

**NATIONAL REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD
SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN
(New York, September, 1990)**

A. Introduction and background

The Republic of Bulgaria is firmly committed to the principles and goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children. In implementation of its commitments, the Republic of Bulgaria adopted a number of legislative and practical measures aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of the child. In the context of the UN General Assembly Special Session on children, a national review of the achievements and obstacles for the implementation of the Plan of Action was made.

Bulgarian legislation guarantees protection and promotion of the rights of the child. The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted in 1991 provides for special protection of children, as well as family and motherhood (Article 14); for equality of children born out of and in wedlock; for special protection by the state and society of abandoned children (Article 47, paragraphs 1-5 of the Constitution). The provisions of the Constitution are directly applicable (Article 5, paragraph 2).

On 31 May, 2000 the National Assembly adopted the Child Protection Act. The Act stipulates the rights, principles and measures of protection of the child. The basic principles defined in the Act are as follows: consideration of the right of the child to preserve his or her identity; ensuring the rights of the child to be raised in a family environment; primary consideration for the best interests of the child; special protection for children at risk or children of prominent talent; selecting persons to be directly involved in activities related to child protection according to their personal and social merits and taking care of their professional training, exercising control over the effectiveness of the adopted measures.

The new Child Protection Act defines the measures of child protection: assistance, support and services in a family environment; placement with a family of relatives or close friends; placement with a foster family; placement in a special institution; police protection and determines the child protection bodies – the State Agency for Child Protection and the municipal social services.

The Child Protection Act (Article 11) explicitly provides for the right of the child of protection against violence – involvement in activities detrimental to his or

her physical, mental, moral and educational development as well as against methods of upbringing which abuse his or her dignity, against violence and influence which is in conflict with his or her interests. The Act (Article 11, paragraph 3) envisages protection of children from exploitation such as begging, prostitution, disseminating pornographic material and obtaining unlawful material income as well as against sexual violence.

The Bulgarian Family and Child legislation is based on the following principles: children should be raised and brought up in the family of their parents, the state and society should assist parents in raising their children, parents should have the respective legal guarantees, parents rights and responsibilities in raising and upbringing children are respected and considered. The Constitution and the Family Code stipulate that raising and upbringing children is the right and obligation of their parents which derives from the principles of equality in the rights and obligations of wed and unwed parents and equality in the rights and obligations of the father and mother. With regard to his or her parenthood, each parent has the rights and obligations to their full extent.

Relations between parents and children, institutions of adoption and guardianship/trusteeship are regulated by the provisions of the Family Code. The right of children to know their parents and be looked after by them (the right to a biological and family identity), to be supported by them is ensured by the provisions of the Family Code which are aimed at protecting the best interests of the child.

The provisions of the Family Code ensure also a strong protection of the rights of children in the management of their property. According to the Law on Persons and the Family, legal action, instead and on behalf of persons who have attained the age of 14 years, shall be undertaken by their legitimate representatives – parents or guardians. Persons between 14 and 18 years of age may undertake legal actions with the consent of their parents or guardians but may also engage in ordinary small transactions for their current needs and use, at their discretion, what they have earned by their own work.

In progress is a procedure of adoption of a new Family Code in which a special attention will be accorded to higher requirements for adoption with a view to protecting the interests of the child.

The Law on Persons and the Family regulates the civil status of physical persons, i.a. legal capacity and ability, legal representation of minors and assistance of guardians to persons under age.

The Education Act is one of the major laws providing for the set-up, operation and management of kindergartens, schools and servicing facilities. The Act is based on the principles of education, which is free of charge, accessible and compulsory, and on an aspiration to make it universal. In the meantime, the Act envisages new forms, structures and goals in the field of education consonant with the altered social and economic situation in the country. Bulgaria introduced pluralism in various kinds of schools and forms of education; alongside public schools there are private schools and kindergartens as well as such with foreign participation and foreign schools. Thus more effective guarantees were created in Bulgaria for the exercise of the right to education. It became possible to study also one's mother tongue along with the official Bulgarian language. Public education establishments introduced principles aimed at directing education towards developing the child's personality, individual abilities and interests, the feeling of tolerance to and respect for others, for parents and friends, national and world cultural values, fostering a professional inclination of the child.

The Bulgarian legislation ensures a special protection of child's labour through the relevant provisions of the Labour Code. These provisions have been adopted in keeping with the ILO Convention on the minimum age and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to which Bulgaria is a Party. The Labour Code, Section I, Chapter 15 envisages a special protection of persons under age with regard to labour relations. Article 301 of the Labour Code sets a minimum age for admission to employment, which is 16 years. It is prohibited to hire persons under the age of sixteen. As a guarantee for meeting that requirement, the Labour Code envisages the observance of special conditions for hiring children. For persons who have attained the age of sixteen years, requirements include a medical examination, a conclusion on their suitability for the job in question as well as a permission from the Labour Inspection. The labour legislation envisages a special protection of persons under age in the work process. The employer is required to provide eased working conditions and conditions for acquisition of professional qualifications and their enhancement to those who have not yet reached 18 years. It is prohibited for children to do night and extra work.

The Bulgarian Constitution recognizes the right of citizens (including children) to health insurance guaranteeing accessible medical care and free use of health-care services under conditions and procedures defined by a law. Since 1990, the state monopoly in health-care has been discontinued, by virtue of amendments to the Law on Public Health and the Regulations of its application; it was allowed, alongside public health-care establishments, to set up private institutions of this kind and doctors were allowed a private practice.

The Public Health Act provides for protection of the health of the population, especially children, establishment of beneficial conditions for their physical and psychological development as well as encouragement of reproduction of the population.

The Law on Combating Anti-Social Behaviour of Minors and Underage Persons regulates the preventive functions of the state in the efforts to counter juvenile delinquency and anti-social conduct through an educational and social influence, restriction, to the minimum, of punitive repression and its replacement by out-of-court instructive measures in keeping with the UN Minimum Standard Regulations. The Law envisages a system of prevention of and counteraction to children's anti-social behaviour aimed at mobilizing all resources, i.a. volunteers and non-governmental organizations concerned with a humane treatment of children in conflict with the law. That system comprises a Central Commission, under the Council of Ministers, for Combating Anti-Social Behaviour of Minors and Underage Persons, local commissions of combating anti-social behaviour of minors and underage persons, social/pedagogical boarding schools, homes for neglected children.

A new draft was made of the Law on Prevention of Breaches and Crimes of Minors and Underage Persons improving, considerably, the structure and functions of the relevant bodies in that field as well as the procedure of consideration of cases in the municipal commissions dealing with minors and underage persons.

A Decree on Encouraging the Birth Rate was adopted to regulate benefits and children's allowances. Under that Decree, on the birth of one living child the parents are entitled to a lump sum. At present, the size of the lump sum depends on which child in succession it is paid for with the amount growing up to the third child.

After the New York Summit held in 1990, Bulgaria adopted a number of laws, amendments and supplements to laws which made a substantial contribution to protection and the best interests of the child:

- Law on Civil Registration – stipulates the right of the child to a name;
- Law on Inheritance – regulates relations of succession and places children of a legator as first-line heirs by law;
- Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents – Article 5 regulates the issuance of Bulgarian identity documents to minors and underage persons;
- Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – regulates the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship by children of the age of up to 14 years and of children between 14 and 18 years;
- Law on Refugees – Article 26 contains provisions concerning minor and underage applicants for the status of refugees;
- Law on Obligations and Agreements – provides for liability of parents for damages caused by their children – Article 48, Article 115 “a” rules out legal prescription between children and parents as long as the latter exercise their parental rights;
- Civil Procedure Code – contains special regulations concerning minors and underage persons in civil proceedings with regard to the institute of legal representation and constitution of an underage person as a side in a civil lawsuit as well as special regulations of divorce proceedings;
- Penal Code – contains in its general part Chapter 4: “Special Regulations for Underage Persons” and Chapter 4 in its special part – “Crimes against the Marriage, Family and Youth”;
- Criminal Procedure Code – establishes, in Chapter 20, Section I “Special Regulations of Hearing Cases of Crimes Committed by Underage Persons”;
- Law on Execution of Punishments – contains Chapter 11 “Special Provisions on Execution of the Punishment of Deprivation of Liberty with regard to Underage Persons”;
- Law on Protection, Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of Disabled Persons and Regulations of its Application – provides, in detail, for the right of disabled persons, including disabled children, to rehabilitation and social integration in the sphere of health and labour, everyday life and environment as well as their social and economic protection;

- Law on Road Traffic – envisages special symbols and signs to be used with regard to transportation of children, to be placed around educational institutions etc.;
- Law on Political Parties – entitles persons over sixteen-year-old to form youth organizations;
- Law on Radio and Television – imposes restrictions to advertisements in consideration of the rights of the child;
- Law on Health-Care Establishments – contains provisions regarding “Mother and Child” Homes and institutions of medical and social care for children;
- Decree No. 226 of the Council of Ministers of 23.10.2000 on the establishment of the State Agency for Child Protection envisaged in the Child Protection Act;
- Decree No. 187 of 1994 of the Council of Ministers on the adoption of the National Programme of Combating Crime;
- Decree No. 136 of 1997 of the Council of Ministers defining the main functions and tasks of the Committee of Youth, Physical Education and Sports;
- Ordinance No. 2 of 1997 on how to organize and realize recreation and tourism for children and students;
- Ordinance No. 9 of 1996 on how to organize and conduct preventive medical check-ups and dispensary observation of children of the age of 0-18 years;

On 11 April, 1991 the Republic of Bulgaria ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child without any reservations to the text. The Convention has been in force with regard to the Republic of Bulgaria since 3 July, 1991 (State Gazette, issue 55 of 12 July, 1991). On 23 April, 1999 the Republic of Bulgaria ratified the amendment to Article 43, paragraph 2 of the Convention concerning the increased number of members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18 experts.

On 8 June, 2001 the Republic of Bulgaria signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on

sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization on 25 May, 2000.

In 2001 the Republic of Bulgaria ratified the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption adopted on 29 May, 1993 in the Hague.

On 13 December, 2000 the Republic of Bulgaria signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. On 12 April, 2001 the National Assembly ratified the Convention and protocols thereto by a law.

On 21 July, 2000 the National Assembly ratified Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization. Bulgaria ratified also the ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138.

According to article 5, paragraph 4 of the Constitution, the international instruments to Bulgaria is a party shall be considered part of domestic legislation.

In compliance with its obligations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1995 the Republic of Bulgaria submitted its Initial Report, which includes detailed information on the legislative, judicial and administrative measures to ensure the rights of the child according to the Convention and the progress achieved. In 1997 the Committee on the Rights of the Child considered the Initial Report and made the following recommendations with a view to effecting a more comprehensive application of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- to make a review of the domestic legislation in order to bring it in line with the principles and provisions of the Convention as well as to adopt, as a priority, a Child Protection Act;
- to improve the coordination among various government structures and agencies working with children both on a national and local levels;
- to carry out and encourage cooperation between government agencies and non-governmental organizations in the sphere of the rights of child;
- to adopt measures aimed at setting up a mechanism – e.g. a National Commission on the Rights of the Child – to monitor the implementation of the rights envisaged in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to carry out the national policy;
- to take special measures to improve the situation of children of minority groups, ill-treated children and disabled children.

In compliance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child the Republic of Bulgaria initiated a number of measures aimed at effective prevention and combating of sexual abuse of children, physical and psychological violence, as well as exploitation of child labour.

The Second Periodic Report of the Republic of Bulgaria reviewing the legislative and practical measures for child protection in the period after 1997 is in process of preparation.

B. Process Established for the End-decade Review

In September 1990, at the World Summit on children the states made a commitment to strongly prioritize the rights of the child, the protection and development of children. Bulgaria participated actively in the 1990 Summit and is firmly committed to the principles and goals of its final documents – the Plan of Action and the Declaration on Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The Bulgarian delegation to the Summit was headed by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

After the Summit on Children in 1990 the government of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted a Strategy and Plan of Action for Protection of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria for the 2000-2003. Thus the comprehensive policy in the field of protection of the rights of child was adequately coordinated. The main objective of the Strategy is to reduce the number of children placed in institutions, to improve the living conditions in these institutions and to protect the rights and best interests of children. The Strategy provides for the following:

1. to step up the preventive work against abandonment of children and for support of parents;
2. to create alternatives to institutionalization;
3. to introduce foster care – placing children deprived of their biological families with foster families;
4. to establish national standards of child care and monitor their application;
5. to enhance the qualifications of social workers engaged in the system of child protection;
6. to make decisive efforts aimed at drastically reducing the number of neglected children;

7. to adopt special programmes of work with minorities targeted on their integration in society and prevention of school drop-out;
8. to improve public relations and involve local authorities and non-governmental organizations in the enforcement of the state policy with regard to child protection;

The funds needed to translate the strategy into practice are to be provided through a loan from the World Bank and grants from the European Union, the Governments of Japan, Great Britain, Switzerland as well as donations from non-governmental organizations. The total amount of these funds is USD 20 million.

The Plan of Action envisages long-term practical measures to be adopted by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of the Interior within the following three years.

Before the Government Strategy for Child Protection was adopted, a programme of monitoring the situation of children in Bulgaria on the basis of internationally recognized indices and standards was implemented at the joint initiative of the Bulgarian National Commission for UNICEF, the National Statistics Institute and independent experts.

A number of legislative and practical measures were directed towards reshaping the social policy of the country. In the period of transition to a market economy the social policy was challenged by serious difficulties – a considerable shrinkage of funds allocated to the social sphere due to the economic crisis, stagnation and losses suffered by the country and caused by the UN economic sanctions imposed on other countries, a steadily increasing number of needy people because of impoverishment of the population, a trade-union pressure on the public administration, introduction of a Currency Board in 1997, the requirements of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The main objectives of the pursued social policy are concerned with the operating a network of protection of the poorest social strata, paying budget-subsidized children allowances based on the number of children and the income of the family, applying social policy on two levels – national and regional, crediting students and raising the retirement age.

Possibilities have been envisaged for the state to assist children or families by way of one-time or periodic grants in money and kind or services. Special assistance has been planned for socially underprivileged children – orphans, children who are physically and mentally disabled, morally threatened, children of unemployed parents or of uninsured, non-working parents.

Changes were also introduced in the legislation dealing with adoption of children. Recently, the number of foreigners wishing to adopt Bulgarian children increased. The lack of more detailed legal provisions to that effect created prerequisites for breaches, which prejudiced the public opinion against such adoptions. A predisposition was formed that a sale in children was underway, that Bulgarian families (waiting for up to two years to be able to adopt a child) were ignored, that children were exported for immoral purposes etc. In this context, The government adopted Ordinance No. 17 of 1992, which established the procedure and conditions for adoption of a Bulgarian citizen by a foreigner pursuant to Article 136, paragraph 1 of the Family Code. The Ordinance outlined the procedure of and conditions for approval, by the Minister of Justice, of any adoption of a child, a Bulgarian national, by a foreign national with a special emphasis on the fact that the requirements under Article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be complied with in the adoption procedure. Applying for such an approval, would-be adoptive parents should submit documents and certificates, indicated in detail, issued by administrative and social services at their place of residence. The decision is made taking into consideration some additional imperatives ensuring protection of the rights of the child and Bulgarian families on the waiting list to become adoptive parents. The draft of a new Family Code highlights the bigger requirements to adoption with a view to protecting the interests of the child in observance of the provisions of the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption adopted on 29 May, 1993 in the Hague.

Some provisions of the Bulgarian legislation guarantee more favourable standards than those envisaged in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the right to life and protection of the fetus, protection against economic exploitation, a few elements of the adoption procedure). In keeping with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Bulgarian legislation was further developed, a new legal policy and strategy in the field of protection of the rights of the child was worked out and is now in the process of application. A National

Analysis of the Situation of Children and the Family bringing out the main problems led to an understanding of the need for developing mechanisms and instruments to translate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice.

With the adoption of the Child Protection Act in Bulgaria, a special body, under the Council of Ministers /the Bulgarian government/, was set up to guide, coordinate and exercise control in the field of child protection – the State Agency for Child Protection. The Act defines the main functions of the State Agency for Child Protection – to organize and coordinate the enforcement of the state policy of child protection; to elaborate and carry out national and regional programmes to ensure child protection by providing the necessary funds to that end and allocating them to departments dealing with child protection; to propose, to the Council of Ministers, drafts of regulatory acts in the field of child protection; to provide methodological guidance and to control municipal social assistance services in their child protection activities; to encourage the work of non-governmental organizations, active in the field of child protection; to organize and conduct research and education work in the field of child protection; to carry out international cooperation; to set up and maintain a national information system on children needing a special protection, children who are eligible for adoption, special institutions and non-profit legal entities working on child protection programmes.

The municipal social assistance services, with separate departments for child protection, are the bodies carrying out the state policy in the field of child protection. Article 21 of the Child Protection Act defines the functions of municipal social assistance as follows: to engage in everyday practical activities of protecting children in the municipality; to plan and effect concrete measures of child protection and control their implementation; to conduct check-ups in response to complaints and signals concerning violations of children's rights and to give binding prescriptions for their elimination; to offer advice and consultations with regard to raising and upbringing children; to provide information on the services offered and render assistance and support to families and parents of children in need; to help children with regard to their professional orientation and qualifications; to organize training and consultations for foster parents and be responsible for their selection; to give signals, if need be, to the police, public prosecutor's office and the court in case prompt child protection actions; to come up with proposals for appointing tutelary councils and guardians; to investigate applicants for adoptive parents in the country

and come up with a written conclusion as to whether they are fit to adopt a child; to prepare the adoption documentation and offer an opinion in cases envisaged in the Family Code; to take part in lawsuits for restriction and divestment of parental rights; if requested by the judicial and administrative authorities, to make reports and come forward with positions on the situation of children; to decide on particular persons; to provide financial assistance.

The municipal social assistance services compile and keep registers of children needing a special protection, children under police protection, children who are eligible for adoption, children placed with families of relatives and close friends, children placed in special institutions, applicants for and approved adoptive parents, non-governmental organisations working on child protection programmes.

The State Agency for Child Protection incorporates the National Child Protection Council, which has consultative functions and is composed of representatives of institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which are active in the field of child protection.

Beside the State Agency for Child Protection, a number of government agencies deal with specific problems of children – the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice and the State Agency of Youth and Sport.

Considerable activities for protection of the rights of the child are carried out by non-governmental human rights organizations, public and civil associations and foundations. There are various charity organizations, associations, companies and foundations, which are taking care of and aiding socially and physically underprivileged children. Some have a broader subject of activity, others have more narrow objectives: *Childhood* Public Fund, *Orphan* Foundation, *A World for All* Foundations, Charity Fund, Association for Protection of the Rights of Children under the *Podkrepa* Trade Union, Association for Child Protection, Bulgarian Section of *Save the Children* etc. A few foundations have been set up on specific occasions related to medical treatment of children abroad – Annie Foundation, Tashko Foundation etc.

All these associations endeavour to take part in the management and financing of public institutions for raising children in an underprivileged social and health situation, make proposals on amendments to specific provisions in the legislation on protection of the rights of the child in keeping with the principles and

provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context they seek cooperation with state institutions.

Women NGOs are also rather active in making the public opinion and the state authorities aware of problems of the family and children. At the initiative of these organizations, the National Committee on the Family was set up under the patronage of the President of the Republic in 1994, proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of the Family.

The text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was distributed in a total of 112 000 copies in Bulgarian language, i.a. in the State Gazette (80 000 copies). In its programmes for children and adolescents the Bulgarian National Radio had a series of broadcasts to acquaint children with the Convention. The Ministry of Education and Science issued guidelines for teachers suggesting that in their work they should be guided both by domestic laws and regulations as well as by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Human rights NGOs are also rather active in propagating the rights of the child by publications, participation in radio and television programmes and other undertakings. Every year schools organize competitions, exhibitions etc. to promote awareness of the rights of the child.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is on the civil studies curricula at schools both in class and out-of-school activities.

In a special project, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was interpreted by illustrations, verses and texts in a de luxe edition –“On the Rights of the Child”. Printed out with the assistance of the “Future for Bulgaria” Foundation, the book was addressed to children and adults and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science as a school aid.

UNICEF has worked out the Education for Development Programme aimed at popularizing the Convention and teaching adolescents to understand its principles and ways of application.

Through 33 UNICEF Friends Clubs in Bulgaria set up on a voluntary principle, UNICEF programmes are popularized, training seminars are arranged to help children and adults learn about the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The organization of “Children Have Rights Too” summer schools attended by children between 14 and 18 years of various towns in the country has now become a tradition. The purpose with the summer schools organized in Bulgaria and abroad is to familiarize children with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to set up

peer teams. Over 250 children of 20 towns in Bulgaria have been trained at “Children Have Rights Too” summer schools. Seminars were held in Stara Zagora, Dobrich, General Toshevo, Karjali, Radomir, Pernik, Blagoevgrad, Bourgas, Sofia, Gabrovo. Such seminars were also arranged in cooperation with the National Association of Pedagogues at the St.St. Cyril and Methodius Foundation, Ministry of Culture. At the seminars, school principals, teachers, parents and children became familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The project is still underway. The training programme comprises current topics in the field of health education of adolescents, prevention of drug addiction and protection from HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998, the Bulgarian National Commission for UNICEF arranged, jointly with the Museum of Education, a traveling photo-exhibition on the Rights of the Child in Bulgaria – end of XIX c. – mid-XX c. In 1999 the exhibition was shown at the National Assembly. Through the UNICEF Friends Clubs the exhibition is being taken to towns where local museums and archives supplement the exhibits with original documents.

C. Action at the National and International levels (Paragraphs 34 and 35 of the World Summit Plan of Action).

The first in-depth analysis of the situation of children and families in Bulgaria in the period of transition was published 1992 - “National Analysis of the Situation of Bulgarian Children and Families”. In November, 1998 Sofia hosted a conference on human rights for Central and Eastern Europe countries which reported a progress achieved by the countries of the region in the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1999 two UNICEF missions conducted studies in the following fields:

- education and schools, training and child labour, professional orientation, school drop-out, influence of the family on school attendance by children;
- the young people in Bulgaria, problems related to their health, education, social adaptation, professional realization, legal protection, prospects of creating a youth friendly environment.

After 1990 a number of projects aimed at making the public aware of the rights of the child and the main problems encountered by Bulgarian children were initiated.

“Mayors – Children Protectors” Project

At the end of 2000 a seminar was held for mayors of the Association of Rhodope Municipalities to acquaint them with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its application. Further seminars for mayors of other municipalities are planned.

Information activities

A “Journalists on UNICEF” Club was set up with the assistance of the Bulgarian National Commission. The Club promotes the popularization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, organizes press-conferences to present UNICEF publications – “The Progress of Nations”, “The Situation of Children”.

An international seminar on “The Media and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child” was held in 1998. A methodological aid for journalists was presented at the seminar: “The Media and the Convention on the Rights of the Child”.

Distribution of UNICEF cards and products

Funds are collected for UNICEF Programmes by distribution of UNICEF cards. The Bulgarian National Commission has concentrated its efforts on popularizing the Global Movement for Children.

Projects of non-governmental organizations aimed at underprivileged children

The Bulgarian government in cooperation with many foreign and Bulgarian non-governmental organizations initiates child protection activities.

Project of the European Children Trust – Great Britain: Children and Families – a pilot project realized in Haskovo and Plovdiv on the basis of a bilateral agreement signed between the European Children Trust, the municipalities and social assistance municipal services. **Aim of the Project:** to expand and develop a number of services to families encountering difficulties in raising their children. The work is divided in three spheres: prevention, restoration and alternative care including foster placement.

Save the Children Fund Project – Great Britain: Development of a Social Policy for Children and Families in Bulgaria. **Aim of the project:** to assist the relevant authorities in Bulgaria to develop a new policy of children care to meet the requirements adopted by the European Union Social Council and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; to bring down the number of children in institutions by encouraging alternative forms of practices, services and care to satisfy the needs and rights of the child, family and community.

Protection of disabled children against isolation and creation of prerequisites for a self-reliant life

This measure is addressed to disabled children and youths who are being raised in a family environment and are, in practice, shut out of the system of education, training, upbringing and work life. In the last three years, in nearly all district cities (28) daily centers for physically and mentally disabled children and social counseling centres have been built up. Their objective is to provide psychological and social support to families with vulnerable children and the preparation of such children for a “self-reliant life.

As a result of the hard social and economic transition a new phenomenon appeared in the country – “street children”. Physical violence against these children, inducement to begging, prostitution and drug-addiction as well as negligence on the part of society are key problems which have a bearing on their mental and physical health. The Government Strategy of Protection of Children on the street envisages establishment of day-care centres and round-the-clock asylums. They offer the following services:

- shelter, food and clothing;
- medical care;
- psychological support;
- counseling and assistance;
- general education and vocational training programmes;
- work with parents;
- consultations and support to children in their contacts with social institutions.

In order to be effective this component calls for an active cooperation on the part of municipalities, NGOs and the police.

D. Specific Actions for Child Survival, Protection and Development

1. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its implementation and monitoring – see A.

2. Prevention and treatment of childhood diseases

The Ministry of Health has certain functional and institutional obligations with regard to the health-care provided to children. These obligations include preventive care, treatment, rehabilitation of children and mothers, opening institutions for such purposes – women's and children's consultation units, maternity wards and hospitals, children wards and hospitals, creches, Mother and Child Homes to raise abandoned children, foundlings and children born out of wedlock, orphans, children of parents who are sick or live in difficult circumstances – until they attain three years of age, offer them for adoption, and the so-called "milk-kitchens" cooking food for children from 10 months to three years of age in various municipalities.

The health reform and restructuring of out-of-hospital medical care established the personal doctor as a key figure in the health-care system. The care for man even in good health, health promotion and prevention are new activities of the general practitioner and that calls for special attention to the health of women, pregnant women and children. In this context, methodological guidelines were worked out and approved in Bulgaria to assist the work of doctors providing the initial out-of-hospital care with a view to protecting the health of women, ensuring adequate feeding of breast-fed children in conformity with the modern requirements of the World Health Organization concerning the advantages of natural feeding and promotion of breast feeding, preventive care and diagnosis of Vitamin D-deficit rachitis. Regulations have been developed with respect to the composition, characteristics and names of various kinds of milk for healthy breast-fed children in conformity with the EU standards.

The concept of school health-care has been radically changed, the health promotion, prevention and education are now the main activities regulated by a relevant ordinance of the Minister of Health.

Protection of children's health, creation of conditions for adequate physical and mental development are the highlights of the draft of the National Health Strategy. The priorities are related to children's health, physical and mental well-being and addressed to prevention of diseases and deaths from the pre-natal period to maturity. With the assistance of the World Bank many doctor's practices were

equipped on an up-to-date level. Doctors were trained in pre-natal care, training programmes for general practitioners are still in progress.

The National Strategy has accorded an important place to prevention of genetically-conditioned inborn anomalies as a secure reserve for reducing children's sick-rate and death-rate as well as disability caused by that. Since 1993, in Bulgaria, a wide-scale neo-natal screening has been held for cases of inborn hypothyroidism, fenilketonuria and other hereditary diseases. In 2000 the National Programme of Prevention of Inborn Anomalies and Genetic Diseases was initiated, which increased the possibilities of an early pre-natal diagnosis of inborn diseases, diatheses and anomalies.

Reproductive health is imperative for raising healthy children. The National Reproductive Health Programme carries on the work along that line. By April, 2001, 750 general practitioners have received training to that effect and youths of 50 schools have been educated in special courses on sexual health.

In the context of sexual health, a National Strategy was developed as well as a plan and strategy of prevention and control of HIV/AIDS sexually transmitted diseases. Medical treatment is in line with the rules of good medical practices and is free of charge for all carriers and patients. AIDS tests are recommended to all pregnant women in order to assess the risks for the newborn. The Ministry of Health, jointly with the Bulgarian Red Cross and non-governmental organizations, have been conducting ANTI-AIDS campaigns to popularize preventive measures amidst different social groups of the population by radio and television programmes, brochures, concerts etc.

Prevention of and effective control over children's infectious diseases are based on the National Immunization Programme aimed at reducing, by 2003, the sick-rate of measles, epidemic parotitis, eradicating poliomyelitis and eliminating diphtheria, congenital rubeola.

Underway are the efforts to combat tuberculosis in the Republic of Bulgaria by applying preventive measures and reducing the risk of contagion, by a timely diagnosis and effective treatment. The contribution of the World Health Organization in this respect is considerable.

New health-care establishments, day-care centres for rehabilitation of children suffering from cerebral paralysis were opened in the last years, on the basis of world experience and assistance. In Rousse, Varna, Blagoevgrad, homes for medical and

social care of children, equipped with good facilities and highly qualified experts, undertook the out-of-home treatment and rehabilitation of disabled children of the said regions.

An important achievement of the health reform in our country is the structural and organizational transformation, going on for three years now, of Homes for Medical and Social Care of Children (HMSCC) which, by virtue of a Decree of the Council of Ministers, have become successors of the former Mother and Child Homes under the Ministry of Health. The reform started in them after the accreditation in 1998 radically changed their appearance – from closed-in health-care establishments they were transformed into open medical and social centres for raising and upbringing children at risk or socially underprivileged children. Changes were made both with regard to the quality of care for these children and the quality of life through a total reconstruction of buildings and restructuring of their internal space by applying new forms of work and organization: Open Strategy, Family Model, Principle of Permanent Multidisciplinary Teams, Creation of Personal Space etc. A series of educational and social programmes were carried out with the participation of Bulgarian and international experts and non-governmental organizations and a sufficient number of psychologists, pedagogues, instructors and rehabilitation therapists joined the teams. The successful reform in the Homes for Medical and Social Care of Children (HMSCC) was duly acknowledged in the large-scale investigation of the Social Analyses Agency (SAA) commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.

In July, 2000, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice in the person of their respective Ministers, the Save the Children Fund and the State Agency of Youth and Sports, signed a Memorandum of Understanding within the framework of an ambitious Project - Development of a Social Policy Addressed to the Child and Family in Bulgaria. The said Project will further the build-up of a network of social services for children on the level of municipal social assistance services. The Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and the UNICEF Bulgarian National Commission are now jointly realizing the Baby-Friend Hospitals Programme. The Programme comprises initiatives related to popularizing, encouraging and promoting breast-feeding, mothers-to-be and medical personnel are trained in the rules of breast-feeding, conditions are created to assist and support

breast-feeding women. The Programme includes training courses for medical personnel of maternity wards of regional hospitals in the country which have accepted to work on the said Programme. Ten hospitals of Sofia, Varna, Pleven, Stara Zagora, Karjali, Pernik, Vratsa, Blagoevgrad and Dobrich have backed up the initiative of popularizing breast-feeding. These hospitals established consultative and information centres for practical guidance to mothers and medical personnel. The first seminar to assess the work of the hospitals working on that Programme was held in December, 2000.

In 2000 five more hospitals in Gabrovo, Silistra, General Toshevo, Sandanski, Petrich joined the Programme.

The UNICEF Bulgarian National Commission, in cooperation with the Institute of Hygiene, holds training seminars for the personnel of the Hygiene and Epidemiology Centre in the country. Meetings with pregnant women are arranged and “Mothers Support Mothers” Groups are set up.

By Decree No. 96 of 17 May, 1994 of the Council of Ministers, an Inter-Agency Commission was set up under the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria with a view to preventing and eliminating iodine-deficiency diseases and breaches.

A Programme of Elimination of Iodine Deficit has started and is now in progress in Bulgaria. That is a joint initiative of the World Health Organization and UNICEF. In 1994 the Council of Ministers adopted a Decree on prohibition of the import of non-iodized salt as well as on preventive care for groups at risk and endemic regions with antistrumin. Screenings have been conducted to that end. With the assistance of UNICEF, a laboratory was equipped in Bulgaria to serve the purposes of control over iodurea and provide salt-iodizing facilities.

Programmes of research on the iron-deficit state of mothers and children are also in progress in Bulgaria.

In 1998, at the joint initiative of UNICEF, the World Health Organization and Rotary Club, an immunization campaign against poliomyelitis was conducted within the framework of the global campaign for elimination of poliomyelitis.

Hepatitis-B vaccines were imported in Bulgaria in 1999 and used in the immunization programme addressed to population groups at risk. Free hepatitis-B vaccine was brought into the country in 2001.

A National Programme for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts was adopted in Bulgaria. The Programme is aimed at limiting the spread-out

of the misuse of narcotic drugs, promoting a healthy way of life, free of narcotic substances, making the public aware of the spreading misuse of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, incl. among children, raising the awareness of the problems of misuse of narcotics. The Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health and the National Drug-Addiction Centre developed a National Programme of Prevention of Drug Addiction at Schools for 2001-2003.

In early 2000 the Ministry of the Interior worked out a Concept of police work to limit the misuse of narcotic substances which is centered on the prevention of drug-addiction.

A National Council on Narcotic Substances was set up – an inter-agency body chaired by the Minister of Health which concert the work of all institutions concerned with counteracting the production, storage, distribution and trafficking of narcotic substances and coordinates the treatment of drug addicts.

3. Enhance the status of girls and women

Bulgarian legislation adopted after World War II guarantees a full equality between women and men and treats them equally in all spheres of social relations regulated by law. Equality before the law has been enshrined as a constitutional principle. The provision of Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. This prohibition has been explicitly proclaimed or implicitly envisaged in all spheres of the law. The rights of women in Bulgaria are an integral part of the human rights. There are spheres of activity, reserved only for women or men – they enjoy equal civil, political, social and cultural rights.

The Penal Code, Civil Procedure Code and Family Code as well as the Labour Code guarantee the equality of all citizens before the law and their equal possibilities to defend their rights before the court when they are infringed upon. Recently, a draft-law on equal opportunities of women and men was elaborated in Bulgaria. For this purpose, an inter-agency working group was set up, coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, composed of representatives of various ministries, trade-unions, employers' organizations and women's non-governmental organizations. The draft-law on equal opportunities envisages the formation of a national mechanism to ensure the advancement of women. In 2001 the draft was approved by the Council of Ministers and submitted to the National Assembly for consideration.

The Republic of Bulgaria is a party to most international instruments on human rights adopted by the United Nations, the Council of Europe etc, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as to international conventions on the rights of women such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on Nationality of the Married Women, the Slavery Convention, the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, as well as the ILO Convention regarding the labour conditions of women. Bulgaria is firmly committed to the principles and goals of the final documents adopted at the UN World Conferences on women in Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi.

In 1995 a National Plan of Action for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was elaborated. The latter was drafted by an inter-agency group with the active participation of non-governmental organizations and was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 2 July, 1996. The National Plan of Action is aimed at achieving real *de jure* and *de facto* equality between women and men in all aspects of public life on the basis of sustainable social and economic development and fostering a democratic civic society.

In July, 2000, at the 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly on women, the Republic of Bulgaria signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The participation of women in the executive power and public administration is an indicator of the extent of *de facto* equality between women and men. Recently, the relative share of women in the legislative power has considerably increased while women holding leading positions in the executive and the public administration account for 30 per cent. Women have marked a progress in the legal professions, they account for over 60 per cent of the judiciary.

A number of human rights non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, have been registered in the country. They promote the professional realization of women in public life and respect for their rights, elaborate and implement programmes and projects related to the problems of women, their development and advancement, engage in cultural, educational, charity activities,

assist women to run a business and do research work, provide legal aid and psychological assistance to victims of violence.

In the meantime, measures are taken to protect the rights of some vulnerable groups of women. For instance, in 1999, the Council of Ministers adopted a Programme of Equal Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society. That Programme was worked out by the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues under the Council of Ministers with the active participation of some Roma non-governmental organizations. The Programme includes a chapter *Roma woman* with a view to encouraging access to education, training and employment as well as participation in all spheres of public life.

4. Ensuring support for parents and care-givers in nurturing and caring for children, preventing separation of children from their families, etc.

According to the provisions of the Bulgarian family legislation, to raise and bring up children is the right and obligation of their parents who are to be assisted by the state and society.

The principal objective of the system of social security and assistance to children and families with children is to guarantee a minimum level of economic security needed to raise children. The direct financial assistance to families with children provided by the state includes payments during the maternity leave and a maternity leave, a lump sum on the birth of a child, monthly allowances for children, pensions and provision of social assistance. Maternity payments depend on the number of children with the sums growing for each consecutive child until the third child.

Funds for raising children and specific assistance received by women under the Labour Code and the Decree on Birth Encouragement:

Type of benefits	Expenses are borne by:
Compensation for pregnancy and birth	Social security, the national budget, local budgets
Payment for wage differences for transfer of pregnant women to appropriate work	Social security
One-time allowance for childbirth	National budget and local budgets

Compensation for child care	National budget, social security, local budgets
Monthly allowances for children	National budget, social security, local budgets

Data of the paid insurance to mothers for the period 1995-1998

Indicator	1995	1996	1997	1998
Pregnancy and birth benefits	698 958	995 064	8 389 318	16 630 196
Paying off the difference in the remuneration in case of work reassignment of pregnant and breast-feeding women	1 624	1 422	46 471	69 673
Compensation for child care	1 596 549	2 127 304	17 943 031	27 093 773
Birth promotion Children's monthly allowances	6 632 547	9 329 840	84 572 645	105 224 335
One-time allowance for childbirth	133 593	204 255	1 351 155	1 477 508

Regulatory acts having a bearing on children in the field of social assistance and services to vulnerable groups.

In 1998 the Law on Social Assistance was adopted. The law provides for social protection of individuals and families who are not in a position to satisfy, on their own, their basic necessities, and social services in and out of the home environment. Social assistance means provision of aid in money and/or kind and services to satisfy basic necessities (sufficient food, clothing and housing) of citizens where it is not possible to satisfy them by work and their property. Social assistance may be given on a monthly basis, granted for a specific purpose or disbursed as a lump sum. Social assistance is provided on the basis of an assessment of the income of the person or family concerned, the property status, family status, health status, employment and age. Social assistance is exempt from taxes and charges.

Social services are provided in the home environment by way of day-care homes, home social patronage, offices for social services, social rehabilitation and integration centres etc. or outside that home environment – in institutions such as homes for children and physically disabled persons; homes for children and mentally handicapped persons, social educational/vocational establishments, homes for old people, homes for temporary placement, asylums etc.

The Law on Protection, Rehabilitation and Social Integration of Disabled Persons (1995) envisages measures to ensure conditions for their social integration and full and equal participation in society. These measures (prevention, medical rehabilitation, special training programmes, special vocational/technical training, stimulation of self-reliant economic activities, monthly allowance for social integration, disability pension, children's monthly allowance etc.) have a bearing on their health, education, professional orientation and training, employment, available utilities, environment and social and economic protection.

Specific-purpose programmes of providing assistance for payment of heating bills, the rent for municipal and state-owned housing, transport services to disabled people, for mineral water treatment, payment of telephone bills, purchase of technical aids, energy-saving lamps etc. and in-kind assistance with food products, public soup-kitchens etc.

5. Early childhood development, universal access to basic education, vocational training, preparation for work, etc.

The 1991 Constitution guarantees the right to education. Article 53, paragraph 1 – “everyone shall have the right to education”, Article 53, paragraph 2 – “school attendance up to the age of 16 shall be compulsory”.

The system of education covers kindergartens, schools and servicing units. Schools and kindergartens are public, municipal and private. The preparation of children for school is done in preparatory groups at kindergartens or preparatory classes at schools. Kindergartens are for children of up to 6 years of age. Children are admitted to them of their own free will and by choice of parents or guardians.

The following laws were adopted to guarantee the organization and quality of education in the Republic of Bulgaria: Education Act (1991), Law on Vocational Education and Training (1999), Law on Education Degrees, General Education Minimum and Syllabus (1999).

According to Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Education Act, citizens have the right to education. They may constantly enhance their education and qualifications. Article 4, paragraph 2 guarantees inadmissibility of discrimination, limitation or privileges on the grounds of race, nationality, sex, ethnic and social origin, religious belief and social status.

With a view to ensuring a high quality education in line with European standards and the Bulgarian tradition, the Law on Education Degrees, General Education Minimum and Syllabus was adopted to introduce:

- a 12-year course of studies in the high education system;
- two foreign languages taught at school;
- the right of choice to students guaranteed by a big number of classes for compulsory subjects to be selected, particularly in the high school course of studies;

The Law on Vocational Education and Training ensures:

- access to vocational education and training according to the interests and possibilities of the person concerned and the needs of the economy;
- possibility of going from one form of vocational training to another;
- access to vocational training through life.

In the Republic of Bulgaria state educational requirements (standards) have been established: with regard to the contents of studies in all subjects with a view to ensuring accessible training to 80 per cent of the Bulgarian children; with regard to pre-school upbringing and preparation; new curricula for all subjects studied in the I, V, IX and X grades at high school.

In 2000, state standards were established for textbooks and school aids in Bulgaria; state requirements for the rating system are now under preparation. .

To ensure the education of children living in the mountains and small settlements, the school network is being optimized with a view to creating conditions for studies in smaller classes and groups of children or providing for their training in neighbouring settlements.

Changes in education policies and practices are introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science with the participation of the academic community and teachers and are subject to a broad discussion by all interested parties – schoolteachers, directors, parents, students and higher education establishments.

In 1998, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of the employment and training policy which served as a basis for the elaboration of: the National Programme of Educational and Labour Integration of Youths Who Drop Out of the High Education System and the National Programme of Social Integration and

Professional Realization of Youths Brought Up at Homes for Raising and Upbringing Children Deprived of Parental Care in the Republic of Bulgaria (adopted by Decision No. 615 of the Council of Ministers of 19.09.2000).

Under preparation is a pilot project - Vocational Training of Boys Who Have Not Done Their Military Service Yet commissioned by the Ministry of Defence. Project executors are the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Office and Bulgarian-German Educational Centres in Stara Zagora and Pleven.

A Concept of Ongoing Vocational Training for Life has been developed giving a chance to all who are willing, without any restrictions on the grounds of sex, age, ethnic affiliation and religious belief, to be trained in accordance with their interests, possibilities and needs with a view to acquiring professional qualifications and realization on the labour market.

A system has been built up to train and bring up children with specific educational needs, chronic ailments, deviant behaviour and of children deprived of parental care. In the context of the changes that have occurred in the society, the tendency now is for most disabled children to be integrated in ordinary schools with students of the same age. Gradually, special schools are starting to admit heavily disabled children. Children deprived of parental care now tend to be raised and brought up in foster families. Syllabuses of vocational training of children with specific educational needs have been developed in the following professions: upholsterer, florist, cook, tailor and carpenter. Curricula and syllabuses of vocational training of persons at places of detention and institutions for underage offenders have also been worked out.

At present, the following special schools exist in Bulgaria:

- supporting schools (I-VIII grades) – for retarded students: heavily disabled or with multiform disability and accompanying behavioral deviations. Some of the supporting schools offer classes for acquiring professional qualifications;
- schools for children with impaired hearing;
- schools for children with impaired eyesight;
- health-schools for students suffering of chronic diseases;
- hospital schools for students undergoing a long treatment at hospitals;
- sanatorium schools for students undergoing treatment at sanatoria;

- speech-therapy schools for children with speech defects;
- corrective boarding schools for students with deviant behaviour;
- social/pedagogical boarding schools for minors and underage persons within the meaning of the Law on Combating Anti-Social Behaviour;
- homes for raising and upbringing children deprived of parental care.

All special schools and homes for raising and upbringing children deprived of parental care are fully state-subsidized and financed by the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science.

In the field of education, an active policy of cooperation with non-governmental organizations, particularly those working on problems related to children, is pursued. The Ministry of Education and Science has entered into bilateral agreements on cooperation with many NGOs.

A special attention is accorded to the problems of education of children of a Roma origin who drop out of school before they reach sixteen years or do not attend school at all. Very good results were achieved in the realization of the following education projects:

- “To Bring Children Back to School”, a joint project of the Ministry of Education and Science and the International Centre on the Problems of Minorities and Cultural Interaction Foundation;
- “A School for Everyone”, PHARE.

The Ministry of Education and Science opened up twelve Centres for Educational Services and Training as its budget-subsidized structures.

The Bulgarian National Commission for UNICEF is also engaged in the realization of some education programmes and projects:

- “Education for All”, a programme aimed at promoting the process of education and upbringing of Roma children. Methodological aids have been developed, published and disseminated.
- “Education for Development”. The “Children Have Rights Too” Project has been developed within the framework of the UNICEF Programme “Education for Development”. The aim of the Project is to familiarize teachers, social workers, parents and children with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. Special protection of children in armed conflicts

The Bulgarian Government follows a consistent policy aimed at protecting all Bulgarian citizens who have not attained the age of 18 years from taking any part in hostilities.

The Law on Universal Military Service stipulates that all male Bulgarian citizens who have attained the age of 18 years shall do a regular military service.

7. Preventing the degradation of the environment by pursuing World Summit goals

With a view to improving the hygiene of the environment and industrial hygiene in the post-1990 period, some legislative and practical measures were undertaken in the Republic of Bulgaria.

7.1. Legislative measures

- atmospheric air: Law on Purity of Atmospheric Air (1999), Decree No. 245 of 1999 of the Council of Ministers on Control over and Management of Substances Destroying the Ozone Layer and Ordinance on Control over and Management of the Substances Destroying the Ozone Layer (2000);
- waters: Law on Waters (1999), Ordinance No.1 on the Exploration, Use and Protection of Underground Waters (2000), Ordinance No. 3 on the Conditions and Procedure of Exploring, Designing, Approving and Exploiting Sanitary Protection Zones around Water Sources and Water Supply Facilities for Drinking and Household Purposes and around Mineral Water Sources Used for Medical Treatment, Preventive Health Care, Drinking and Hygienic Needs (2000), Ordinance No. 2 on Protection of Waters from Pollution with Nitrates used in Agriculture, Ordinance No. 4 on the Quality of Waters for Fishing and Breeding Shell Organisms, Ordinance No. 7 on the Conditions and Procedure of Outflow of Industrial Waste Waters in the Sewerage Systems of Habitats, Ordinance No. 6 on Emission Standards of the Allowed Contents of Harmful and Dangerous Substances in Waste Waters Flowing out into Water Supply Facilities.
- Recreation resources – mineral waters, curative mud fields, bio-climatic resources, seaside beaches and sea water: Ordinance No. 14 on Recreation Resources, Resort Localities and Resorts, Ordinance No. 6 on Bottling of Natural Mineral Waters, Ordinance No.1 on Exploration, Use and

Protection of Underground Waters, Ordinance No. 3 on the Conditions and Procedure of Exploring, Designing, Approving and Exploiting Sanitary Protection Zones around Water Sources and Water Supply Facilities for Drinking and Household Purposes and around Mineral Water Sources Used for Medical Treatment, Preventive Health Care, Drinking and Hygiene, Ordinance No. 8 on the Quality of Coastal Sea Waters.

7.2. Projects and programmes

- Implementation of the National Plan of Action with regard to the Environment and Health adopted by Decision No. 314 of 1998 of the Council of Ministers. The tasks envisaged in the Plan cover activities aimed at improving the state of environment and diminishing the risk to the health of the population due to the impact of harmful factors on the environment. Eleven Ministries are involved in the enforcement of these measures. The implementation is monitored by the Inter-Agency Council for Management of the National Plan of Action with Regard to the Environment and Health.
- In 2000 a joint project of the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization was initiated. The project aimed at building up an information system with respect to matters bearing upon the environment/health and contagious diseases. One of the main objectives of the information system is working out analyses and reports based on the data provided by the system as well as making an integrated evaluation of the state of environment and health of the population. These reports are to assist the environment/health policy on all levels – local, national and regional. The system is to supply current information at an optimum price and promote a rational management of risks to the health related to the quality of the environment.
- In 2000 another joint project of the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization was initiated. It aimed at investigating the applicability of environment/health indices developed by the Regional Office of the World Health Organization for Europe. These indices cover information both on the state of the environment and the health status of the population affected by environment factors. The project is targeted on

investigating and assessing the possibility for certain pilot states in Europe, including Bulgaria, to supply the needed data to EHO so that they could be entered in the European Environment/Health Information System of the World Health Organization.

The use of selected and high-quality products, guaranteeing their bacterial and chemical purity, in the industrial production of children's and baby foods is also subject to regulation. The implementation of the National Programme of Medical Examination of Children Living in Environmentally Hazardous Regions of the Country started in 1990. Children at risk are to be taken out, on schedule, for recreation and studies in a healthy environment. In this context, mountain and Black Sea facilities and student camps as well the National Children's Ecological Centre are to be used for the purposes of training and upbringing as well as for medical treatment and preventive health-care.