpreters/experts;
 - equal access to the qualified interpretation services in all territorial units of the State agency for Refugees;
 - access to language expertise from other MS;
 - business travel cost-reduction for providing interpretation at the territorial units;
 - free-of-charge legal services for asylum seekers during all stages of the RSDP; est. 4500 legal advice sessions (900 per year, i.e., 3 legal advice sessions per asylum-seeker based on 300 asylum-seekers per current RSDP statistical data);
- printed brochures on the rights and obligations of asylum seekers throughout the RSDP in 10 languages: 1500 brochures in Arabic; 1500 brochures in Persian; 1500 brochures in Bulgarian; 1000 brochures in English; 500 brochures in French; 500 brochures in Tamil; 500 brochures in Kurdish; 500 brochures in Hindi; 500 brochures in Armenian; 500 brochures in Russian; in the event of quantity depletion, new printing orders will be made;
- developed programs for systematic improvement of the competences of staff who deal with asylum cases: initial training sessions of the newly hired staff of the Transit Center; yearly qualification improvement training; for the staff dealing with asylum cases from SAR's territorial units (Sofia and Banya RRCs, and the Transit Centre in Pastrogor); annual specialized training of judges from the panels of the administrative courts in Sofia, Haskovo and Sliven; annual training of NGOs who work with refugees with special needs; annual training sessions for public administration staff (employment offices, social services, municipalities, etc.) and representatives of professional groups, NGOs and communities (school doctors and teachers, university professors, school headmasters, non-governmental organizations, landlords, real estate agencies, religious communities, etc.) who work with refugees;

3.1.4. Provide asylum-seekers with social activities aimed at facilitating their preliminary social adaptation; sustainable integration measures for persons with granted refugee status and subsidiary protection; additional health, psychological and dental services to asylum-seekers and refugees when such assistance is needed;

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions: provision of social adaptation measures for the asylum seekers upon their arrival in the host country, as well as integration activities not covered by the National Integration Program for the persons with granted refugee status and subsidiary protection:

1. Bulgarian language training for asylum-seekers;
2. Training in: clothes tailoring and design; computer literacy; hair dressing; cosmetics; painting, arts and hand-crafting;
3. Summer camps and green schools for the children of asylum-seekers and refugees.

b. Target groups concerned: asylum-seekers, refugee status holders and persons benefiting from subsidiary protection (including vulnerable groups such as refugee children and unaccompanied minors);

c. Indicators used:

- strengthening of the integration measures;

- achieving a better rate of cultural and social integration in Bulgarian society;
- providing suitable integration activities to refugee children, unaccompanied minors and children of asylum-seekers.

3.1.5. Encourage the involvement of the public at large, the local authorities, NGOs and the social partners in the successful integration of refugees and persons benefiting from subsidiary protection by means of regular, comprehensive and flexible awareness-raising campaigns with a focus on the national migration and integration policy.

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions: improvement of Bulgarian society's attitude towards refugees and asylum-seekers as well as successful integration of persons benefiting from protection; an example of a key action is the permanent national awareness campaign in the press and media targeting Bulgarian society;

b. Target groups concerned: asylum-seekers, refugees and persons benefiting from subsidiary protection.

c. Indicators used:

- Awareness-raising and better understanding of the asylum and refugee issues in the Bulgarian society;
- Improving the measures aimed at promoting the quality of life of the vulnerable groups by means of alternative programs;

3.1.6. Accommodate refugee children/unaccompanied minors at specialized facilities such as SOS Children Villages in order to provide them with a home-friendly environment.

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions - to ensure more favorable conditions for further integration in the Bulgarian Society of refugee children whose family members could not be traced and family reunification is not possible;

b. Target groups concerned - unaccompanied minors with granted refugee status or subsidiary protection;

c) Indicators used:

- Development of programs for accommodation of minors in specialized protected SOS Children Villages

This action implements Specific Priority 1 under Priority 1

3.1.7 Provide additional support for costly medical treatment and medicines which are not on the list of reimbursable clinical paths of the National Health Fund

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key action - to provide better care for persons with special medical needs suffering from serious chronic diseases requiring expensive treatment (cancer, HIV, diabetes, etc.)

b. Target group concerned - asylum seekers, refugees and persons benefiting from subsidiary protection

c. Indicators used:

- Provide access to expensive medical treatment for persons in a precarious medical condition.

3.2. Priority 2 (Development of reference tools and methodologies for the assessment and improvement of the quality of the procedures for determining international protection

applications, and strengthening the administrative structures in order to meet the challenges related to the enhanced practical cooperation with other Member States)

The key actions under this priority will be carried out during the entire five-year period.

3.2.1. Improve the quality of COI information by establishing a Resource Center, which will be used by all the institutions whose operation is related to asylum and refugees. The Center may be linked to the common European COI portal.

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions - better collection, processing, update and storage of information about the countries of origin and various documents issued in them so as to speed up the RSDP procedure; linking the COI to the courts and other stake holders to the common European COI portal;

b. Target group concerned: asylum-seekers;

c. Indicators used :

- enhancing the quality of the decisions on the asylum cases by providing up-to-date information, easier co-ordination among the authorities concerned, shortening the deadlines of COI determination;
- avoiding cases where COI with questionable reliability is used in the RSDP, namely during the court hearings.

This action implements Specific Priority 3 under Priority 2

3.2.2. Enhance the possibilities for data exchange among the institutions involved in the asylum and refugee area.

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions - improving the Refugee Automated Information System; expanding the Refugee Automated Information System to include SAR, Mol, MFA and the courts;

b. Target group concerned - asylum-seekers;

c. Indicators used:

- Shortening of the time limits for determining protection applications;
- Maximization of the RSDP efficiency;
- Quality improvement of statistical information;

This action implements Specific Priority 2 under Priority 2

3.2.3. Independent yearly review of the functioning of the national refugee system.

a. Objective of the strategy and examples of key actions - improving the efficiency of the national refugee system; developing and implementing an independent monitoring mechanism by an independent organizations (NGOs) or research institution;

b. Target groups concerned: refugees, persons benefiting from subsidiary protection and asylum seekers;

c. Indicators used:

- Preparation of annual independent monitoring report regarding the state of play of the asylum system in Bulgaria;
- Contribution of the monitoring report to the efficiency improvement of the national refugee system;

This action implements Specific Priority 1 under Priority 2

3.3. Priority 3 - Including resettlement in the national migration and integration strategy as well as partnerships with states that have best resettlement practices is an option. Developing pilot programs for resettlement in the Republic of Bulgaria is currently being discussed by the Government. Nevertheless, whether or not Bulgaria will become a country of resettlement is still pending and is to be decided by the Government. Should the Government take such a decision, the actions under this priority will be planned in future national programs and the budget will be adjusted accordingly.

4. COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS

The State Agency for Refugees will undertake measures in order to ensure that the actions co-financed from ERF are coordinated with other national measures in the field of asylum and migration and are compatible with other Community instruments. The actions co-financed from ERF will supplement:

A. The National Refugee Integration Program (2008-2010)

SAR is the only governmental institution in Bulgaria dealing with refugee issues. Independently of the National Migration and Integration Strategy (NMIS) for migrants, refugees are a specific priority of SAR. Refugees are only considered in the NMIS plan in the longer term. They follow a specific refugee integration program first (the National Refugee Integration Program, NRIP). The NRIP is entirely independent of the Government; it is a separate instrument financed by the Republic of Bulgaria via its national budget. The national financing for 2007 and 2008 each, amounts to 300 000 BGN; this figure will be adjusted in future years according to inflation rates.

The following actions, directed at the integration of 100 refugees, are included in the NRIP:

- Bulgarian language training;
- Cultural Orientation and Social Adaptation Course;
- Professional Training Course;
- Assistance in finding employment.

In addition to the above, the NRIP provides for: monthly assistance while refugees are attending courses; financial assistance for rent; social assistance, services and health insurance (in the amounts applicable by law to socially vulnerable Bulgarian citizens).

For the time being, no assistance from the European Social Fund is used. Refugees are only considered as a possible beneficiary thereof in the future.

The NRIP is the only national financial instrument designed to assist refugees in Bulgaria.

The ERF is the only EU financial instrument currently implemented in Bulgaria which is directed at refugees' needs.

B. The National Migration and Integration Strategy (NMIS).

The NMIS has been approved by the Bulgarian Government. Refugees are included as a group in it but there are no specific activities or actions regarding them as SAR carries the sole financial responsibility to that regard. SAR is included in the NMIS via its programs and actions under the ERF.

C. Projects implemented under the Phare national program:

1. BG 0103.06 "Strengthening the institutional capacity of the State Agency for Refugees"
2. BG2003/004-937.08.05 "Strengthening the accommodation capacity of the State Agency for Refugees"
3. BG 2005/017-353.08.06 "Implementation of EU acquis - Dublin II and Eurodac Regulations"

D. Projects within the framework of practical cooperation:

1. GDISC Interpreters' Pool Project (General Directors' Immigration Services Conference). This project is financed under the ARGO program of the EC and addresses the problem of ensuring translators with rare languages by creating a translators' pool to be shared by GDISC members and by promoting the use of interpretation via a video-conference link.

2. Agency for Refugees and Information about the Countries of Origin Project financed under the ARGO program of the EC and managed by the Department of Civil Rights and Immigration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy. The partners under the project are Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Slovenia. The project is focused on the development of a system for collecting and exchanging COI information among the institutions of the project partner states.

3. ARGONAUT - Enhancing the practical cooperation between Bulgaria and Greece in the field of the RSDP. The project, also co-financed under the ARGO program, has been successfully implemented for 3 years: meetings have been held between SAR experts and the Greek partners to address the practical aspects of the implementation of Directive 2003/9/EC laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum-seekers; the RSDP; the conditions at reception centers; the development of a common COI information system; and the application of the Dublin II and Eurodac Regulations.

5. FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

5.1. The publication of the program

- i. All the materials produced by the competent authority in relation to the implementation of the program (notices for tender procedures for projects, guidelines, application forms, letters to project applicants, etc.) will bear the EU logo and will indicate the ERF co-financing;
- ii. All recipients will be informed about the ERF co-financing of this program;
- iii. The EU logo will be attached to any equipment acquired with program funds;
- iv. Any accompanying advertising materials, brochures, letters will bear the EU logo and will indicate the ERF co-financing;
- v. The availability of the EU logo and the indication of the ERF co-financing will be secured at the premises of the main recipients;
- vi. The participants in workshops and conferences will be informed about the co-financing by the ERF for projects under the program.

The following sentence will be used for advocating the ERF co-financing:

"Project co-financed by the European Refugee Fund."

The responsible authority shall organise at least one information activity a year, presenting, as of 2008, the launch of the multiannual programme or the achievements of the annual programme(s).

5.2. The approach chosen to implement the principle of partnership.

In the implementation of this program, the partnership with the other Member States will be encouraged in view of sharing best practices about the delivery of the activities under the identified priorities, as well as the partnership with other government institutions, NGOs and local authorities.

Prior to submitting the MAP and the AP to the EC, the RA makes a consultation round with UNHCR and all the NGOs working in the field of asylum and refugee policy in order to obtain their input for the drafting of the programs. This approach ensures that all the needs and gaps in the field of asylum are reflected adequately.

During the selection process the UNHCR Representative will be invited as a member of the Evaluation Committees.

An independent Monitoring Committee will be established for each annual program in order to supervise the project implementation progress. The Monitoring Committee will be composed by representatives of governmental institutions and civil society organizations. The Monitoring Committee will be established by an Order of the Chairperson of the RA and will have adopted rules of proceeding.

6. INDICATIVE FINANCING PLAN

6.1 Community contribution

6.1.1. Table in EUR.

<i>(in 000*EUR - current prices)</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total ERF
PRIORITY 1:		453,399.36	481,920.00	481,920.00	522,816.00	522,816.00	564,288.00	3,027,159
PRIORITY 2:		113,349.82	120,480.00	120,480.00	130,704.00	130,704.00	141,072.00	756,789.!
PRIORITY 3:								
Technical assistance		74,916.60	77,600.00	77,600.00	58,480.00	58,480.00	60,640.00	407,716.1
TOTAL		641,665.78	680,000.00	680,000.00	712,000.00	712,000.00	766,000.00	4,191,665.7'

6.1.2. Comments on the figures/trends.

6.2 Overall financing plan.

6.2.1. Table-in EUR.

<i>(in 000*EUR - current prices)</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
Community		641,665.78	680,000.00	680,000.00	712,000.00	712,000.00	766,000.00	4,191,665.7'

contribution (ERF)								
Public co-financing (BG)		188,916.39	200,800.00	200,800.00	217,840.00	217,840.00	235,120.00	1,261,316.4:
Private co-financing		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total		830,582.17	880,800.00	880,800.00	929,840.00	929,840.00	1,001,120.00	5,452,982.1:
% Community contribution		77.25%	77.20%	77.20%	76.57%	76.57%	76.51%	76.89°/

6.2.2. Comments on data/trends

SVETOSLAV MICHEV
CHAIRPERSON
STATE AGENCY FOR REFUGEES
WITH THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS