



STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF ETROPOLE AND BELA PALANKA – 2012 - 2016

Contents:

- I. Introduction of the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

- II. Assessment of the need of social services in the community in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

- III. Legislative framework for social services in Bulgaria and Republic of Serbia

- IV. Objectives, activities and expected results from the provision of social services in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

- V. Human, administrative, technical and institutional capacity for implementation of the strategy for social services in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka



Social services are vital for society. This determines their implementation at the highest possible standard, considering the individual circumstances, responding to a variety of needs, helping people fully realize their potential and at the same time respecting the principles of independence and social inclusion.

This strategy aims the provision of accessible and quality social services in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka, integration of communities and individuals and complete realization and care of people in groups at risk for the period 2012 - 2016.

I. Introduction of the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

1. Municipality of Etropole

General characteristic of the municipality

The municipality of Etropole is located on the northern slopes of the Balkan Range in the northeastern part of Sofia Region. It is the seventh largest municipality in the region and occupies an area of 371.7 square meters. Its centre, the town of Etropole, is situated in the hollow of the Malki Iskar River, at the foot of the Baba summit. The municipality of Etropole borders the municipality of Teteven in the east, the municipality of Yablanitsa in the northeast, the municipalities of Pravets and Botevgrad in the west and the municipalities of Zlatitsa and Gorna Malina in the south.

The municipality consists of one town, its municipal centre Etropole with a population of 10 292 people, and 9 villages - Boikovets, Brusen, Gorunaka, Lopian, Laga, Malki Iskar, Oselna, Ribaritsa and Yamna.

Population - demographic characteristics

According to data from the latest census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2011 the population of the municipality of Etropole is 12 047.

The distribution of the population in the urban and rural areas is as follows:



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



Age	Total			In urban areas			In rural areas		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total	12 047	5 953	6 094	10 292	5 105	5 187	1 755	848	907
0-4	476	270	206	422	238	184	54	32	22
5-9	508	249	259	453	228	225	55	21	34
10-14	567	255	312	521	236	285	46	19	27
15-19	681	362	319	618	325	293	63	37	26
20-24	660	342	318	611	321	290	49	21	28
25-29	687	383	304	632	354	278	55	29	26
30-34	721	382	339	676	349	327	45	33	12
35-39	773	368	405	727	350	377	46	18	28
40-44	958	485	473	882	438	444	76	47	29
45-49	944	507	437	870	461	409	74	46	28
50-54	921	484	437	837	435	402	84	49	35
55-59	827	415	412	710	345	365	117	70	47
60-64	957	445	512	804	373	431	153	72	81
65-69	718	334	384	540	257	283	178	77	101
70-74	595	245	350	401	173	228	194	72	122
75-79	567	249	318	345	151	194	222	98	124
80-84	311	111	200	147	43	104	164	68	96
85+	176	67	109	96	28	68	80	39	41

One third of the working-age population of the municipality lives in the villages and two thirds live in the town. Based on this age structure, it can be concluded that the population is aging and the number of persons of working age and persons under working age is decreasing. The natural and mechanical increase of the population is negative, which is a long-term tendency in Etropole as well as in the country.

According to data from the Labour Office Directorate for January 2012, the unemployed population on the territory of the municipality Etropole is characterized by the following figures:

Level of unemployment – 9,2 %

Number of registered unemployed persons – 514

- women – 281
- men – 233
- including people with reduced work capacity – 36

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



Number of persons registered by age – 514

- under the age of 24 – 80
- between the age of 25 and 29 – 63
- between the age of 30 and 44 – 185
- between the age of 45 and 49 – 54
- over the age of 50 – 132

Number of persons registered by education – 514

- with higher education – 47
- with secondary education – 247
- with basic education – 68
- with primary education – 31
- without education – 121

Number of registered persons without qualification – 255

Long-term unemployed – 152

Representatives of vulnerable ethnic groups – 127

2. Municipality of Bela Palanka

General characteristic of the municipality

The municipality of Bela Palanka consists of one urban centre, Bela Palanka, and 44 villages belonging to its territory. The municipality is located in the southeastern part of Serbia, in the Pirot Region. It occupies an area of 517 square meters between the Suva Mountain on the southwest and the Svarlishka Mountain on the northeast. It crosses the Nishava River and the international automobile and railway road – the shortest connection between Europe and the Middle East.

Greater part of the region is hilly and mountainous. The municipal territory consists of 76 % mountainous terrain, 19 % hilly mountainous terrain and only 5 % flat terrain around the Nishava River.

The municipality has a well-maintained and passable road network connecting the town of Bela Palanka with the other settlements on its territory.

Population - demographic characteristics

Data	1991		2002	
	Men	Women	Man	Women
Full structure				
Number of residents	8 276	8 171	7 289	7 092
Structure compared to the number of children (0 - 18)	3 437		2 779	
Total	16 447		14 381	

Total for the municipality		1991	2002
		Number of residents	In urban areas
	In rural areas	8 347	8 626
	Total	16 447	14 381

According to data of the Office of Statistics of the Republic of Serbia, in 2011 the number of the population in the municipality has been 12 551.

As a whole, the statistical data for the municipality of Bela Palanka show a considerable decrease of population. The decrease of population in the villages, especially in those located in inaccessible areas away from the highway and the municipal centre, has also become a tendency.

According to data of the municipality of Bela Palanka, the following major social problems of the population can be defined:

- Unemployment has a strong influence on the need for social protection;
- The average wage in the municipality is below the average wage in the Republic of Serbia;
- There is a tendency towards the increase of unemployment due to the economic crisis, the restructuring of entire economic sectors, the insufficient training of the working population, which cannot satisfy the dynamically changing business requirements, and the migration of population;
- The privatization process is slow. Moreover, privatization does not give the expected results where it has been introduced;
- The public sector is collapsing while the private sector is still underdeveloped.

Adult users of social protection in Bela Palanka according to data of the Office of Statistics of the Republic of Serbia for 2009

Total	Materially unsecured persons	Persons with mental and physical disorders	Elderly persons	Other
1 050	770	39	165	76

Adult users of social protection in Bela Palanka according to data of the Office of Statistics of the Republic of Serbia for 2010

Total	Materially unsecured persons	Persons with family problems	Persons with mental and physical disorders	Elderly persons	Other
1 755	818	37	39	402	459

II. Assessment of the need of social services in the community in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

1. Municipality of Etropole

Social services provided on the territory of the municipality of Etropole at present

- Home Social Patronage with a capacity for 150 persons

The Home Social Patronage provides the following types of services:

- Food delivery to homes;
- Assistance in maintaining personal hygiene and maintenance of hygiene in the residential premises of the served persons;
- Assistance for providing the necessary facilities to disabled persons and persons with serious illnesses;
- Assistance in communication and maintenance of social contacts;
- Intermediation in receiving financial, health and other services;
- Public services - purchase of food and objects of common use and payment of electricity, telephone and other running bills with the money of the served persons.

- Home for Elderly People with a capacity for 22 persons

The Home for Elderly People is the only specialized institution in the municipality of Etropole with a capacity for 22 persons. This home serves the residents of the municipality as a priority. The lack of alternative forms of social services in the community shows the necessity of increasing the capacity of the institution and strengthening its position.

The work of the specialists and their communication with the users create conditions for social contacts, security and activities, which make their everyday lives meaningful.

The elderly people receive help and care in order to improve their hygiene and living habits, motor skills - agility and coordination of complex movements, mental activity and psychomotor reactions.

The users of this social service are disadvantaged people, solitary persons, people with income below the social minimum and 50 % of the people with disabilities.

The insufficient number of beds and the inappropriate environment for the existence of this type of service in the hospital necessitate the relocation of the Home for elderly people in a separate

building or in family-type residences meeting the modern requirements and standards for the provision of social services to elderly people. This will contribute to improving the quality of the provided service.

- Club of Disabled – 1 club
- Club of Pensioners – 1 club
- Project “Worthy Life” financed by Alternatives grant scheme under the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development - 20 personal assistants take care of 20 users
- Public Dining Room with a capacity for 82 persons -for the period between the 1st of October, 2011 and the 30th of April, 2012the financial resources for this social service have been provided by the Social Protection Fund. The public dining room will further be funded by the budget of the municipality of Etropole.

After initial analysis of the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the municipality aiming to outline some priority needs for social protection as well as the necessity of developing certain social services, the following typical risks for persons in vulnerable situations can be defined:

- Disadvantage on the labour market - uneducated persons or persons with education not meeting the contemporary requirements in today’s dynamically changing situation;
- Persons living in isolated communities;
- Large families and persistent lack of property and income;
- High morbidity among vulnerable groups of population.

Major social problems of the residents of the municipality of Etropole

Unemployment is the main problem for ensuring a standard of living. The access to employment is most highly limited for several specific groups of unemployed: people with basic and lower education, unemployed young people, people in pre-pension age, working-age people with disabilities and representatives of ethnic minorities.

The low and insufficient income makes it difficult for parents to ensure good living conditions for their children and cover the costs for everyday needs. This in turn puts most children at risk.

Maintaining their residential buildings is defined as the main problem for people with disabilities, who need assistance in performing the normal activities of daily living. Their health problems do not allow them to find a job, which reflects on the income for living. Often the personal/social assistant’s wage or the diseased person’s pension is the only source of income in cases where a family member takes care of a relative with disability, which makes it difficult to cover the costs for food and the overheads.

Education

Education is a factor for social integration and professional development. According to the analysis of the statistical data, people with basic or lower education, especially those from villages and minority groups, can be defined as significant groups. Education has no value for most people from this category. Many of these children live in the conditions of social deficit – absent parents, neglect and established bad habits and aggressive pattern of behaviour.

Persons with disabilities or a family member with a severe health problem

People with disabilities can be differentiated in two main groups:

- Working-age persons with permanent disabilities

The target group of people with disabilities is characterized by lack of motivation, skills for professional orientation, decision-making and defending of positions as well as low economic activity.

The combination of low qualification, insufficient education and health problems make these people uncompetitive on the labour market. The employment opportunities on the primary market are limited for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities, especially those with over 70 % disablement, have minimal chances to get a job which is not subsidized.

Most of the vacancies announced at the Labour Office and requiring no education or qualification involve manual labour, which is contraindicated for persons with reduced work capacity.

- Persons with permanent disabilities, who are over the working age

The following problems can be defined as the most serious for persons from this category: need of assistance and support in performing daily activities, lack of self-confidence and assurance in their own abilities, lack of enough social contacts and isolation at home, inability to meet the challenges of their illnesses alone, old age and their environment. Very often persons who take care of their lonely living or disabled relatives do not have the necessary medical or social competence.

Elderly people living alone

The majority of population in the rural areas is of pension age. The bad transport links and the remoteness of part of the villages, which consist of scattered neighbourhoods, make difficult the

access of citizens to medical aid and developed services concentrated mainly in the town. The following main problems of this group of population have been identified:

- Difficult access to health services;
- Difficulties in purchasing medicines – there are pharmacies only in the town and elderly people rely on people who go to the town as well as on their relatives for the purchase of medicines;
- Need of support in carrying out household activities;
- Need of medical supervision;
- Need of communication;

Due to the isolation of the villages and the limited access to services, elderly people still rely on mutual aid and the help of relatives as the major resource for dealing with everyday problems. This makes lonely elderly people without spouses or relatives much more disadvantaged.

Children living in disadvantaged families

This at-risk group includes children from low-income families, single-parent families and large families and children of parents with disabilities. In 2011 the Social Assistance Directorate - Etropole has supported on different grounds such families as follows:

- Families of children of two unemployed parents - 50
- Families of children of single parents - 13
- Families of children of parents with disabilities - 19
- Large families -51
- Children with disabilities - 63

A specific problem for children from these families is the low standard of living and the bad socio-psychological climate in the family. Social benefits cannot compensate the financial status of families. Parents are unable to solve the problems, which leads to family breakdown and abandonment of children, domestic violence, depression and social isolation. For these reasons children are at risk of institutionalization and school dropout.

Children with disabilities

The number of children with disabilities supported by the Social Assistance Directorate according to the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities and the Rules for Its Implementation has averaged at 63 per month during the last year.

The basic needs of children with disabilities include:

- Access to education in schools of general education;

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 10 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- Equal access to services;
- Access to adequate health care;
- Provision of supportive environment for families and relatives of children with disabilities;
- Integration in the community.

In the municipality of Etropole there is a lack of developed services for socialization and adaptation of children with disabilities in society and support for their parents.

The following problems have been identified after analyzing the needs of this group of children:

- Most of them remain isolated in the family;
- A very small proportion of children with disabilities attend mass kindergartens and schools;
- In cases when there is a child with permanent disability in the family, one of the parents /most often the mother/ is forced to stay at home and take care of the child. On one hand, this severely restricts the possibilities for family income. On the other hand, the parent is deprived of the chance to practice his or her profession. Given the high costs for treatment, rehabilitation and other correctional and compensatory activities as well as the access to the nearest Centre for social rehabilitation and integration, which is located 25 kilometers away from the town, these families face exceptional difficulties.

The analysis shows that the social services provided in the municipality of Etropole do not cover all groups of people in need. The capacity of the existing services is not sufficient for all potential users living in the municipality. For these reasons most of them are not covered by the network of the existing social services.

2. Municipality of Bela Palanka

Institutions and users of social services according to data of the Office of Statistics of the Republic of Serbia for 2010 for Southern and Eastern Serbia Region, in which the municipality of Bela Palanka is included

Southern and Eastern Serbia Region	Number of institutions	Number of users	Men	Women
Home for children and adolescents without parental	3	93	52	41

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 11 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



care				
Institution for children and adolescents with abnormal development	1	419	243	176
Home for education of children and adolescents	2	126	112	14
Foster care centre	-	-	-	-
Institution for mentally ill persons	1	274	155	119
Institution for elderly people and pensioners	10	1978	764	1213
Institution for elderly people with disabilities	-	-	-	-
Institution for elderly people with mental disorders	1	580	284	296

Social services provided on the territory of the municipality of Bela Palanka at present

- Branko Milovanovich-Tsiga Centre for Social Work. This institution was founded in 1979 and started functioning in 1980. The main activities of the Centre are as follows:
 - Establishing conditions for provision of family protection and support;
 - Establishing conditions for independent living and working of persons in need as well as searching opportunities for activation of their own resources;
 - Providing material support to unsecured persons;
 - Providing other forms of social protection and social services;

The users of social services benefit single or permanent support depending on their individual necessities and identified needs.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 12 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- The municipality of Bela Palanka assists and advises different strata of society in order to satisfy their needs to the highest degree depending on their specifics. For example, the municipality has the following functions:
 - Supporting families with children according to the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children;
 - The right to maternity benefits and the right to remuneration for the time spent in taking care of children;
 - Giving rights to disabled soldiers and disabled civilians;
 - Supporting families who take care of a seriously ill family member as well as acquisition of technical aids.

As stated in the local Strategic Plan for Social Protection 2007 – 2012, the municipal budget is limited and insufficient to deal with the pressing social problems of the local population, which grow with every subsequent year. The willingness of the local authorities to actively participate and contribute financially to any idea aiming to solve the social problems of citizens, families and individuals should be noted.

The municipality is aware of the need for purposeful actions for attracting additional funds for projects and providing extra budgetary resources in order to improve the social status of the population.

The upcoming construction of 8 social houses for emergency accommodation of refugees serves a good example of the efforts of the municipality of Bela Palanka to attract additional funds for social protection.

Major social problems of the residents of the municipality of Bela Palanka

- A great number of children and adolescents with special needs, for whom special social centres such as daily care or rehabilitation centres have not been created yet. Inclusive education has not been introduced in mass kindergartens and schools, too.

This target group can benefit from a social service called Day Care for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs according to Decision № 011-07/09-1 of October 13, 2009, for initiating services in the field of social protection in the municipality of Bela Palanka. Social services aimed at supporting the development of children and adolescents with disabilities are provided to users so that they can stay in their natural environment. Their families receive support as well.

The main problem of these children and adolescents is connected with their limited access to social and educational services. It is extremely difficult for children with physical disabilities to attend mass schools and other public places, which are inaccessible for them. They cannot acquire skills for independent living and realization based on their abilities due to the lack of

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



services for social and medical rehabilitation and training. Their families are unable to provide enough support money because of the fact that usually one of the parents fully takes care of the disabled child and only the other parent works.

In this way professional realization is more difficult, social and work exclusion increases and families fall into the group of socially disadvantaged.

The main problems of this group of vulnerable persons are:

- Lack of social and psychological support for parents;
 - Lack of sufficient number of qualified staff to work with children with disabilities and their families;
 - Insufficient public awareness and engagement.
- Aging population – this is a current tendency all over the European Union. However, the problem is particularly tangible for the population of the municipality of Bela Palanka because 25 % of the population are elderly people, while the municipality consists of 44 settlements, with poor infrastructure in some places.

A great number of young people are forced to leave the villages and move to the neighbouring bigger cities or other municipalities. This fact together with the demographic crisis and the negative growth of the population are the factors which have in recent years determined the prevailing presence of elderly people in the municipality, most of whom are lonely and have no relatives to take care of them.

Social services are too limited for them. The socio-economic efficiency of the services provided in specialized institutions is low, but it can be considerably increased by applying modern and approved methods of work. The social services provided in the community lead to a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with disabilities. The difficult access puts elderly people in isolation, makes their communication in social circles problematic and does not allow them to regularly go to the doctor.

- Social problems of the Roma population - just like everywhere else, the Roma are a particularly vulnerable category. The places where they live do not meet the hygiene requirements and do not have water and sanitation. In respect to employment, lower level of qualification, underdeveloped social capital, low social image of employment status, high levels of unemployment in the community and labour market exclusion have been reported. The tendencies in improving the educational status of the Roma community are reduced while illiteracy increases.
- Refugees - due to a number of political, economic and social factors, which have led to the break-up of Former Yugoslavia, there are a lot of displaced persons and refugees on the territory of Bela Palanka as well as in the whole of the Republic of Serbia. Their settlement is a serious problem for authorities because they are poor, homeless, often ill and marginalized.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 14 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.

Many find it hard to integrate in another country or region, to find a job and to build their lives and the lives of their children again.

III. Legislative framework for social services in Bulgaria and Republic of Serbia

1. Republic of Bulgaria

Enabling everybody to use the benefits of the economic progress is in the basis of the Bulgarian system for social protection and social inclusion. The main elements of this system which contribute to achieving the objectives for better and wider social protection are:

- ✓ Guaranteed rights;
- ✓ Provided access to the use of these rights;
- ✓ Solidarity and social responsibility in society;
- ✓ Differentiated and individual approach to everyone;
- ✓ Guaranteed resources;
- ✓ Clearly defined responsibilities.

Providing equal opportunities for all is one of the guiding principles. In order this to be achieved without breaking the principle of equality, specific rights and measures for improving and equalizing the chances of different groups of people to fully participate in social life and use its resources and goods are envisaged. Elderly people, people with disabilities and children are among these groups.

Social services in the Republic of Bulgaria are decentralized and their management is assigned to the mayors of the respective municipalities. This fact is of great importance in terms of the opportunity given to the municipalities to develop and manage the services for disadvantaged people and children on the basis of the specific needs of the population. In order to foster private entrepreneurship in the social sphere, the mayor of the municipality may assign the management of the social services, for which the state or the municipality is responsible, to private providers of social services. A competition-based principle has been introduced for assigning the management of social services. All activities in the field of social services are assigned through a competition or on the basis of a single tender procedure.

The services delegated by the state are financed by the state budget, while the social services for which the municipalities are responsible are funded by the municipal budgets. The social services delegated by the state are financed on the basis of standards for material support in one place in different specialized institutions and alternative social services. The municipalities have the authority to provide financial resources for the improvement of social services according to their financial capacities.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 15 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



Social services are provided in the community as well as in specialized institutions. During the past years the existing specialized institutions have been restructured and updated. The introduction and provision of new types of social services in the community is a priority.

The social services provided in the community are services provided in a family environment or in an environment similar to the family one. Examples of such services include:

- Personal Assistant –this service provides quality care in a family environment for seriously ill people with permanent disabilities who find it difficult to take care of themselves as well as support to their families. In this way such people are prevented from being placed in specialized institutions. A personal assistant takes care of one person with permanent disabilities, helping him or her integrate in society through interaction with institutions and participation in cultural life as well as in social, work and other activities;
- Social Assistant – this service provides a range of services for satisfying the daily needs of people with permanent disabilities and diseased people who find it difficult to take care of themselves in order to contribute to their social inclusion and prevent them from being placed in specialized institutions. Each social assistant takes care of two or more persons with permanent disabilities, helping them integrate in society through interaction with institutions and participation in cultural life as well as in social, work and other activities;
- Home Assistant - this service provides a range of social services in a family environment for satisfying the daily needs of diseased and elderly people who find it difficult to take care of themselves in order to prevent them from being placed in specialized institutions. It offers a package of services mainly including home care for diseased and elderly people. This service is an alternative to accommodation in specialized institutions for people who have no relatives and are not able to maintain hygiene at home, to go shopping or to prepare food. People who have left specialized institutions can also benefit from this service – it will contribute to creating adequate living conditions in a family environment;
- Home Social Patronage –this is a range of social services provided at home such as food delivery, maintenance of personal hygiene and hygiene of the residential premises where the user lives, assistance for providing the necessary technical facilities to users with disabilities, household services and others;
- Public Dining Rooms – this is a service aimed at satisfying the needs for food of people who are unable to provide food for themselves;
- Day Care Centre – it provides a range of medical, social and educational services which create conditions for full care of the users during the day through satisfying their daily needs, providing food, medical care and rehabilitation and organizing activities for their free time;



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- Centre for Rehabilitation and Social Integration – it provides a range of social services such as rehabilitation, social and legal advice, education, professional training and orientation and development and implementation of individual programmes for social inclusion;
- Protected Homes – this is a form of social service where people lead an independent lifestyle, supported by professionals.
- Foster Care –this service provides the upbringing in a family environment of a child who has been placed in a family of relatives or in a foster family;
- Family-type Accommodation Centre – it offers a range of social services provided in an environment similar to the family one for a limited number of persons – no more than fifteen;
- Centre for Community Support – this service provides a range of social services related to prevention of abandonment, violence and school dropout, deinstitutionalization and reintegration of children, training in skills for independent living and social integration of children from institutions, advice and support to families at risk, assessment and training of future foster parents and adopters and advice and support to children with antisocial behaviour.

Legislative framework in the field of social services in the Republic of Bulgaria

Category of vulnerable persons covered by the legislative instrument	Name of the legislative instrument
People with disabilities	Law on Social Assistance Law on Integration of People with Disabilities Law on Medical Devices Law on Disabled Soldiers and Victims of War
Children and families	Law on Family Allowances Law on Child Protection
Unemployed persons	Law on Employment Promotion

In addition, the following strategic documents, aimed at specific targets, measures and activities with respect to the vulnerable categories of the population of the Republic of Bulgaria, have been developed:

- **Regional Strategy for Development of Social Services 2011 – 2015 for Sofia Region.**
The strategy includes several objectives:
 - ✓ development and improvement of the existing social services in the period 2011 – 2015;
 - ✓ introduction of new and innovative social services for the priority target groups;

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 17 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.

- ✓ initiation of inter-sectoral mixed innovative services and programmes;
- ✓ parallel development of policies and measures for social inclusion in related sectors (education, health, employment, residential environment), through which specific problems of the at-risk groups are solved and/or conditions for effective functioning of social services are created.

The sources of funding of the Strategy and the funds necessary for financing the planned social services in the region have been developed. When determining the sources of funding, a priority is given to the state's delegation of funds to the municipalities which provide social services according to the local needs.

- **Municipal Strategy for Development of Social Services in the Municipality of Etropole (2011 - 2015)**

The strategy includes three major priority areas which are being strictly implemented by the municipal government and other stakeholders at present:

Priority area 1: Prevention for children and families at risk and deinstitutionalization of childcare. This priority area aims to improve child care in the family by preventing the occurrence of risk factors and reducing the number of children raised in specialized institutions.

Priority area 2: Development of social services for social inclusion of vulnerable groups and disadvantaged persons. This priority area aims to create conditions for integration of a maximum number of disadvantaged people.

Priority area 3: Care for elderly people for a better and worthy life. This priority area includes a number of measures aimed at improving the quality of life of elderly people.

- **National Strategy “Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria”.**

The strategy aims to create conditions for replacing institutional care of children with child care in a family environment or in an environment similar to the family one in the community – it is not limited only to removing children from the institutions. The Document and the attached Action Plan have the task to create new opportunities for children and families to receive support in the community, namely:

- Planning of work with families and specialists from the social sphere and other closely related areas of prevention of child abandonment and institutionalization in order to



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



reduce and gradually stop the placement of children in institutions as well as to support the reintegration of children in their home families;

- Implementing reforms and working in the social assistance system for realization of programmes for social assistance and raising of children in a family environment;
- Introducing alternative services and forms of care;
- Promoting the development of adoption and foster care with a focus on the development of services for children under the age of 3;
- Engaging the public in supporting children who leave the institutions and fostering their social inclusion.

- **Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities (2011 – 2020)**

The strategy has the following objectives:

- Providing employment for unemployed persons with permanent disabilities in working age in order to help them overcome their social isolation and fully integrate in society;
- Creating conditions for independent living of people with disabilities;
- Achieving effective social inclusion of people with disabilities through their realization on the open labour market.

In this document, employment of people with disabilities is defined as a national priority which requires constant political and public attention as well as maximum coordination of the related policies. Realization on the labour market of this vulnerable group is one of the main tools for integrating people with disabilities in all spheres of public life.

2. Republic of Serbia

Like in Bulgaria, decision and policy making in the sphere of labour and social affairs shall be jointly implemented by the Social Ministry, unions, employers' organizations and other associations. According to the Law on Social Protection and Social Security all legal and natural persons can provide social services provided that they have a protected area, appropriate equipment and the required number of professional and other workers. This means that social services can be provided by private providers under the same conditions as when they are performed by a state or a municipal authority.

The following categories of persons receive social support:

- Socially vulnerable persons (child benefits, financial support and allowances for care and assistance in accompanying persons in need of social care);
- Pregnant women during maternity leave, leave for childcare or absence from work in order to take special care for their children;
- Persons with disabilities;
- Disabled soldiers, families of dead soldiers and civil war disabled;

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



Services in the family and social care sector provided to stakeholders in the field of applying the Law on Social Protection and Social Security should give citizens the right to material support, help benefits, assistance in training and working with people with disabilities, home assistance, temporary accommodation in a hospice or other institution as well as accommodation in a residence or in another family. The rights and freedoms are recognized and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. The key rights are as follows:

- Everyone has the right to health care;
- Children, pregnant women and elderly people have the right to health insurance from the public revenue when they are not secured by other sources;
- Everyone has the right to work;
- Guaranteed freedom of labour, freedom to choose an occupation and employment and participation in governance;
- Citizens with disabilities have the right to be trained for a suitable job and conditions for their employment should be created according to the law;
- The State shall provide social security for citizens who are unable to work and have no means of living.

The main objectives of the social policy in the Republic of Serbia are:

- Social Protection;
- Social Security;
- Social Protection activities include organized social measures and actions aimed at the creation of conditions for protection of families, ensuring of independent living and employment for persons in need and activation of their abilities and provision of occupation for unemployed persons.
- Social protection is an organized social activity aimed at the provision of assistance for citizens and their families when they arise as an obligation of the state. It balances the social situation in which citizens or a family needs social support in order to overcome social and existential difficulties.
- Social Security /Support/ is provided to citizens who are unable to work and earn their own living as well as the living of their families. It also covers persons who cannot provide sufficient funds in order to meet their basic living needs through their job or other sources of income.

Types of social services in the Republic of Serbia:

- Institutions for Accommodation of Children Deprived of Parental Care –these institutions provide care for children deprived of parental care regardless of whether they have parents or not. The aim is to guarantee that these children will be reintegrated in a family environment /in their

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 2007-2013 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.

own family or in a foster family/. Children live in an environment in which they are trained to deal with life alone.

- Foster Care Centres – these centres were organized and started functioning in 2010 with changes in the Law on Social Protection and Social Security. Children are entrusted to the care of other families while professionals perform inspections and provide expert assistance to foster families. The aim is to create conditions for children to return to their own families and give them opportunities for independent living.

- Institutions for Care and Development of Persons with Disabilities - they are different depending on the type and degree of disabilities. A person may be placed temporarily or permanently. The aim is to provide the accommodated persons with care, education and training for work under specific conditions.

The following types of institutions for persons with disabilities can be differentiated:

- Institution for children and adolescents with disabilities;
- Institutions for mentally ill persons;
- Institution for elderly people with disabilities;
- Institutions for elderly people with mental disorders;

- Institutions for Education of Children and Adolescents – the main activities of these institutions include care, education and professional orientation. The aim is to prevent further acts of violation of the generally accepted social norms for committing crimes. These institutions provide daily meal, shelter and temporary accommodation.

- Institutions for Elderly People and Pensioners - they offer temporary and permanent accommodation, meal and health care for elderly people. The target groups are elderly persons without families and livelihood, some of them with mental or physical disabilities and therefore unable to lead independent lives. The institutions for accommodation of pensioners and other elderly persons in the Republic of Serbia are organized as Gerontological Centers, Homes for Accommodation of Pensioners and Home Departments to the Centres for Social Work.

Legislative framework in the field of social services in the Republic of Serbia

Category of vulnerable persons covered by the legislative instrument	Name of the legislative instrument
People with disabilities	Law on Prevention of Discrimination against People with Disabilities Law on Social Protection and Social Security of Citizens Law on Health Protection Law on Vocational Training and Employment of People with Disabilities

Children and families	Family Code Law on Support to Families with Children Law on Social Protection of Citizens Law on Marriage and Family Relations
Unemployed persons	Law on Protection at Work Law on Labour

Moreover, the following strategic documents aimed at specific targets, measures and activities with respect to the vulnerable categories of the population of the Republic of Serbia have been developed:

- National Strategy for Young People - young people in the Republic of Serbia are subject of special social protection, because their youth has passed under severe political, social and economic conditions as stated in the strategic document.

Today's 24-years-old people have been at the age of 3 when the shooting war in former Yugoslavia has started, at the age of 4 when sanctions have begun, at the age of 7 during the Dayton Agreement, at the age of 11 when Serbia has been bombed and at the age of 15 when the Prime Minister has been killed.

All this had effect on their whole further lives. Many of today's young people have grown up in isolation, without adequate social support, in extreme poverty and with a pattern of violence and aggression. At present, these young people are expected to lead their country forward, develop economy and support the state. The main task defined in the document is to support young people because of the fact that when they are supported and encouraged the whole country will be on the rise - economic development and birthrate will be increased and better living conditions will be created.

- Strategy for Development of Social Services – this document is aimed at improving the social status of citizens, increasing social protection and cohesion and promoting independence and self-sufficiency. It is noted that social protection should satisfy the individual needs of the citizens and support the vulnerable and marginalized groups who need assistance from the state and the citizens. The strategic objectives of this document are:
 - To ensure adequate level of social protection;
 - To promote lifelong learning and respecting the rights of workers;
 - To provide support to vulnerable social groups;
 - To promote equal opportunities;
 - To suppress discrimination and social isolation;
 - To promote European cooperation in the process of migration.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- National Strategy for Aging 2006 - 2015 – the objective of this document is to create integration and coordinated policy aimed at health, social protection, labour and education, taking into account demographic changes. The idea is to build a society which at every stage of a person's life can satisfy his or her needs as well as to include the unused resources of elderly people. The strategy is based on the following major principles:
 - Development of skills for independent living;
 - Promotion and protection of all human rights and freedoms;
 - Provision of economic and social security and achievement of high levels of quality of life of elderly people;
 - Assistance for full integration and participation in society of elderly people;
 - Elimination of all forms of social disregard;
 - Commitment to achieving gender equality;
 - Respect for the differences and the different needs of elderly population;
 - Promotion of solidarity and dialogue;
 - Establishment of partnerships at all levels: state, NGOs, private sector and elderly people;
 - Provision of equal opportunities for everyone;
 - Promotion of personal responsibility.
- Strategy for Improving the Situation of People with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia 2007 - 2015 – this document includes the following principles:
 - Respect for dignity, individual self-sufficiency, independence of people with disabilities and their right to make decisions for their own lives;
 - Struggle against discrimination and marginalization – promotion of equal opportunities for people with disabilities through the provision of access to basic rights, services and resources;
 - Full and effective participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in all spheres of social life – programmes, services and facilities should be fully accessible;
 - Respect for the different, recognition of people with disabilities as part of human diversity and support of human diversity – the knowledge and life experience which people with disabilities can give to society should be recognized and appreciated;
 - People with disabilities must have the same rights as the other citizens as well as equal opportunities to exercise these rights (participation in social, cultural, economic and political life of society);
 - Development of an accessible environment through removing the barriers – solving problems of accessibility and mobility in the context of equal opportunities and rights to participate;

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 23 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- Promotion of gender equality, which is of great importance for the most vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities;
 - Respect for the developing skills of children with disabilities and their right to develop their own identities.
- The Municipality of Bela Palanka's Strategic Plan for Social Protection 2007 - 2012 – it has been adopted by a decision of the Municipal Council because of the necessity of improving the quality of life of the population on the territory of the municipality. It is expected that the development of this strategic document for social services in the municipality of Bela Palanka will contribute to proper planning, equitable allocation of resources and successful realization of the objectives and intentions for social protection. Active participation of the stakeholders covered by the strategy – socially vulnerable groups of population – is expected as well.

The main objectives are:

- Decreasing the poverty of the population, particularly in the small settlements in the municipality;
- Reducing social exclusion;
- Satisfying the specific needs of the users of services.

IV. Objectives, activities and expected results from the provision of social services in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

1. Municipality of Etropole

Objectives:

- With respect to the Vulnerable Families with Children at Risk target group:
 - Reduction of child abandonment and child placement in specialized institutions and keeping children in their biological families;
 - Expansion of the number, the capacity and the range of activities of social services in order to support the social inclusion of children with disabilities;
 - Provision of equal access to quality education for children from communities at risk;
 - Accommodation of children from institutions in different forms of family environment.
- With respect to the Children and Elderly People with Disabilities target group:

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 24 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- Creation of better living conditions for people with disabilities through the improvement of the quality of care for them;
- Creation of conditions for reintegration of vulnerable persons, groups and communities at risk;
- Creation of new social services of residential type in an environment similar to the family one for people with disabilities.
- With respect to the Lonely Elderly People target group:
 - Development of a wide network of services in the community in order conditions for quiet and worthy life of elderly people to be provided;
 - Provision of access to quality social services for elderly people.

RESULT INDICATORS:

- Provided support for 80% of the vulnerable families and children in the Day Care Centre for Children with Disabilities in the municipality of Etropole;
- Prevented institutionalization of 80% of children at risk of abandonment at the end of the strategy implementation;
- 70% reduction of the number of children raised in specialized institutions;
- 80% decrease of school dropouts;
- Improved conditions for independent living in a home environment for 35 % of people with disabilities who are users of the following services: Social Patronage, Home Assistant, Social Assistant, Personal Assistant, Home for Elderly People, Day Care Centre for Elderly People and Club of Pensioners;
- Created capacity for the involvement of at least 80% of children with disabilities in inclusive activities in the Day Care Centre for Children with Disabilities;
- Provided services, support and care in a home environment for at least 20 % of elderly people in the municipality of Etropole with those living alone being a priority;
- At least 3 newly developed and operating services for children and families in the municipality of Etropole such as Foster Care, Day Care Centre for Children with Disabilities and Centre for Community Support, functioning at a municipal level.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DEFINED INDICATORS:

1. Establishment of a Day Care Centre for Children with Disabilities in the municipality of Etropole where a set of social services for children with disabilities and their families will be

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 25 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.

provided –medical and multi-sensor rehabilitation, correctional and compensatory activities with a speech therapist, psychological advice and social support.

2. Carrying out of modules for training of parents of children with disabilities for acquiring new skills and knowledge in the following areas:

- Overcoming of the differences in communication, development of skills for dialogue and behavioural tasks for hearing and patience;
- Formation of practical skills for stimulating and developing the potential of a child with a disability;
- Strategies for involving all family members in the process of raising and educating a child with a disability;
- Training of parents and whole families to take care of their children and renewal of the parents-child relationships.

3. Establishment of a Centre for Community Support in the municipality of Etropole in order services to be provided to groups at risk, such as pregnant and single mothers, disadvantaged families, children at risk, young people with antisocial behaviour, as well as prospective adopters and foster families to be trained.

4. Establishment of a Mother and Child Unit for temporary accommodation of young single mothers with young children in order to foster their parental affection, provide legal advice, train them in parenting skills and create a safe environment for the children and prevent them from being placed in an institution.

5. Development of projects under priority axes of the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development which fund activities at home such as Personal Assistant, Social assistant and Home Assistant.

2. Municipality of Bela Palanka

The existing social institutions in the Republic of Serbia need to be improved, restructured and reduced according to the standards and criteria for provision of social services. Most social institutions in Serbia have over 80 users.

According to the European Social Framework for Deinstitutionalization the following strategic objectives need to be accomplished:

- Creation of an environment similar to the family one;
- Introduction of alternative services and forms of care for the vulnerable categories of the population;



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- Realization of projects and programmes through which the available unused resource of people with disabilities will be developed and they will to a maximum extent integrate in the labor market.

Objectives:

- With respect to the Children and Young People with Special Needs target group:

- Reduction of child abandonment and child placement in specialized institutions and keeping children in their biological families;
- Expansion of the number, the capacity and the range of activities of social services in order to support the social inclusion of children with disabilities;
- Provision of equal access to quality education for children from communities at risk;

- With respect to the Aging population target group:

- Creation of better living conditions for people with disabilities through the improvement of the quality of care for them;
- Creation of conditions for reintegration of vulnerable persons, groups and communities at risk;

- With respect to the Roma population target group:

- Development of a wide network of services and activities in the community in order conditions for integration and inclusion to be provided;
- Provision of access to quality services for Roma people;

RESULT INDICATORS:

- Provided support for 80% of the vulnerable families and children in the Centre for Social Integration and Rehabilitation in the municipality of Bela Palanka;
- Prevented institutionalization of 80% of children at risk of abandonment at the end of the strategy implementation;
- 70% reduction of the number of children raised in specialized institutions;
- Provided services, support and care for at least 20 % of elderly people in the municipality of Bela Palanka with those living alone being a priority;
- At least 3 newly developed and operating services for children, families and elderly people in the municipality of Bela Palanka functioning at a municipal level;

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DEFINED INDICATORS:

1. Establishment of a Centre for Social Integration and Rehabilitation of Children. The purpose of its creation is to increase social skills, communication between coevals and the overall development of children with disabilities. The integration of children with disabilities is a process

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 27 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.

which should start from early childhood. The formation of adequate public attitude towards the problems of children with disabilities and the promotion of positive models and practices of care are of great importance.

The Centre for Social Integration and Rehabilitation will be implementing the following activities:

- Formation of practical skills for stimulating and developing the potential of a child with a disability.
- Strategies for involving all family members in the process of raising and educating a child with a disability, training of parents and whole families to take care of their children, renewal of the parents-child relationships, social, legal, psychosocial and psychological advising of families of children with disabilities and stimulating child activity.
- Identification of the needs of training of children with disabilities not covered by the traditional forms of education and training.

2. According to the Strategic Plan for Social Protection 2007-2012, unions and organizations for people with disabilities from the municipality of Bela Palanka will be formed. These organizations will provide a solid foundation for true understanding and tolerance and will function effectively in the direction of protecting the rights and necessities of people with special needs. The unions and organizations for people with disabilities will operate in the following areas:

- Employment and occupational rehabilitation - supporting and promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in a real work environment;
- Social support and humanitarian activities – assisting the members in need of support separately or together with humanitarian organizations and state structures;
- Training and education - raising the qualification and retraining of people with disabilities;
- Transport and architectural barriers – organizing campaigns and enforcing the policies aimed at creating an accessible environment;
- Social contacts - activation of social contacts and meaningful organization of free time;
- Integration through art, culture, sports and tourism – organizing tournaments, competitions and interest clubs separately or together with other organizations;

3. After evaluation and analysis of elderly people with disabilities the need of creating a Day Care Centre for Elderly People has been taken into account. The main purpose of the introduction of this social service is to cover people who have left active life and who need to overcome the psychological barrier which makes them feel isolated as well as to provide conditions for meaningful social contacts and mutual assistance.

The Day Care Centre for Elderly People will be implementing the following activities:

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 28 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA
Cross-border
Programme

ADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES IN EFFECTIVE TANDEM

№ 2007CB16IPO006-2009-1-111



- Medical and paramedical care;
- Organization and implementation of a complex rehabilitation programme which is appropriate for everyone depending on their health conditions and performance of individual rehabilitation procedures.
- Organization and implementation of occupational therapy. The goal of the occupational therapy is to promote social and labour adaptation of people at risk. It aims at developing skills for overcoming difficulties and integrating in society;
- Provision of information, organization of free time and personal contacts and realization of joint activities together with other social institutions, NGOs and schools (celebration of holidays, trips, sports festivals, exhibitions and meetings with interesting people).

4. Establishment of a Centre for Roma. The aim is to concentrate the resources of the Roma population in taking responsibility for solving current problems and community development.

Main activities which will be carried out in the Centre:

- Health education of parents - health education is of great need for marginalized families of illiterate parents and families of minor parents who do not have the necessary social experience, health education and knowledge about health and hygiene requirements when raising child.
- Provision of educational services including the organization of interest clubs for Roma children. Interest clubs will work for the inclusion of children in school as well as improvement of their general knowledge, interests and knowledge.
- Provision of a complex of social services and support aimed at socializing the Roma population, raising their life status and helping them acquire general life knowledge and skills.

The establishment of a Centre for Roma will lead to improvement in life planning, reduction of antisocial behaviour and development of models of safe health behaviour among inaccessible groups and groups at risk in the community.

5. Integration Centre for Refugees which will be implementing the following activities:

- Planning and organization Serbian language training;
- Identification of foreigners who look for or have received protection and sending them in the specific educational institutions;
- Planning and organizing of professional training of refugees who look for or have received protection through education in the Centre's offices;
- Implementation of programmes for social protection and integration of refugees with special needs;
- Advice on social assistance problems and guidance to the Offices for Social Protection;

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 29 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.

- Organization and implementation of activities for cultural adaptation of refugees who have looked for and have received protection;
- Planning and organization of sports, health and educational activities.

V - Human, administrative, technical and institutional capacity for implementation of the strategy for social services in the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka

This strategy is based on the conception of continuous improvement of living standards, creation of job opportunities and provision of equal access to diverse and high quality social services for all residents of the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka.

A key moment is the cooperation between different social partners and increased partnership between municipalities and regions aimed at improving the welfare of the residents of both municipalities.

- Human resources - both municipalities have the necessary human resources for the implementation of this strategy. In addition, the following is needed:

- Establishment and development of a capacity for planning and management of social services;
- Establishment and development of a system for enhancing the professional competence of the personnel providing social services;
- Development of a capacity for monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of social services.

- Administrative capacity - the administrations of both municipalities have the necessary capacity to achieve the goals and fulfill the tasks of this strategy. This can be proved by the implemented social projects, the developed detailed strategic documents adopted by the Municipal Councils as well as the proper assessment of the specific needs of the vulnerable groups of population in both municipalities.

The two municipalities can implement joint social activities in order to:

- Increase the efficiency of services and supplement the resources available through the development of inter-municipal partnerships and inter-sectoral cooperation;
- Promote the inter-municipal partnership in the field of social services;
- Establish effective mechanisms for inter-sectoral cooperation and development of joint services.

- Technical capacity—the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka are fully equipped with the technical means necessary for the achievement of the indicators defined in this strategy for social



services. In addition, both municipalities can apply for funding from the European Union funds in order to equip and furnish each newly established social service in accordance with the requirements for ergonomics and health care.

- **Institutional capacity** – the two municipalities have the necessary institutional capacity for the realization of the strategy. In addition, the implementation of the strategic documents related to the provision of social services can be periodically monitored.

The monitoring of the implementation is a particularly important mechanism for:

- Ensuring accountability to the public;
- Supporting the efforts of the local authorities to raise the standards of social services;
- Supporting the users of these services as well as the persons providing care and the organizations representing their interests when they require more flexible services which better satisfy their needs, achieving greater awareness about the effectiveness of the individual services and seeking ways to improve them.

It is necessary to develop a maximally broad partnership and involve all stakeholders in the planning and realization of measures for social protection of persons in need of social services from the municipalities of Etropole and Bela Palanka. Such type of complex interventions can be initiated and implemented by the joint efforts of all stakeholders.

Firstly, these are the mayors, the Municipal Councils, the providers of services and the NGOs at a municipal level. Deinstitutionalization and the development of a maximally wide range of services for families at risk in order to prevent child abandonment and remove children from institutions should become a priority of the joint activities in the field of social services. Both municipalities need to develop prevention measures and support services for families at risk in order to reduce the risk of permanent institutionalization of children who have been placed in institutions due to poverty, unemployment and poor living conditions of their families.

It is necessary to use the resources of the educational system and the tendency for the development of extracurricular activities which can help prevent aggressive and intolerant behaviour. However, schools should be supported by social workers through additional training in planning extracurricular activities aimed at the prevention of aggression and the development of tolerance.

Social services need to be diversified as well as new and flexible alternative services which satisfy the specific needs of the groups at risk should be developed.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE №1:

Strengthening the sustainable economic development in both municipalities - organization of joint meetings between representatives of the municipalities, NGOs and local businesses in order

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the Bulgaria – Serbia 31 IPA Cross-border Programme. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of The Municipality of Etropole and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the Managing Authority of the Programme.



to make the two municipalities economically strong regions with a high standard of living, develop new contacts and exchange best practices and promote cooperation in the field of providing services to the population.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE №2:

Promoting social cohesion and cooperation through joint investments in human resources development, people to people activities, labour market initiatives, assistance in increasing the adaptability of workforce to the market requirements and support for the preparation of projects of mutual benefit.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE №3:

Improving the quality of life of the residents in both municipalities – creation of conditions for the improvement of the quality of social services and ensuring the sustainability of the alternative social services provided in both municipalities, creation of social capital, restoration and formation of basic labour and social habits, realization of joint initiatives encouraging the development of social economy and formation of labour and social skills while stimulating initiatives for the provision of social services.