



**NEMO**

Using the New media in Education to  
Overcome Migrant Discrimination  
Online

# National Report Bulgaria

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*The authors of the Report are experts from Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation (Literature Review and the overall country report) and experts from the Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria (Qualitative report).*



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## **I. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Executive summary**

The review of literature definitely shows the Bulgarian society is burdened with a lot of stereotypes towards the different people regardless of their ethnicity or country of origin. The main reason is the big influence the media have on opinions' formulation. As the review of the media landscape shows it's quite a problematic one with serious uncertainties towards media ownership, the influence of different political and governmental structures (one of the last places at media freedom ranking), with a lot of cases of hate speech and discrimination. Bulgarian online space (as a target of NEMO project) seems to contain more online hate speech than some other European Union member states. The citizens of Bulgaria are less likely to be in contact with foreigners due to the significantly lower number of foreigners in the country, and therefore are less likely to reduce their prejudices and stereotypes, which also affects their expression of hate in cyberspace. Other explanations might be found in the less restrictive legislation in Bulgaria compared with other countries. Also, it is possible that control mechanisms such as reporting and/or removing hate comments from social networks work less effectively in Bulgaria.

The main focus of migration process is on administration of the processes. There is a well-structured mechanism between the different institutions, there is also a National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015-2020, there's an action plan. There's National Council on Migration Policy, established under the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria on migration, asylum and integration 2011-2020 (2011) is chaired by the Minister of Interior Affairs in view of improving inter-ministerial co-operation and coordination between the structures engaged in the migration processes. There's also a lot of NGOs supporting the process: representative offices of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International organization of Migration (IOM), Caritas, CVS, local ones as Bulgarian Council for Refugees and Migrants, Council of Women Refugees in Bulgaria, etc; governmental structures as State Agency for Refugees at Ministry of Council, etc. Migration policy is related to other sectors, such as public health, education, commerce, demographics, transport, anti-poverty, and working conditions. Labour market policy and work force characteristics are important elements, as immigration policy is applied in support of economic development. The main tasks and drivers of the asylum and migration system have been effective prevention of illegal migration and meeting the needs of the national labour market. Moreover, being an external border to the EU entails certain challenges in terms of migration pressure, and the EU accession led to the need to update the mechanisms for control and regulation of migration, including a long-term strategy with a view to national security and economy. Still there is a lack of connection between the activities towards social and cultural integration and migrants, asylum seekers, minor and local society. As a result of active job of NGO sector a lot of things are done for migrants integration but local people lack of information and possibility of independent analysis of situation and a chance to see the migrants (as a total term) as benefit not only as a threat.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 NEMO and the national Context

The project NEMO team put forward the following objectives with the elaboration of this report:

- To identify the main forms and manifestations of discrimination of third-country nationals
- To contribute to enlarge the current literature on the issue of fake news and its relationship with discrimination, thought a specific target, not well studied in literature, children aged 11-14, especially in the reference country.
- To gain a better understanding on the use of digital media by target groups in particular in relation to the diffusion of fake news and their capability to evaluate the quality of the sources
- To collect qualitative information on the level of awareness of target groups on misinformation on third country nationals, stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination and on their responses to the phenomenon
- To collect information in order to build a toolkit and a methodology that try to fix some of the main elements that will emerge by the analysis

### 1.2 Definitions and Statistical overview about the presence of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities in Bulgaria

In this document “*refugees and migrants*” will be used as generic terms to describe people on the move across borders, whether in search of better economic and social opportunities or to flee conflict, persecution and human rights abuses.

The 2011 census recorded that *Roma* amounted to around 4.9 per cent among those of the 92 per cent of the population who responded to the question about their ethnicity. However, non-governmental sources have previously estimated that there were some 700,000 Roma in Bulgaria, a proportion closer to 10 per cent of the national population. According to the authorities, the large discrepancy between this figure and the census results is due to many Roma identifying themselves as Bulgarians, Turks and to a lesser extent as Romanians. The Roma community is deeply segmented and divided by religion, clan affiliation, language and traditional occupation. About half the Roma are Muslim; others are Christian Orthodox, and some are Protestant.

*Religious minorities*: We usually refer to Turks, Pomaks, Jewish, and Armenian people as often subject to discrimination.

*Discrimination* as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of an ethnic origin, race, age, or sex.

*Hate speech*: Hate speech is speech that attacks a person or a group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

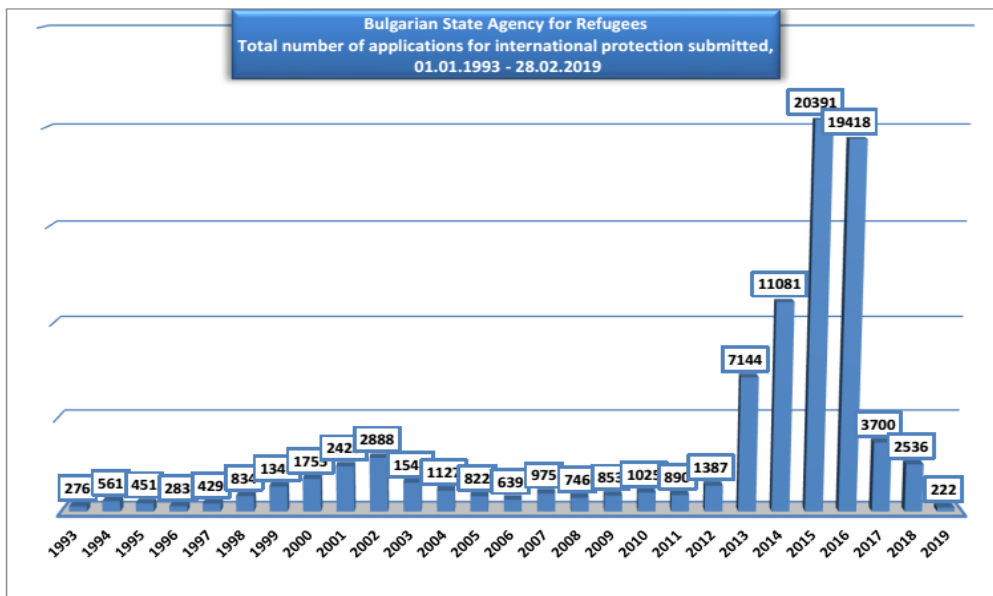
*Stereotype* is a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

RASC – Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children

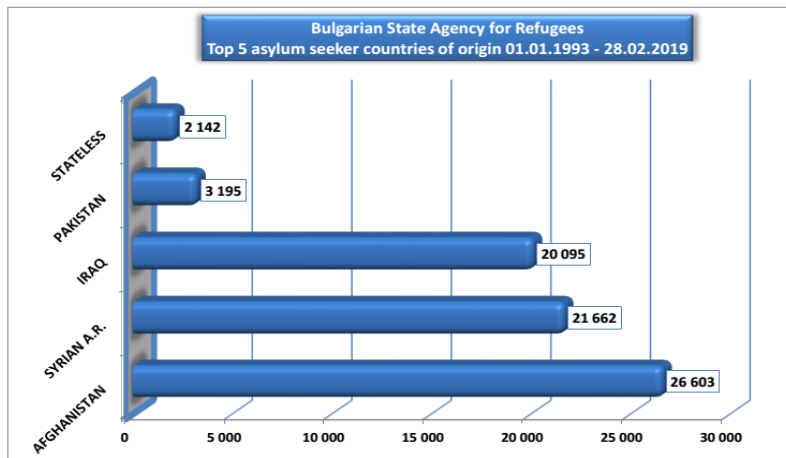
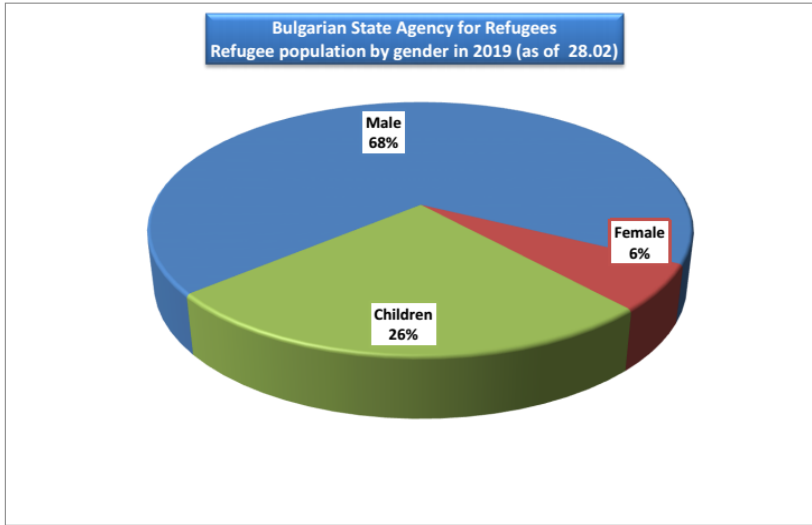
*Fake News* (definition of EU) - Deliberate use of false or distorted information to influence public opinion in a harmful way.

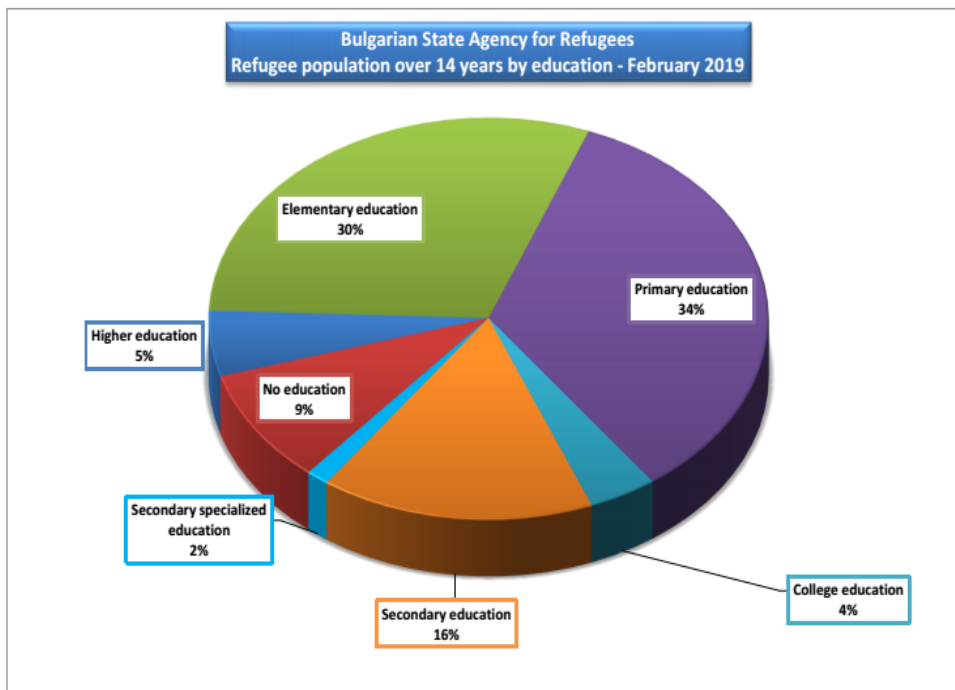
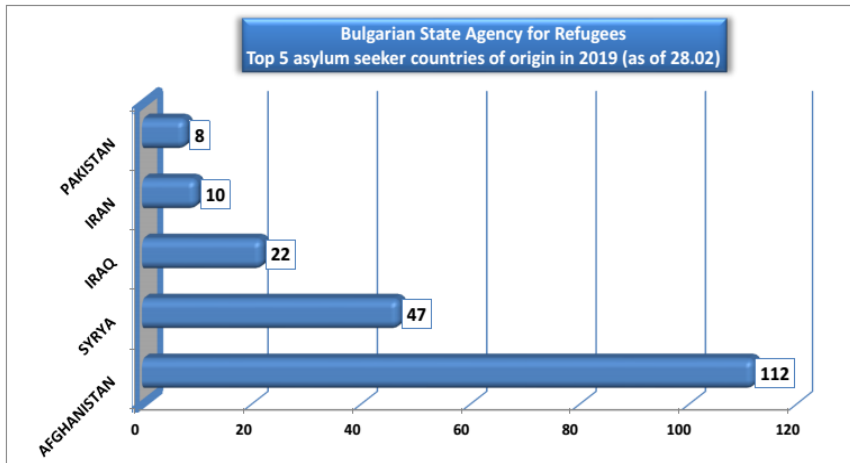
Statistical overview about the presence of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities in Bulgaria:

Source <sup>1</sup>	01.01.2019-28.02.2019
Asylum seekers	222 persons
Refugee status	42 persons
Provided humanitarian status	41 persons
Refusal to grant international protection	184 persons



<sup>1</sup> State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers, Statistics and report - <https://aref.government.bg/en/node/179> , (03/04/2019)





### Key migration Statistics (Bulgaria)<sup>2</sup>

Immigration & Emigration	
The total number of international migrants (UN DESA, 2017)	153.8 thousand
International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population (UN DESA, 2017)	2.2 %
Net migration in the last 5 years (immigrants minus emigrants, in millions) (UN DESA, 2015)	-24.5
Proportion of female migrants of the international immigrant stock (UN DESA, 2017)	55.6 %
Difference in the percentage of migrants in the total population between 2017 and 1995 (percentage points) (UN DESA, 2017)	1.6 Percentage points
Percentage of international migrants 19 years and younger living in the country/region (UN DESA, 2017)	38 %
Percentage of international migrants 65 years and older (UN DESA, 2017)	13.2 %
Migrant Flow	
Total number of new international migrants each year (UN DESA, 2013)	18.6 thousand

According to IOM (Bulgaria)<sup>3</sup> the largest numbers of arrivals of migrants and refugees in Bulgaria in 2018 were November (448), August (414) and September (413). Not surprisingly, given the trends of several years, the coldest months saw the lowest numbers – 99 in January and 55 in February. In December, there had been a total of 152 arrivals, but this included the December 13 – 19 period, in which there were none, according to IOM’s figures, compiled on the basis of official and other sources. Numbers of people in the facilities in Bulgaria to accommodate refugees were strikingly low – at Pastrogor, there were just 12 people, and at Harmanli, just 207, IOM said, citing figures as at December 20. It is well-known that refugees and migrants arriving in Bulgaria tend to want to transit through the country on to more prosperous countries to the west. Separately, IOM said that 113 145 migrants and refugees entered Europe by sea in 2018. This year is the fifth straight during which the arrival of irregular migrants and refugees has topped the 100 000 threshold – although 2018’s total is low compared to those recorded at this time in 2017 (168 258) and 2016 (359 160). Last census conducted in Bulgaria in 2011 showed the following figures about representation of different ethnic

<sup>2</sup> Migration Data Portal, Data for Bulgaria,  
[https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock\\_abs\\_&t=2017&cm49=100](https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2017&cm49=100) (03/04/2019)

<sup>3</sup> Migrant and refugee arrivals in Bulgaria total 2503 so far in 2018, IOM, The Sofia Globe, Written by The Sofia Globe staff on December 23, 2018 in *Bulgaria* <https://sofiaglobe.com/2018/12/23/migrant-and-refugee-arrivals-in-bulgaria-total-2503-so-far-in-2018-iom/>, (23/12/2018)

minorities included in this report: Turks (585 024), Roma (320 761), Armenian (6 360), Jews (1 130).

### 1.3 Overview about media landscape

National Report of Freedom House<sup>4</sup> stated that Bulgaria's media environment has deteriorated significantly in recent years, with an increase in hate speech and violence against journalists. Transparency of media ownership continued to be a serious problem, as was the fusion of media and politics, media monopolies, and lack of transparency of funding sources.

- The state of independent media in Bulgaria continued to deteriorate during the year 2017. **Disinformation and fake news increasingly become problems**, particularly during the March election campaign, as documented on the website EU vs Disinfo (euvsdisinfo.eu), where a list of Bulgarian media outlets known to circulate fake news has been compiled. The list includes almost exclusively web-based media, and the data available on their traffic suggests that most are among the top 20 online media outlets. Furthermore, a comparative study by the Open Society Institute on media literacy and capacity of citizens to deal with the post-truth media landscape places Bulgarians last among EU member states, preceded only by Montenegrins, Albanians, and Turks.
- The year 2017 also saw **the return of pressure on journalists and media outlets by politicians and institutional actors seeking to intervene in editorial policies**. According to the Association of European Journalists, one of the main problems in the Bulgarian media landscape is state influence over media outlets, exerted through the advertising budgets of EU operational programs. This includes the pernicious practice of assigning large advertising budgets to public and private media directly and without competition, and without applying the law for public procurements, in exchange for favorable media coverage.
- The 2016 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) report for Bulgaria gives a detailed account on the **lack of ownership and financial transparency in the sector and absence of regulatory transparency** in the country. The report's conclusions highlighted significant risks to media pluralism, and the lack of legislative activities addressing those issues points to the need for substantial changes to the structural indicators of Bulgaria's media landscape.
- The MPM also found **that cross-media concentration of ownership and enforcement of competition, as a rule, was another high-risk indicator** (89 percent). Bulgarian media legislation does not provide for specific thresholds in order to prevent a high degree of ownership concentration. Insufficient data on media ownership and market shares does not allow for an accurate evaluation of the actual state of cross-media concentration in the national market. In addition, the

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<sup>4</sup> Emilia Zankina, Boris Gurov, "Nations in Transit 2018: Confronting Liberalism in Bulgaria", 2018  
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/bulgaria>

Commission for the Protection of Competition, the relevant regulatory authority, does not take into account, implicitly or explicitly, considerations about media

pluralism when applying competition rules to the sector. There are also no regulatory safeguards ensuring that state funds granted to the Public Service Media (PSM) do not cause disproportionate effects on competition.

- A white paper issued by the Union of Publishers in **Bulgaria highlighted visible pressure from law enforcement, the government, and progovernment media outlets on independent publishers and journalists.**

### 1.3.1 Children and internet usage

Findings from latest Global Kids Online Bulgaria Research<sup>5</sup>, launched by Bulgarian Safer Internet Center reveal that children are spending more time online at increasingly younger ages. Even though many of them are technically competent and skilled internet users, few children take full advantage of the online opportunities or act in a proactive way.

**The average age of accessing the internet for the first time in Bulgaria has dropped to 8 years old over the past 6 years and by the time children reach 10 years old, 90% are already online. Children also go online more often and spend more time using the internet than they did 6 years ago.** Over 9 in 10 children (93%) use the internet daily and the majority of these children (79%) spend at least one hour online.

**Children in Bulgaria go online predominantly via a smartphone (80%),** which creates not only opportunities but also risks due to relatively unsupervised access. More internet access comes with higher exposure to online risk and the safety of children when they are online depends on their digital skills. Better skills also allow children to take more advantage of the opportunities that the internet affords them.

**About 70% of Bulgarian children report that they learn new things from the Internet every week and almost all of them (96%) agrees that the internet offers a lot of useful things for children of their age.** About half children use the internet for schoolwork (51%) and to look for news online (45%) but looking for health information is rare, even among older teenagers. In fact, children in Bulgaria use the internet most often for leisure and entertainment activities, such as watching videos (89%), listening to music (86%), and visiting social networking sites (73%). Playing games and posting pictures and comments are also popular.

**While children in Bulgaria use the internet to create content rather rarely, they seem competent internet users.** Most know how to save a photo they found online (86%), find it easy to choose terms for their online searches (78%), or how to install an app (77%) and check mobile app prices (67%). They are also able to access their information from various devices they use (70%) and know how to change the privacy settings of their online profiles (73%).

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<sup>5</sup>Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre (Research Team: Georgi Apostolov, Emanuil Georgiev, Marko Hajdinjak, Peter Kanchev), Global Kids Online Research, 2017

<http://globalkidsonline.net/are-children-empowered-to-benefit-from-the-internet/>

**However, having the skills does not translate into making use of the existing opportunities.** For example, while nearly 80% of children know how to record and

upload a video online, only 23% have done so in the past month. While the internet is a popular place for socialising with friends, very few children use it for civic participation. Most of the children do not engage online with local charities or organisations (7%), campaigns or protests (4%) or in discussing political or social problems with others (6%). Similarly, using the internet for school preparation is considered highly useful (the second most useful online activity after using the internet to play games), but is the 12<sup>th</sup> most frequent online activity they actually engage in – only 50% of children use the internet for schoolwork at least once a week and nearly a quarter (24%) have not done so over the past month.

**The increased use of the internet, however, has created more exposure to risk, especially for older children.** Over the past year 15% of children in Bulgaria have experienced something online that bothered or upset them compared to 9% in 2010. About one third of all survey participants have seen online pornographic content, which was upsetting for almost half of these children. A third of the children have encountered online hate speech or seen violent online materials, including images and videos of murders and executions, which was exceptionally or very upsetting for nearly half of the children.

**Most children talk to family and friends when they experience something negative online but nearly one in 5 children do not speak to anybody.** Parents and carers are the main source of support (70% of children turn to them), followed by friends (36%) and siblings (12%). Teachers or other professionals are very rarely sought for support in such cases (respectively 4% and 1%). In addition, a significant number of children (18%) do not talk to anybody and this proportion has increased considerably since 2010 (4%). When to cope with upsetting content, the most common strategies are closing the unpleasant, disturbing or unwanted website or application (44%), ignoring the problem (32%), blocking the person (28%) or deleting the messages (14%). Very few children report the incident (5%).

**Georgi Apostolov**, the coordinator of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre which carried out the survey summarises the challenges: *“Today’s 9-17 years old Bulgarian children are real digital natives. Most of them use internet and mobile communications almost all the time and often have digital skills superior to those of their parents. This is probably the main reason why parents seems to have reduced the supervision and mediation compared to 6 years ago. However, children start using internet at an earlier age, so they need more mediation in order to develop the necessary social and media skills that will allow them to benefit from the opportunities the internet provides. The education system also has an important role to play – digital and media literacy should be urgently included in the curricula in order to educate competent and active netizens”.*

## 2. Discrimination of migrants

### 2.1 Main forms of discrimination of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities

Amnesty International Report 2017/18 <sup>6</sup> stated the necessary services were not provided to migrants and refugees, including to unaccompanied children. A climate of xenophobia and intolerance sharply intensified. Roma continued to be at risk of pervasive discrimination.

The number of refugees and migrants entering Bulgaria declined in the recent years, but still excessive use of force and theft by border police continued. Irregular border crossing remained criminalized resulting in administrative detention of migrants and refugees, including unaccompanied children, who arrived in greater numbers. Human rights organizations documented numerous allegations of ill-treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers and substandard conditions in detention facilities.

In July 2018, the government adopted the *Regulation on Integration of Refugees*, however, this fell short of providing an effective mechanism for integration. According to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, the Regulation failed to address the persistent problem of unco-operative municipalities or to propose measures to create more favourable conditions for integration in local communities. It also failed to address the gaps in refugees' access to social housing, family benefits for children or language training, which limited their enjoyment of social and economic rights.

The government issued an order restricting freedom of movement for registered asylum-seekers. Adopted in September, it imposed territorial limits for asylum-seekers in refugee centres, prohibiting them from moving out of prescribed areas.

Reception conditions for unaccompanied refugee and migrant children still remained inadequate.

The authorities lacked developed systems for early identification, assessment and referral mechanisms for unaccompanied children.

Hate speech and hate crimes continued, directed at minority groups, including Turks and Roma; refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants remained vulnerable to violence and harassment. Discriminatory or xenophobic statements were made during the campaign for parliamentary elections held in March 2017, by candidates and political parties as

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<sup>6</sup>Amnesty International report 2017/18 - The state of the world's human rights, © Amnesty International 2018 (Published in 2018) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/bulgaria/report-bulgaria/>

well as by the coalition of far-right parties, the Patriotic Front, which gained enough seats to enter the government.

The overview of the information sources shows a lot of evidences that the widespread discrimination against Roma is still an issue in all aspects of life, including education, health care, housing and employment.

## 2.2 Children and stereotypes on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities

The section is based on the information from the audit in migration, sustainability and Development education in the framework of *“Developing capacities together: European CSO-university networks for global learning on migration, security and sustainable development in an interdependent world” (InterCap) - Nov 2017 – Oct 2020.*<sup>7</sup>

Main conclusions:

- ✓ Most of the Bulgarians have positive attitudes towards Westerns, Americans and Russians, but have extremely negative attitude against people who look for refuge because of the war conflicts in the Middle East. According to common opinion Bulgarians were not prepared to meet the migrants from one side and from the other there’s an information lack of the benefits of migrants’ inclusion. Driver of this opinion is media who represents migrants as a threat.
- ✓ Insecurity is widely spread in the Bulgarian society and the penetration of migrants (often on religious basis) flow from Africa, Asia to Europe leads to uncertainty in the communication. Main fears and negative attitudes are driven from previous unsuccessful attempts of Roma integration and social inclusion. There’s also a threat that long term immigration would significantly change the ethnic and religious structure of the population which would threaten stability and existence of the country in principle.
- ✓ Being a transit country, Bulgarians don’t fear so much that migrants will replace them at the labor market. More significant reason is the threat of potential crimes for each media “helps” a lot drawing such a picture, emitting negative messages about the migrants.

There’s definitely a need of more educational and raising awareness activities and more positive messages. When discussing stereotypes with regard to ethnicity 6 main groups are described below in comparison with Bulgarians: Armenians, Bulgarian, Jews, Pomaks, Roma, Turks. Stereotypes based on ethnic diversity is very well represented in a publication done by Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Project “Developing capacities together: European CSO-university networks for global learning on migration, security and sustainable development in an interdependent world (InterCap) “- Activity 1.1.1: Audit on migration, sustainability and development education, Bulgaria national report on migration, sustainability and development education -, Written and compiled by EURO-training (Contact person: Christomir Zafirov, christozaf@yahoo.com, +359899109088) – <https://www.developogether.eu/documents/outputs/national-audit-reports/Bulgaria.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Deyan Kolev, Teodora Krumova, Alexey Pamporov, Daniel Radulescu, Sebastiaan van der Zwaan, Tayfun Balcik “Beyond anti-Roma Stereotypes: the World is not Just White and Black”, pages 77 -130, © ACTAPTA – 2013 ( Project “To Touch the Untouchable:

**The Armenians:** usually seen as tricky and intelligent hardworking jewelers or traders, rich but misers. Due to the occupation of particular famous people with Armenian origin in Bulgaria, some solitary instances such as “culinary”, “ear for music” and “art” appear. The Armenians are usually perceived as an “other” (i.e. not “our”) community.

**Bulgarians** are (self-) seen as hardworking, intelligent, tolerant, and hospitable, but poor and envious.

**The Jews** – in stereotypical aspect they are look quite similar to Armenians. They are considered as money-lenders, which are knit together and having distinct religion. Jews are very often associated with the Holocaust (although the Bulgarian Jews were saved during the WWII) that is corresponding to the “tortured people”.

**The Pomaks** are Bulgarian speaking Muslim group. In fact, they do not have an official status of an ethnic group and in many censuses are considered being Bulgarians. However, they live concentrated in two regions of the country and non-officially the local population considers them as having different ethnicity. In fact, as a population size, they are the third biggest ethnic minority group after Turks and Roma. At a national level there is only one extremely shared stereotype about the Pomaks – they are hardworking people. Due to their religious affiliation, associations are made about the Islam that also explain another stereotype – about the traditional clothing (shulwars, yashmak, kerchief). However, the Pomaks do not look as the dangerous as the other because they are considered to be good-natured, humble, honest and hospitable. In fact, the stereotype image of the Pomaks is a very positive one.

The stereotyped image of **Roma** people is set up to the opposite side. Roma are described as criminals, lazy, dirty, liars, and uneducated. They are irresponsible, but they love music (as the only positive stereotype, related to their revelers image). Roma people have many children. The doctors and social workers share the stereotype that Roma are ill-mannered (here recorded: ill-mannered, insolent, rude, arrogant, and boor). This appear on the relevant places but are not going to be subject of a profound analysis. Some more: Roma enjoy privileges; are susceptible to commit a crime; cannot trust or rely on Roma; are lazy and irresponsible; Roma value low the education; all Roma are very much alike; Roma must live apart and do not mix with Bulgarians and Turks. A special attention is paid to stereotypes about institutional integration: **the role of the Roma leaders** (they are blamed for the non-integration, but others state that nothing could happens without the informal authority of a given community); **the role of Evangelic churches** - after 1989, there was a boom of Evangelic churches into the Roma neighborhoods (mainly Pentecostal denominations and Adventists of the Seventh day). The preachers and lead singers/musicians became very influential and reputable into the local communities and therefore, may be regarded as part of the Roma leaders; **the role of Islam schools** - parallel with the boom of the Evangelic denominations, an

establishment of dozens of Islam clerical schools in the regions with higher proportion of Muslim population was observed; **the role of educational standards** - among the Roma pupils in Bulgaria is observed an extremely high dropout rate as well as quite a high non enrolment rate – stereotypical statements: “Roma value low the education”, “they are lazy” and “irresponsible” , “they have lower intellectual capacity”, dropouts because of poverty, of early marriages; **the role of natural talents** - there is a stereotype that Roma people have a natural talent about music and rhythm; **the role of mother tongue** - insufficient language competence of Roma. Stereotypes about the Roma women - case of inner vulnerability within a vulnerable group: high illiteracy rate, higher risk of school dropout, higher risk of unemployment, totally dependable; give childbirths in order to receive social benefits.

Stereotypes towards **the Turks**: hardworking, Islam, and knit together. Probably due to their Muslim identification and predominant rural residence, there are some stereotypes about Turks, which are very similar to ones about the Pomaks: good-natured, honest, hospitable, traditional clothing, specific Turkish culinary (baklava, delight, cafe, kadaif, and duner-kebab).

The strongest fears in the Bulgarian society are connected with the difference in cultural and religious traditions. At the same time there is an increase of those who state that doesn't fear refugees (10% in 2017 and 17% in 2018) and a decrease in the shared fears in comparison to 2017 as follows:<sup>9</sup>

- Refugees might bring crime – from 60% in 2017 to 42,8% in 2018
- Refugees will spread their cultural and religious beliefs – from 48% in 2017 to 42,7% in 2018
- Refugees might spread disease – 39% in 2017 to 35,8% in 2018
- Refugees might take our jobs – from 25, 7% in 2017 to 13% in 2018.

### 3. Representation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities

Representation is based on two diametrically opposite opinions from overwhelmingly polite to hostile but in both cases as conflicted.

Bulgaria is located in the South Eastern corner of the European Union, being one of the gates into Europe along the Balkan and the East Mediterranean migration routes. Very often the migration is seen as a threat, rather than a driving force for sustainable development. There is a need of raising awareness actions to change the negative prejudices about the migration processes and to connect them with the sustainable development.

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<sup>9</sup> UNHCR Survey on public attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria 2018, [https://www.unhcr.org/bg/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/04/UNHCR\\_Survey\\_2018\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/bg/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/04/UNHCR_Survey_2018_EN.pdf)

In the autumn of 2013, Bulgaria was the subject of unpredictable and unmanageable refugee flows from the Middle East and mainly from Syria, torn apart by a military conflict with elements of civil, ethnic and religious war. The Republic of Bulgaria proved to be unprepared to meet more than 7,000 human beings seeking protection, food and shelter.

According to a nationally representative survey of the sociological agency Alpha Research (Alpha Research, 2015), conducted on 5–7 September 2015, many Bulgarians (63 %) believe that the refugee wave is a danger for the country. The vast majority of the respondents (89 %) think that Bulgarian state has to fight with the people smugglers and 82 % supports strengthening the border fence. The results indicate that there is strong support for restrictive measures. At the same time, the study indicated greater acceptance of social measures to improve the work of social institutions to ensure better conditions for refugees – 75 %. 44.5 % of the respondents were in favour of the need for coordination between a Bulgarian and European asylum policy. 11% demand a complete closure of borders. Opposite option – to accept refugees without restrictions – was approved by 3.7 % of the respondents. The release of additional money from the state budget for refugees was not supported by the Bulgarian society. According to the survey results, 63 % of the respondents support quotas to distributions of the migrants and 34 % are opposed. The survey registered growth of the fears, extreme sensitivity to political speeches and solutions, radicalization of public opinion, but within the institutional alternatives. The refugees continue to be perceived as “mass”. A study of Alpha Research for the years 2012 and 2013 indicated the refugees were rather unknown, misunderstood, with a negative image in Bulgarian public opinion. The main concerns about the refugees have been associated with rising crime, diseases and infections.

Concerning a research made by Trend agency in Bulgaria, in October 2017 (Trend agency, 2017) the Bulgarians remains highly sceptical about the admission of refugees and migrants to their territory. Moreover, there is no difference in the attitude towards refugees and economic migrants from the Middle East and in both cases just over 80 % of all respondents believe that they should not be allowed on the territory of the country.

Concerning the attitude to the refugees and people searching for protection in Bulgaria, the results show that local people's direct contacts with refugees and people seeking protection are diminishing as well as public awareness of refugees compared to the beginning of the intensified migratory flow in 2013. In 2017, 93.2% of Bulgarians say they have never had a contact with a refugee, while in 2013 they were 81%. There is also a significant drop (from 84% in 2013 to 54% in 2017) in the proportion of people who have come upon news or stories about refugees (UNHCR, 2018). Considering the

lack of direct contact with refugees and people seeking protection, the media is the main source of information for Bulgarians and a major factor in forming opinion. Television is the leading source of information (94%), internet (20%), conversations with friends and acquaintances (19%), printed media (11%), social media (7%), and radio (7%) (UNHCR, 2018).

There is no understanding of who needs protection. As a whole, Bulgarians perceive anyone coming to the country outside the European Union as an illegal migrant without clearly realizing the difference between migrants and people seeking protection.

Reflection on different levels: **NGO** (although most active part in raising awareness), **national and local levels** (need of a comparable statistics, analyses, research, opinion polls; need of activities both targeted the society – public discussions, legislative changes, form of civil control, action plans and immigrants – a need of capacity building of employees who are directly engaged); **business** (priorities related to employment, involvement of the immigrants in the economy, considering immigrants as a commercial and cultural channel – favorable environment for doing business and hiring people from the target group); **local municipalities** (raise awareness activities, support of civic education, mediation, inform community at all); **educational institutions** (problems with limited access to education, citizenship and opportunities for political participation, adequate trainings); **research areas** (lack of interference with other stakeholders, results should be widely spread without any dependencies and populism from the political parties).

### 3.1 Media representation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities – framing and narratives

The role of the mass media is very sufficient mainly in influencing public and elite political attitudes towards asylum and migration. The mass media set agendas and frame debates. They provide the information, which citizens use to make sense of the world and their place within it. In Bulgaria often refugees and migrants are named negatively as a problem, rather than a benefit to host society. However, it is also true that, on occasion, media can have positive impacts on public attitudes and policy. People very often learn about migration or “migration crisis” from the media, where the refugees are found that present either as a victim of violated human rights, with fates of war-fledged and genocidal fugitives, or at the other extreme, as threatening security and a big issue for the host country.

A small part of the Bulgarian society has a direct daily contact with foreigners in order to be able to build up a personal judgment and mind-set. Therefore, the main source for information that forms opinion and leads to taking certain position, appear to be the media. For this reason, their role is of a great importance. Usually, in order to draw the attention of the public, they somewhat overexpose the topic with the threat of the refugee crisis or they simply turn into an uncritical platform for racial and xenophobic

standpoints. The main instrument for spreading hate messages towards migrants is **television. Internet** is the second significant media, especially amongst the youth and

the educated (Project TAL, 2014). Analysis (Gancheva, V., 2015) of over 8400 online publications, done by the Association of the European Journalists, has found that a refugee has been presented as a thread, illness, danger. Only some 20 % of the articles pay attention to the Syrian society and culture. In the forums, social networks and mostly in comments under news and reports on different news websites can be found the aggressive and hostile language towards the “others”. The arsenal, usually used, is made of qualifications like “spawns”, “scum”, “mass murderers”... According to D-r Vyara Gancheva, sociologist and professor at the Faculty of Journalism of Sofia University St. Climent Ohridski, the advantage of the haters in the net space is that they are anonymous and to a great extent they can't be punished (Evdokieva, R., 2015).

To sum up, the prejudices and manifestations of intolerant inclinations towards the migrants, can be overcome through education, upbringing, social politics, equal access to quality education, health care and social assistance. Therefore, more raising awareness actions are needed at different levels. More projects have to be performed with trainings and spreading information on these global topics.

### 3.1.1 Misinformation, myths, fake news about migrants in the media online and offline

The Bulgarian media<sup>10</sup> show a chronic tendency to dehumanize Roma people, who are usually the first to be blamed for most public woes. Since “the refugee issue” took a central position on the media agenda in Bulgaria in September 2013, the media have helped create another representation of the enemy, namely the refugee.

Over the past five years, the statements against refugees have been much more visible and presented in a more understandable language than the statements in their support or in their interest. The media have consistently provided a platform to people using hate speech, and this nasty language has in turn replaced the sensible and expert talk about refugees-related matters. The speculative and almost always incompetent talk about “refugees”, the exploitation of human stereotypes and biases, the conflation of refugees and terrorists, and the lack of a clear distinction between the terms “refugee” and “immigrant” have gradually put the figure of the refugee on the same footing as the traditional epitome of the enemy in the Bulgarian media, the Roma. The refugee has thus emerged as another enemy in the Bulgarian society. According to polling agency Sova Harris, in the beginning of 2016, 60% of the Bulgarian citizens considered the

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<sup>10</sup> Theodor Spassov (AEJ-Bulgaria), Representation of Roma, refugees, and expats in Bulgarian online media during the 2017 election campaign, 11/05/2017. This text is part of AEJ-Bulgaria's project “Mediator 2: A Bridge Between Ethical Journalism and the Society”, supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation.

refugees a threat to national security. A total of 387 communication units published between 6 March 2017 and 19 March 2017 have been monitoring.

According to the number of stories containing the words “refugee(s)/(im)migrant(s)” and “Roma” or “Gypsy/Gypsies”, the five media outlets rank as follows: First place: Pik.bg (104 stories); Second place: Blitz.bg (100 stories); Third place: Novini.bg (61); Fourth place: Dnes.bg (48 stories); Fifth place: Vesti.bg (20 stories). The words “Roma” and “Gypsy” appear in headlines in Vesti.bg (fifth place) 10 times less often than in headlines in Blitz.bg (second place). Dnes.bg (fourth place) is the only media of the five outlets that did not use the word “Gypsy”, which is considered inappropriate. The only headline in the present study which uses “Roma/Gypsies” in a positive context is “Gypsies are the fathers of flamenco”, published in Vesti.bg. The only headline in which one of the terms “refugee(s)/(im)migrant(s) is used in a positive context is “Six years later: Japan’s nuclear refugees in oblivion”, published in Dnes.bg.

The hypothesis is that the topic “refugees” appeared in the media during the 2017 parliamentary election campaign more often than the topic “Roma”, while disproving the other two hypotheses. At the same time, it reveals that in at least one of the media the negative associations in relation to Roma in the headlines are much more prominent than the negative associations with regard to the refugees.

According to the number of stories containing the words “Turks/expats”, the five media outlets rank as follows: First place: Pik.bg (39 stories); Second place: Novini.bg (21 stories); Third place: Vesti.bg (19 stories); Fourth place: Blitz.bg and Dnes.bg (16 stories each). The hypothesis that the term “Turks/expats” appeared more often in the Bulgarian media during the election campaign than the terms “Roma” and “refugees/migrants” was confirmed in the case of only one of the five media outlets, namely Vesti.bg. In four of the five media outlets, the term “Turks/expats” appeared more often than the term “Roma/Gypsy”. The exception is Blitz.bg, where the term “Turks/expats” appears the least often. The hypothesis that references to the Bulgarian expats in Turkey appeared in the Bulgarian media more often in the period 20-24 March 2017 than in the period 6-19 March 2017 was confirmed in all five cases.

**The Association of European Journalists (AEJ)** has prepared a position on countering the “fake news” phenomenon. During the AEJ annual congress in Vilnius in November 2017, Irina Nedeva – President of AEJ - Bulgaria was appointed as a special representative of the organization in the field of fake news and disinformation. AEJ’s position on the problem has been filed as a part of a public consultation, organized by the European Commission.

As a part of the Commission’s initiative, on March 12, 2018 the European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel received a report, prepared by a high-level working group which studies possible measures related to fake news.

Fake news can come in different kind of categories: *“defamatory and spurious claims or bogus 'facts' that cannot be backed up by credible sources; half-truths or malicious*

*smears intended to incite populist displays of anger or aggression; arbitrary or vexatious allegations against individuals or entities that amount to bullying, harassment or threats of harm; minors who are targeted or subjected to such material should be protected from deception, humiliation and all forms of exploitation. Fake news also takes the form of partial (titles like “Shock”, “Bomb” etc.) or sensational items of information or rumour that are calculated to arouse strong opinions or antipathy but cannot be fact-checked; claims made by politicians especially at times of elections or political tensions that are at variance with objectively proven evidence. It includes photographs that actually relate to other times or locations but which are falsely and deliberately attributed to current events; images and videos aimed at persuading viewers to a particular conclusion in order to deceive or to falsely influence opinions or judgements; imaginary or fantastic claims made to seem to give credence to a particular narrative”* (Association of European Journalists<sup>11</sup>). Concerns of fake news: dangerous political instrumentalization for self-promotion of politicians, undermining democratic values, control and spread propaganda, etc.

One of the General conclusions in the recent Survey on public attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria 2018<sup>12</sup> show that “There is a significant increase of the impact of Internet and social media as a source of information about refugees”. And one of the reason for sure is that “most Bulgarians have never met a refugee” – in 2013 81% declared that, while in 2017 this share became 92,4%. Television is with 91% the main source of information according to the same survey, followed by the Internet (30%), friends/acquaintances (10%), press 16%, social networks (21%) and radio (11%).

### **3.1.2 Representation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ethnic minorities in the public discourse**

ECRI<sup>13</sup> (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) notes that the situation for asylum seekers and refugees has not improved since 5th monitoring cycle during last months of 2013 and that organised anti-migrant protests have sparked tensions between local residents and refugees. For example, in November 2016, riots broke out in the refugee reception centre in the town of Harmanli when quarantine measures were put in place, reportedly to stop the spread of infectious diseases following complaints from locals.

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<sup>11</sup> Irina Nedeva , Fake News and Disinformation Target Democratic Freedoms, 11/03/2018, <http://www.aej-bulgaria.org/eng/p.php?post=2647&c=288>.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, 2018 [https://www.unhcr.org/bg/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/04/UNHCR\\_Survey\\_2018\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/bg/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/04/UNHCR_Survey_2018_EN.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance ) Report 2017, published on 16 May 2017 - <https://rm.coe.int/interim-follow-up-conclusions-on-bulgaria-5th-monitoring-cycle/16808b55f2>

In view of the high levels of intolerance for asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria, the authorities have to take urgent action. In its fifth report, ECRI noted that booklets and

Information leaflets about the Anti-Discrimination Act were only available in Bulgarian and some in English, and that the only language permitted for filing complaints was Bulgarian. ECRI was concerned that this hindered access to justice of the most vulnerable groups in the country. Since then, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) has provided information relating to dissemination of information, the work of regional offices, and various projects and trainings. However, no mention was made about information produced and disseminated in the various languages used in the country. “In the media<sup>14</sup> and on Internet, expressions of racism and xenophobia against foreigners, Turks and Muslims are commonplace, as is abusive language when referring to Roma”. ECRI has expressed its worries for the “open anti-Roma campaign [...] being waged by the media in which Roma are presented as a demographic threat to Bulgaria”. The 2016 U.S. Department of State report on human rights practices in Bulgaria confirms that “[t]he marginalization of and societal intolerance towards the Romani minority remained the country’s most pressing human rights problem.” And the report expressed concern at “the use of racist, xenophobic, and inflammatory rhetoric throughout the election campaign”.

The primary targets of hostility and hate speech by nationalist parties during electoral campaigns (Bulgarian presidential election in 2016 and parliamentary election 2017) were Roma and Syrian migrants. According to the US Human Rights State Department report and the Sofia Globe, the Bulgarian media used discriminatory and abusive language to describe Roma and other minorities, incl. migrants. Extreme nationalist parties such as Ataka and the Patriotic Front based their political campaigns on strong anti-Roma, anti-Turkish, anti-Semitic and anti -migrants slogans and rhetoric.

#### Key words and the image of refugees and migrants<sup>15</sup>

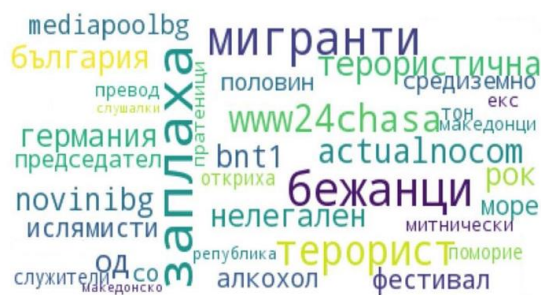
The selected words are present in a sizeable portion of all comments and posts during 2016. Key words (migrants, refugees, threat, Islam, etc.) share out of the total number of comments is 24%. It varies from 8% for Blitz.bg (164 out of 2,016 posts) to 65% in Novini.bg (2, 499 out of 3,838 posts). At the same time, the media content related to refugees and migrants is less than 7% of the total media content. The topic therefore has the potential to be of high interest to the viewership/readership and to provoke online verbal reactions.

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<sup>14</sup> European Roma Rights Center Concerning Bulgaria , Written submission by (To the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, for consideration at its 92nd Session (24 April - 12 May 2017)

<sup>15</sup> Authors/contributors: Denitza Lozanova, Sofia Development Association Sevdalina Voynova, Sofia Development Association Snezhina Gabova, Sofia Development Association Svetlana Lomeva, Sofia Development Association, Report “Mapping out the national context of Online Hate Speech in Bulgaria” Compiled under the Coalition of Positive Messengers to Counter Online Hate Speech Project, Ref, No JUST/2015/PRAC/AG/BEST/8931, Sofia2017 –

[https://positivemessengers.net/images/library/pdfs/OHS-report\\_Bulgaria-eng\\_form.pdf](https://positivemessengers.net/images/library/pdfs/OHS-report_Bulgaria-eng_form.pdf)



The wordcloud with the selected key words and the words most frequently associate with shows that the most often used collocation is “refugees” and “threat”, followed by “terrorist” and related words, “illegal” and “Islamists”. Additionally, the wordcloud shows three other lines of semantic units: geographical – where the refugees/threat come from (“Mediterranean (sea)”, “customs”, “Macedonia”, “Pomorie”); geopolitical – one of the reasons for the refugee crisis (“Germany”), and media outlets as sources of information regarding stories containing the key words. A deeper systematic examination of the connections and relationships between “refugees” and the rest of the key words demonstrates three major semantic clusters: The above cluster shows the association of the word “refugees” with health hazards: medical, treatment, Afghani, send back, etc. Due to the difficult and sometimes catastrophic travelling and living conditions of refugees, they raise the fear of the host population of spreading diseases. In some cases local propaganda traps set by politicians helps this trend with unproven claims and even blockades of refugee camps. In addition, the recommended by the World Health Organization vaccination for refugees is also controversial since a few years ago the Bulgarians experiences a shortage of vaccines that stirred significant public dissatisfaction. A second semantic cluster is formed around words related to threat and terrorism concerns: terrorist (noun and adjective), threat, act, evidence. Words that engage in this cluster are also related to political establishment (“minister”), to public events and gatherings of large number of people (“rock festival”). The cluster reflects the perception, though analytically and statistically unfounded, that terrorists take advantage of refugee flows to carry out acts of terrorism, or that refugees are somehow more prone to radicalization than others. The third semantic cluster is more or less fact based, reporting on stories and occurrences, sometimes laced with humanity, empathy and a focus on the suffering of those involved. It suggests detailed neutral reporting with words like “migrants”, “policemen”, “disappeared”, “saved”.

The largest online hate starters, i.e. trigger/mobilization incidents and events, are the incidents in which refugees and immigrants are (are presented as) perpetrators. Facebook (FB) is perceived to be the most used online media. Twitter doesn’t seem to be hugely popular in Bulgaria. Probably due to language limitation, there is little opportunity for cross-border interaction (retweets, shares). The volume of tweets using

the specific keywords was limited and the national twitter spheres do not synchronize around refugee related issues or events. Facebook however is not only the most popular social media in Bulgaria with 45% of the population (3.3 million) national users but also seems to provide a best environment for the refugee and migrant related news and comments, including online hate speech. Facebook is very accessible. 78.78% of its Bulgarian users access it through their mobile phones and check it 45 times a day at the average. That is why media outlets develop their Facebook profiles. Despite the no-hate-speech self-regulation policy of Facebook, introduced over an year ago, allowing users to report hateful content and Facebook administrators to remove it, hateful Facebook comments during the two monitored periods in 2016 and 2017 at moments reached epidemic scale. A new research of the Bulgarian Academy of Science (June 2017) demonstrates that 2/3 of the Bulgarians – mostly the youngest, 18-25 year olds - believe hate speech is part of the freedom of speech and should therefore be tolerated and not reported and/or sanctioned. The analysis also explored how news media are managing conversations with their audiences in an increasingly toxic online environment and identifies the readers' forums as risky spaces for online hate speech. The analysis faced the abusive tone and poor quality of many online conversations, which could be equally offensive and hateful as some Facebook ones.

To summarize:

- The image of migrants in the media and social media is dynamic and shifts over time. It is moving in the direction of dehumanization, dominated by a narrow range of negative arguments with less coverage of any positive aspects. The arguments increasingly cluster around geopolitics and trafficking, as well as national security, public order and welfare.
- The media coverage of migrant and refugee related themes and events show some problems with accuracy, distortion, use of stereotypes in language, sensational appeal. Though such editorial policies may foster readership/viewership increase in the short run, they result in increasing the gap between perception and reality and discarding the democratic functions of the press: to inform, to scrutinize, to investigate and to hold power accountable. Journalists and editors need to understand that just because someone says something outrageous that does not make it news.
- The true opinion maker and leader is more an more the internet, and not the media outlets. The refugee and migrant theme receives thousands of interpretations and contexts in the internet and they muffle the media reactions. An offensive facebook comment by a well-known politician can completely hijack the media coverage of an event.
- The media therefore maintains additional internet spaces – facebook and readers' forums, for the content of which they are not legally liable, where reader-generated content is encouraged, it is not moderated and in result online hate speech proliferates and has a lasting presence.

### 3.2 Children, media and migration

As far as children aspect is concerned the main direction is towards the educational system and the education status of refugees and asylum seekers. What characterizes the migrant children: different linguistic culture, parents who do not know Bulgarian and this prevents them from helping the kids with their school work. These children enjoy the same right of access to education granted to Bulgarian children. Education is also free for them as for the Bulgarian students. There are a number of problems considering the existing procedure for school enrollment of RASC as well as existing practices of (no) schooling to unaccompanied RASC. Educational integration of RASC is organized in two stages: preparation for school enrollment and integration into public school system. Both stages involve different stakeholders. The 1<sup>st</sup> stage is responsibility of State Agency for Refugees (SAR) and Bulgarian Red Cross, and for the integration - Ministry of Education and SAR. A lot of good practices can be pointed here – a set of practical information materials (leaflets, brochures, TV spots), summer camps. Regarding a recent information from SAR last year in Sofia 144 refugee kids (in Sofia) have been enrolled in public school, 9 kids in kindergartens. In one of the camps people are proud of the fact that a refugee kid won a recent regional History of Bulgaria competition. Regarding representation of children in media, incl. RASC Unicef Bulgaria initiated a campaign “**Children and the media. Mission: Ethnical Reporting**”. There’s a special section on “Children of Minority of Foreign Origin”<sup>16</sup>

## 4. Responses to the phenomenon and good practice

### 4.1 Remedies and good practices against discrimination, against misinformation on migration and fake news in general

**Remedies to combat hate speech**<sup>17</sup>: ensure that corrections are to be displayed with the same impact as the original falsehood, children at school should be educated in critical thinking, taught methods of dissecting stories, they have to learn how to check facts and to be encouraged to expose lies without fear of reprisals even if it goes against the grain of the societies they live in. Acc. to AEJ, “*Over the last two years we see that the public opinion has been impacted by fake news mostly in the areas of Political affairs (e.g. elections), Immigration policies (e.g. refugees), Minorities (e.g. religious, ethnic,*

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<sup>16</sup> Contributors: Alexandra Krasteva, journalist at bTV Daniel Kiryakov, Public Relations specialist Evelina Pavlova, journalist at Radio FM+ Georgi Apostolov, expert at Safe Internet Center Irina Nedeva, journalist at the Bulgarian National Radio Maria Milkova, journalist at Nova Television Maria Cherneva, journalist at the Bulgarian National Television Nikolay Doychinov, photo reporter Oleg Popov, photo reporter Ognyan Penev, videographer Rossen Boshev, journalist at “Capital” newspaper Simona Veleva, lawyer Tsveta Brestnichka, expert at “Parents Association” Vessela Banova, child psychotherapist Children and the media. A guidebook on ethnical reporting, Unicef – Sofia 2018  
<https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/sites/unicef.org.bulgaria/files/2018-05/Children-and-the-media-a-guidebook-on-ethical-reporting.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Irina Nedeva, Fake News and Disinformation Target Democratic Freedoms, 11/03/2018,  
<http://www.aej-bulgaria.org/eng/p.php?post=2647&c=288>

*sexual orientation) and less in the areas of Personal life of public figures (e.g. politicians), Showbiz and entertainment, and bank and financial services”.*

Journalists in the AEJ have adopted various practices in our media organisations and individual output but we share the same commitment to the well-tried rules for checking information sources and their credibility. Mainly we rely on codes of practice issued by respected authorities including journalists' unions, public service media guidelines and the Ethical Journalism Network. All the working journalists within the AEJ adhere to the traditional guidelines of checking before publication or broadcast. The key points are: Never take story at face value -- especially if it comes from an unknown or untested source. If in doubt, leave it out and find out!; fact-checking (human fact checkers) and peer review processes should be encouraged within media organizations and flagging by trusted flaggers is generally preferable and more reliable than flagging by users. At the same time social media and platforms should make the automated content verification tools available to their audiences.

The audiences in general are not sufficiently aware of the steps to take to check the veracity of news when reading and sharing news online (e.g. check sources, compare sources, check whether claims are backed by facts). AEJ recommends to the European Commission measures and resources to strengthen the media literacy and critical thinking of the audiences. Awareness of the issue and the danger of the fake news should be widely understood and explained.

*Audiences should be made aware that they need to: “check the sources; to identify and know about the owners of media outlets and websites; to look for the publicly announced links to the ethical code of the media; to see if there are references to sources and if sources are clearly identified and can be verified; to check if the pictures or texts have been published on the internet before and to establish their origin and to what they could be attributed. We are an organisation formed by national sections where individual journalists are taking part voluntary. In some of our sections we have websites where we regularly post information about disinformation content. For instance, this topic is crucial for AEJ Bulgaria and we publish many articles on the topic, and recently held two conferences on Fake news ourselves - one on national and one on international level”.*

AEJ recommends connecting similar activities among the network of the International AEJ where examples from Fact-checking platforms may be re-published and journalistic efforts could be combined to tackle the Fake news phenomenon. All articles posted come from known sources whose integrity we value. Concerning what should be done to reduce the spread of disinformation online AEJ proposes the following steps:

- *Creating awareness of the danger;*
- *Encouraging critical reading and critical consumption of information.*

Every stakeholder, incl. online platform, media shops, advertisers and media owners should develop standards to combat fake news and to keep them.

### Remedies to combat discrimination:

- Empowerment<sup>18</sup> of Roma and migrants<sup>19</sup> - to gain knowledge about their fundamental rights and freedoms
- Inclusion of migrants: REST approach, consisting of workshops, coaching support, internet platform and validation - Project REST (Refugee Employment Support and Training) - <https://rest-eu.org/read-more/>
- Inclusion of stakeholders (teacher, kids, parents)
- Cultural and peer-learning approaches (CPLA) for successful integration of disadvantage youth and refugees at school level – CULPEER Project - [www.culpeer.eu](http://www.culpeer.eu)
- Combating antigypsism through human rights education – Roma Youth Action Plan
- Support migrants to gain knowledge in local language - Job Language Kit for Migrants - <http://workit-project.eu/products/good-practices/>
- Organizing community events aiming at inclusion and engagement of all migrant groups, including women and young men but also children and whole families. They address the challenges in the area of inter-cultural dialogue and cultural participation as well as in the participation in local public life: overcoming the lack of events for interaction with local communities, overcoming cultural barriers.
- Involving of local voluntary mentors which meet young refugees on regular base and they talked in an informal settings over issues of common interest, like sport, music, history, etc.
- Capacity building of police officers in prevention and combating aggressive acts in society, corruption and radicalization – good practices against misinformation on migration and fake news
- Social mediation - The social mediators supporting asylum seekers and beneficiaries are selected among other migrants, beneficiaries, family members of mixed marriages, foreigners with permitted residence in the country and Bulgarian citizens who are fluent in the most commonly used languages by those seeking protection and familiar with the culture of the countries where the largest groups applying for refugee or humanitarian status come from. Social mediators play an extremely important role in the cultural orientation and integration of newcomers in the country.

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<sup>18</sup> Final Report, Increasing Roma Inclusion via the EEA and Norway Grants: Results from Romania and Bulgaria Rapid Assessment report Final Report, 01 August 2017

<sup>19</sup> Jacek Kucharczyk and Grigorij Mesežnikov, Phantom Menace The Politics and Policies of Migration in Central Europe”

## Good practices

- Multi Kulti Collective (MKC) - <http://multikulti.bg/#up> is one of the leading Bulgarian not-for-profit organizations working on migrant and refugee integration, community development and human rights since 2011. It operates both on grass-root and policy level to achieve bigger impact and social change both nationally and European. It also works as a social enterprise that has been empowering migrants since 2013 through offering and promoting their culinary services to individuals, cultural institutes, small and big companies.
  - Coalition of Positive Messengers to Counter Online Hate Speech Project - <https://www.positivemessengers.net/en/>
  - RACCOMBAT project - <http://raccombat-project.eu> presents collection gathers 15 promising practices from various EU Member States in the area of including fundamental rights knowledge and empowerment against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance into the overall integration process of non-nationals throughout the Union. Practices come from integration systems of very different level of development and are varied in their nature – from private company driven efforts to meet government requirements, concerning integration curricula, to citizen initiatives having found some form of institutionalization. What unites them all is the concern of institutions, NGOs and individuals that migrants should be given more than basic education, jobs and healthcare – a true sense of citizenship and readiness to counter negative social phenomena, related to hatred.
    - Institute of Psychology at Ministry of Interior – Project “Capacity building of expertise of police officers in prevention and combating of aggressive acts in society, corruption and radicalization”, Ref. BG05SFOP001-2.004-0003-C01/27.12.2016.
    - TV documentary production “Small stories from the Roma world” shown on the Bulgarian National TV 1 (BNT1), awarded the prestigious CIVIS MEDIA PRIZE (2014) for unbiased reporting on interethnic issues and human rights – author a blind Roma journalist Kremena Budinova.
    - The project “M.E.N.T.O.R.S” (implemented by Arethe Youth and supported by the NGO Fund of the EEA Grants in Bulgaria) aimed at achieving higher educational, professional and personal development of young Roma.
    - Training program for children, parents and teachers against hate speech and discrimination: project “Children, parents and teachers against hate speech and discrimination” EEA Grants<sup>20</sup>
    - Brief guidelines for integration and application of the "CULPEER" approach in schools<sup>21</sup>
    - A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide Second edition, 2017 - [www.coe.int/youth/roma](http://www.coe.int/youth/roma)
    - Mirrors – Manual on combating antigypsism through human rights education

<sup>20</sup> project ‘Children, parents and teachers against hate speech and discrimination’  
<https://www.safenet.bg/en/initiatives/251-children-teachers-parents>

<sup>21</sup> CULPEER Project - [www.culpeer.eu](http://www.culpeer.eu)

- Guide and exercise book “Teaching in tolerance” – Project BG051PO001-7.0.02 0004-C0001 ПРОЕКТ „УЧЕНЕ В ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТ “
  - Compendium “Good Practices in Roma Integration”- Project “Contribution to the Role of education – Educating Educators (CORE) “– Ref. N 357373-1-LLP-1-2011-BG-KA1-KA1NWR.
  - The project “To touch the Untouchable: Combating traditional and new anti-Roma stereotypes” / JUST/2010/FRAC/1108-30-CE-0377116/00-43 created and tested an effective model for overcoming anti-Roma stereotypes among teachers, doctors and social workers. Most probably, this model is also applicable for certain other groups of field workers.
  - Bread making for inclusion – The Bulgarian NGO International Council for Cultural Centers – Bread Houses Network Program – <https://www.breadhousesnetwork.org/>
  - Talk with me – Voluntary language mentors for young refugees Erasmus+ project "Talk with me: young voluntary language mentors for young refugees" was developed by three partner organisations: “Gemeinsam leben und lernen in Europa e. V.” (GLL) from Germany, “Tulip Foundation” from Bulgaria and “Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca” from Romania. - <https://voluntary-mentors.eu/>
  - Guidelines on Incorporating Tolerance and Mutual Respect in Language Tuition and Social Orientation of Refugees and Migrants – project “Preventing and Combating Racism and Xenophobia through Social Orientation of Non – Nationals – RACCOMBAT” – [www.raccombat-project.eu/good-practices-collection/](http://www.raccombat-project.eu/good-practices-collection/)
  - Teaching materials – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee – Guideline For Teachers - <https://www.unhcr.org/bg/%D1%83%D0%B5%D0%B1%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%A3%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%B1%D0%BD%D0%B8%20%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8>
  - “Children and the media. A guidebook on ethnical reporting’ <https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/sites/unicef.org/bulgaria/files/2018-05/Children-and-the-media-a-guidebook-on-ethical-reporting.pdf>
- Here is a set of successful projects that focus more on migrants, their integration and raising awareness among communities are performed from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Bulgaria (IOM Bulgaria, 2018):
- “Provision of information and counselling for voluntary return” - The programme assists undocumented third country nationals (TCNs) staying in Bulgaria. The project activities consist of providing information and counselling on possibilities for voluntary return to TCNs (Third Country Nationals), including rejected asylum seekers and persons provided with international protection.
  - “Integrated Border Management” - A cooperation program aiming to build the capacity of the government in border management is being implemented by IOM missions in Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria.
  - “Migrant Integration Programme” - Under its migrant integration programme,

IOM Sofia has established Integration Information Migration Centres in key locations in Bulgaria, which help migrants to successfully integrate into Bulgarian society. It has also conducted integration information days within the country targeting third country nationals residing legally in Bulgaria. A specialised integration website and specialised integration hotline was established.

- "Strengthening the National Capacity of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Field of Asylum and Migration" - the overall objective of the project is to focus on: improving reception conditions, in particular the provision of psycho-social and legal services; assistance to counter the trafficking of vulnerable migrants and protection for unaccompanied minors; providing information and advice to third-country nationals on the possibilities for voluntary return.

#### 4.2 Information sources about migration

- National Statistical Institute - <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6683/migration>
- State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers - <https://aref.government.bg/en>
- International Organization on Migration (Mission Bulgaria) - <https://www.iom.int/countries/bulgaria>
- United nations high commissioner for refugees (Office Bulgaria) - <https://www.unhcr.org/bg/>
- Open Society Institute – [www.osi.bg](http://www.osi.bg)
- Migration Policy Institute - <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/migration-information-source>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - <https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/>
- UNICEF - <https://www.unicef.org/eca/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children>
- Refugee - Migrant Service, Bulgarian Red Cross - <http://en.redcross.bg/activities/activities8>
- Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria - <http://crw-bg.org/>
- Center for the study of the democracy - <https://csd.bg/>
- FB Group “Уязвимите групи между гражданското общество и държавата” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/vulnerable.groups.Bulgaria/>
- Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants <http://www.bcrm-bg.org/en/events.html> ; <http://www.refugee-integration.bg/en/>
- European web site on integration Bulgaria - <https://www.facebook.com/EWSIBulgaria/>
- ECRI REPORT ON BULGARIA (fourth monitoring cycle), <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Bulgaria/BGR-CbC-IV-2009-002-ENG.pdf>
- Migration and migrant population statistics, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)

- FRA reports: Fundamental Rights Report 2016 (2016), <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications>
- UNHCR Survey on Public Attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria 2018 - [https://www.unhcr.org/bg/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/04/UNHCR\\_Survey\\_2018\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/bg/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/04/UNHCR_Survey_2018_EN.pdf)

## II. QUALITATIVE REPORT

### 1. Introduction

In a context where third country nationals are affected by the proliferation of misleading information and biased communication with discriminatory attitudes, young teenagers (11-14 years old) must be prepared to enter the online world with proper tools. To do so, the NEMO project intends to analyze the main forms of stereotypes and discriminative behaviors affecting young people and their families, in order to create an innovative and highly communicative toolkit for schools. This tool will be developed through factual data, interviews and images about migrants on the basis of the real discrimination patterns.

Below is the Bulgarian “input” in trying to understand and analyze the strongest driving opinions, views and activities behind the young teenagers’ behaviors.

#### 1.1 Methodology

The aims of this research are outlined within the NEMO project respective work package:

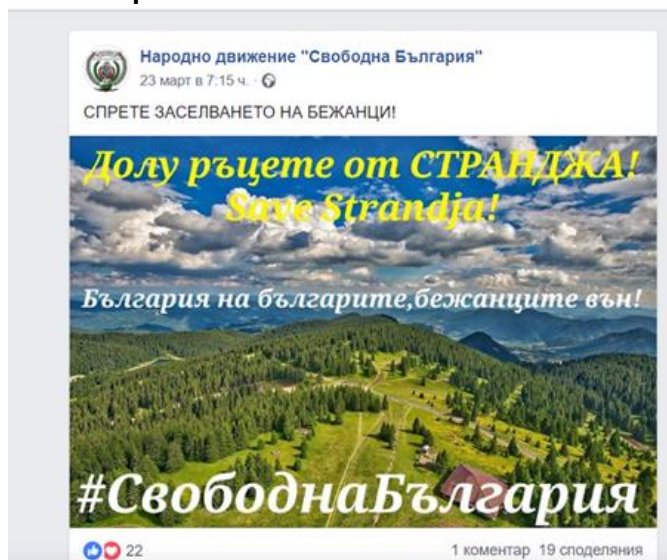
- To identify the main forms and manifestations of discrimination of third-country nationals
- To contribute to enlarge the current literature on the issue of fake news and its relationship with discrimination, in relation to a specific target, not well studied in literature, children aged 11-14.
- To gain a better understanding on the use of digital media by target groups in particular in relation to the diffusion of fake news and their capability to evaluate the quality of the sources
- To collect qualitative information on the level of awareness of target groups on misinformation on third country nationals, stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination and on their responses to the phenomenon
- To collect information in order to build a toolkit and a methodology that try to fix some of the main elements that will emerge by the analysis

In order to do so, all the partners, including the Bulgarian team of the “Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria” Association conducted a qualitative research using identical methodology and approach – and namely in-depth interviews as part of an Action Research approach.

“Action Research” is a reflective process, aimed at dealing with a specific issue. This implies that “research” usually is combined with “action”. Together with the community members- schools in this case, action researchers usually are engaged in solving the issues they have researched. Through the research both researcher and community gain a lot of knowledge about the issue.

The interviews with the Bulgarian participants were conducted in the period April – May 2019 in Sofia city, Bulgaria. Some of the interviews took place in the CRWB office; others were conducted on the school premises. The interviews comprise of questions regarding: access and use of Internet activities and skills; mediation and supervision by parents and teachers; view on subjective harm; understanding about fake news; view on stereotyping; prejudice and discrimination. At the end of each interview, the participants’ awareness towards online discrimination and stereotyping was tested via visual examples. Here are the examples which the Bulgarian research team initially gathered and used:

### Example 1:



### Translation from Bulgarian:

Facebook page: People’s movement “Free Bulgaria”

STOP THE COLONIZATION OF REFUGEES!

Hands down from Strandzha! (*a very beautiful Bulgarian mountain, nearby the Bulgarian-Turkish border*)

Save Strandzha!

Bulgaria for the Bulgarians! Refugees – out!

FREE BULGARIA!

## Example 2:

Начало България Свят Конспирации

Начало > България > БСП разкри коварния план на ГЕРБ за подмяна на българското население с...

БЪЛГАРИЯ

### БСП разкри коварния план на ГЕРБ за подмяна на българското население с мигранти

25.06.2018

Дарете ни 2

Share Facebook Twitter Google+ Pinterest



БСП разкри коварния план на ГЕРБ за подмяна на българското население с мигранти.

Българската социалистическа партия изпрати до медиите откъс от Националната стратегия в областта на миграцията, убежището и интеграцията 2015-2020 г. – изготвена от ГЕРБ.

В документа се вижда, че ГЕРБ имат план да подменят българското коренно население с мигранти от трети страни:

- Превръщане на миграцията и мобилността в позитивни фактори за развитие в икономически и демографски план;
- Успешно интегриране в българското общество на лицата, получили международна закрила и ефективното използване на техния потенциал за социално-икономическото развитие на страната;

## Translation from Bulgarian:

**The Bulgarian socialist's party revealed the insidious plan of the "GERB" party to replace the Bulgarian population with migrants.**

25.06.2018

The Bulgarian socialists party send to the media an excerpt from the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015-2020 - prepared by "GERB" party

It is obvious in the document that "GERB" has a plan to replace the local Bulgarian population with migrants from third countries:

- "Transforming migration and mobility in positive factors for economic and demographic development;
- Successful integration of persons, beneficiaries of international protection in the Bulgarian society and efficient use of their potential for the social and economic development of the country.
- Prevention and effective counteraction of the illegal immigration and trafficking in persons."

### Example 3:

петиции Вход | Регистрирайте се | Контакти

## вън сирийските уж бежанци

Препоръчване 0 | Споделяне

Петиция | Подписи 10 | Дискусия | Статистика | До

НАДЯВАМ СЕ ЧЕ ХОРАТА ПРОУМЯХА ЗА КАКВО ПРИЕХА В ДЪРЖАВАТА НИ СИРИЙЦИТЕ ТОВА СА ТЕРОРИСТИТЕ КОИТО ,ТУРЦИЯ НИ ВКАРА С ЦЕЛ ПАК ЧРЕЗ ТЯХ ДА НИ НАЛОЖАТ МЮСИЛМАНСКОТО СИ ВЕЛИЧИЕ .ПИТАМ ЗАЩО БОГАТИТЕ ДЪРЖАВИ -ГЕРМАНИЯ ,ФРАНЦИЯ ,АМЕРИКА И ДРУГИ КОИТО, ГИ СЪЖАЛЯВАТ НЕ ГИ ПРИЕМАТ. А НИ ГИ ПРАЩАТ НА НАС? БЪЛГАРИТЕ ГЛАДУВАТ ЗА НАС НЯМАШЕ ПАРИ ЗА ВДИГАНЕ НА ПЕНСИЙТЕ, ЗАПЛАТИТЕ, А ЗА ТЕЗИ ВЕДНАГА НАМЕРИХА .РЕДНО ЛИ Е СПОРЕД ВАС ?

#### Translation from Bulgarian:

Call for Petition:

#### So called Syrian refugees – out of here!

I hope that the people have come to their senses and they know why the Syrians were admitted in our country. These are the terrorists which Turkey sends us in order to bring upon us their Muslim glory. I ask why the rich countries – Germany, France, USA, and others which feel sorry for them, why don't they accept them? Why they send them to us? The Bulgarians are starving, there is no money for us to raise the pensions, salaries also, but money are found for those people. Do you think this is acceptable?

Sign the petition:

Name/Surname  
City/town/Email

### Example 4:

## Карбовски: България ще се напълни с ислямисти, когато Германия затвори границите

Харесва ми | Регистрирайте се, за да видите какво харесват приятелите Ви.



Когато ислямистът хване пушката, го обявяват за враг, а когато я пусне – е гражданин и се чудим как да се погрижим за него. Това е шизофрения, каза Мартин Карбовски.

**Ключови думи:** Карбовски, ислям, ислямисти, Меркел, атентати, джихадисти, Гаревлов, граници, имигранти

зловещи неща. Сега също има такива, но свързани с идеята за шерият и по-справедлив свят. Дали ще е лъв или ислямистки терорът, какво значение има? Когато ислямистът хване пушката, го обявяват за враг, а когато я пусне – е гражданин и се чудим как да се погрижим за него. Това е шизофрения”, коментира писателят.

17 Ноември 2015, Вторник, 14:15 ч.

Журналистът нарече Меркел глупава „скиорка“, защото е създавала проблем за Германия и цяла Европа, като се опитала да обнови кръвта на нацията

България трябва веднага да изпрати отряди на граничната бразда, защото страната ни ще се напълни с имигранти, когато Германия затвори границите. Не смятам, че трябва да слушаме глупавата „скиорка“ Меркел, която повтаря да не правим връзка между бежанците и тероризма. Това каза в „Здравей, България“ по Нова телевизия журналистът Мартин Карбовски.

„Ако продължаваме да приемаме врага в нашия свят, не можем да издадем. Ако това не бяха хора, а 1 млн. бели пудели, които минават през границата на ЕС и влизат в Германия, пак щяхме да имаме хуманитарен проблем. Ислямът е като комунизма. Има една огромна маса от хора, които преди 50 години бяха леви и направих

**Translation from Bulgarian:** Karbovski: Bulgaria will be full of Islamists, when Germany closes the borders. The journalist called Merkel “stupid skier” because she had created a problem for Germany and the whole Europe by trying to refresh the blood in the nation.

Bulgaria has to immediately send troops to the border because our country will be filled with immigrants when Germany c loses he borders. I don't think we should listen to the stupid “skier” Merkel who repeats that we should not connect refugees and errorism. This is what the journalist Martin Karbovski said in the TV show “Hello Bulgaria”, NOVA TV. “If we continue to welcome the enemy in our world, we cannot manage. If it wasn't about people, but about a million of white poodles to cross the jorder and enter Europe, we would still have a humanitarian problem. The Islam is like communism. There is a huge majority of people who 50 years ago did terrible things. Now again, there are such people, this time connect to the idea of a sharia and a ustice world. When the Islamist takes a gun – he is announced as an enemy, when he drops the gun, he is considered a citizen ind we start thinking how to take care of him. This is schizophrenic.” commented the journalist.

## 1.2 Context of the research

In Bulgaria the past four – five years were marked by the refugee flow, which looked rather strange – numbers currently were not high, but the way these processes were presented by the mainstream media were as if it is a “national crisis”. The majority of Bulgarians don’t have enough knowledge about the conflicts in the Middle East and there is not enough information in the mainstream media about the situation in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. News are brief and tend to stay somehow in the large overview of the international news in each channel, electronic newspaper or information website. There is no special or exclusive coverage in order to enable society to form a comprehensive view and opinion on the causes of current migration movements. Opposed to this, again since 2015 Bulgaria has entered in a very dynamic political period which escalated with the Presidential elections in the end of 2016. Several far right populist parties started proactive campaigns in order to win votes based on the creation of “enemies” and exploiting society’s fears. The enemies were “recognized” in the faces of refugees and migrants, as well as in the Bulgarian Roma minority.

Detailed overview of the country’s situation is presented in the Country Literature Review, April, 2019, prepared by “Gender Project for Bulgaria” Foundation.

## 1.3. The interviewees

The following number of interviews were executed in Bulgaria:

Students: 12 – 6 girls and 6 boys

They were from 11 to 14 years old, from 5th to 8th grade. Four of them were students in a private general education school, licensed according to the National Educational Standards and with a relative mixture of students – some of them come from mixed marriages, there are half Italians, Chinese, Turkish children. The rest of the students (8) were from state general education schools. Among the interviewed students 10 are Bulgarians, one is of Roma origin, one is Chinese, born in Bulgaria, as his family has lived in Bulgaria for more than 15 years.

Teachers: 6 – 3 women and 3 men

They are between 36 to 49 years old. They teach Bulgarian language and Literature, English language and Sports. Five of them teach in two different private schools and one works in a state general educational school.

Parents: 4 – all mothers

They were pleasantly open to answering questions and all of them felt the need to provide responsible opinions regarding the influence of digital media and social networks on their children. Fathers were a little bit reluctant to the invitations for interviews and the team decided that there was no need to be insistent, since we needed open and volunteered answers. The age range of the mothers was 31 to 51, all of them were with University education, and professions such as administrative manager, media monitoring, manager of social facility and a bank clerk.

Each topic in the interviews is outlined in the content below in order to summarize the interviewees' answers and reflections on it.

The interviews were conducted by two experts from the Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria Association. When approaching the interviewees and presenting themselves and the organization, the experts didn't come across any strong negative reactions towards the area of work. Both adults and children were rather curious and asked questions such as: "are there many refugees here?", "how many are they?", "aren't they dangerous?", "where do they come from?" etc. The interviewees were also interested in the organization, since it looks like the name "council of refugee women" pointed their attention more to the word "women", rather than "refugees" and they asked additional questions what do women refugees do here, how they live, what about children, etc.. We have noticed before that the expression "refugee women" doesn't bring out a negative connotation among people.

## 2. Students' experience online

### 2.1 Students' access and use of Internet

The students were open and answered without hesitation regarding how they access Internet, where they use it and what are their usual activities. All of them shared that they use their **smartphones to connect almost everywhere**, except one girl who said: *"I use Internet at home or at school, but when I am outside, I prefer to give myself to the company of friend"*.

What students do most is chatting with friends, listening to music, watching videos on YouTube, and some of them report looking for information for school projects. Time spent online varies between one and five hours.

Take a look below what our students do during the day in a "digital diary" which they were asked to "construct" for themselves analyzing their online activities:

#### Digital diary – online activities during a week day.



##### Morning:

Not online in the morning/ only a few minutes online/ checking up on the homework in the school platform; /checking up my Instagram/snapchat stories/ checking up the weather forecast



##### Afternoon:

Not online – it is school time!/ reading chat messages from friends/ looking for different info/ chatting with friends/ checking up my Instagram/ Facebook/ snapchat stories/reading articles/ making videos on TikTok



### Evening:

Chatting with friends, watching scientific videos, watching videos or movies on YouTube /checking up my Instagram/ /Facebook/ snapchat stories/playing online games

## 2.2 Students' activities and skills

**As regards social networks Instagram is the winner** – every student, without exception uses Instagram. Almost everybody shares that Facebook is outdated and there are also students who haven't even used it. Those who have used Facebook, now prefer Instagram because it is lighter, without unpleasant and unwanted information – no news, no petitions, no advertisements, and no unwanted comments by strangers – just pictures and newsfeed of favorite topics and famous people (teenage idols). Twitter is rather rarely used among students and seems to be not so popular. Regarding contacts and friend lists – the students share they have between 200 and 1000 followers (only one girl reported 13 000 followers) on Instagram and they personally know less than half of these people.

Everybody can block messages; find information on safe use of Internet; make video clips; use WhatsApp; use YouTube; create Facebook page; create posts on Instagram; create posts on Facebook; use Snapchat. Only a few can use Skype and use the Bookmarks option.

Other applications the students share they use are Viber and TikTok, several students use also school applications for communication and homework tasks sharing.

Most of them use passwords on their devices in order to protect their privacy from their parents or curious peers. One girl reported she doesn't use passwords because she always forgets them.

Almost all of the students shared they learn from each other how to use Internet, how to do new things or manage new applications or play online games. They also share that their parents often would ask them for help on the Internet or with the electronic devices: help is needed if something is bugged or blocked, to create a profile in a social network, or if the respective settings don't seem clear enough.

## 2.3 Mediation by adults

The students shared that they have started to use Internet around the age of 8 – 9 years. The lowest reported age was 7 years and the highest one was 10 years. The use of Internet usually started with them having their first smart phone.

The use of Internet and electronic devices is strictly regulated at school, especially during classes. Exceptions are made if the teacher gives a task which especially requires for example to search for information online. Students themselves shared that they

don't strictly obey the school regulations and every once in a while their phones get confiscated for the day if the teachers find out.

Things at home are a little bit more different – half of the students share they are being supervised by their parents and being told to “stop” browsing or using their devices. The other half of the children say they are not being supervised how much time they spent or what they do online and consider they can decide for them when to stop. Students, who don't perceive they are being put on a time clock, make an interesting impression, because as you will see below, all the interviewed parents for example, have reported that they have set a limit of an exact number of hours. On their side, children say: *“sometimes, when it is really late in the evening, my parents come to my room and tell me to stop”*; *“probably if I was addicted my mom would tell me to stop ... but I am not.”*; *“ sometimes my parents would make remark about my time online, but if I am in the middle of something important, I don't listen to them”*; *“I don't use my phone at school ...only when we have exams I use it to secretly view answers on the Internet.”*

## 2.4 Subjective harm

When asked whether they like being online, all of the students answered “yes”. Immediately after that they were asked whether there is something they consider as a threat, danger or being somehow awkward or inappropriate. This is what they shared: *“I have seen videos of people hurting animals”*; *“sometimes advertisements can be awful and disgusting”*; *“general news about catastrophes, such as earthquakes”*; *“uncensored or inappropriate pictures or possible encounters with pedophiles”*; only a few share that they haven't seen anything that bothers them.

What students do in such cases: block the person; leave the page; visit only Instagram where the content is filtered and they can filter it themselves; delete content; reporting the content in the social network administrator's page; some students replied that they look for their parents for help or advice and some students tend to ignore inappropriate content and avoid communicating with people they don't personally know and are careful what kind of information (such as pictures) they post online about themselves.

Students have different ways to react when they see something inappropriate or dangerous. What bothered, were those students who chose to ignore and not act or talk about what has bothered them. It seems that those children tend to keep it to themselves, do not discuss and express how they feel, don't feel like taking measures and they could easily become victims of a harmful online activities.

There was one student who described what being safe online means:

*“They have taught us at school what to do and what not to do while looking up things on Google - how to use the filters in order to find only what we need for example. We had classes for safe browsing on the Internet, which was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Some of the things were clear – how to use “cookies”, how to turn off or on settings in your browser. We are*

*not supposed to go on websites which are not protected. It is good to use passwords and to change them, don't give your address or phone to strangers"*

### 3. Students and information, discrimination on third country nationals and fake news

#### 3.1 Use of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination

It was a surprise to find out that almost all of the students are not even slightly aware what a stereotype is or what a prejudice is. Only one of them said that *"being prejudiced is when you say a group of people are such and such without actually knowing them"*.

Almost all of them reviewed the examples (number 1 and number 2) and concluded that these are bad things to be said about migrants and refugees with essentially bad intentions of those who publish such things – to turn people against migrants and refugees and to attract more attention to websites and media.

#### Let's bring in the baseline!

**Stereotypes** are cognitive representations of how members of a group are similar to one another and different from members of other groups. They are defined as specific beliefs about a group, such as descriptions of what members of a particular group look like, how they behave, or their abilities. They are often based on cultural traits, considered fixed, reified, and unchangeable.

**Prejudice** refers to the attitudes and feelings—whether positive or negative and whether conscious or non-conscious—that people have about members of other groups. Stereotypes+ feelings= prejudice. In the Nature of Prejudice, Allport<sup>22</sup>(1954) defined prejudice as 'an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization.

**Discrimination** refers to inappropriate and potentially unfair treatment of individuals due to group membership According to Allport (1954<sup>23</sup>), discrimination involves denying "individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish". Discrimination is generally understood as biased behavior, which includes not only actions that directly harm or disadvantage another group, but those that unfairly favor one's own group (creating a relative disadvantage for other groups), indirect discrimination.

Most common negative phrases regarding refugees and migrants which students reported they have heard around themselves are: *"Muslims concur Bulgaria; migrants are bad, they don't belong here; they are not like common people; all Muslims are terrorists; they are here to ruin our country, to steal our money and lives; gypsies give birth to children only to get social welfare and not to work."* Usually, around refugees and migrants, stereotypes and prejudices about Bulgarian Roma minority go together.

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22

Allport, G. W. (1954). The Nature of Prejudice. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley

23

ibid

One student expressed his opinion that discriminative material should be reported – for example a Facebook page or a post; another student shared that expressing your own opinion is important, even if there is nobody to back you up. Several students expressed their opinion that nothing can be done against discrimination and racism.

Some students report that they have experienced a change in their opinion after acquiring more information, though not purposefully looking for it. In particular one girl recalled that during the Pope visit to Bulgaria in the beginning of May 2019, he visited a refugee camp. His visit was comprehensively covered by all kind of media for two days in a row. A 14-year old girl interviewed said: *“I have thought about these people who were described on the news and media as people who ruin everything they touch and everywhere they go – that they bring war with themselves. Then I watched news about women who are innocent and live in misery with their children. When the Pope was here, they have prepared for him, despite what they had suffered and the condition they live in.* (There was a recital and welcoming event in the refugee camp with the participation of the refugees which was on TV and websites) *My opinion totally changed about them ... though I still have some doubts, my first opinion changed”.*

This leads to the conclusion that providing more information – better visual information – children still can see what they were missing while forming their opinion and above all – there should a counterpoint to all the exploitation of negative stereotypes and prejudices through the provision of more information – images of people, narrative of their stories.

### 3.2 Discrimination online and offline

Students appear to accept that discrimination face to face and discrimination online are equally bad and one doesn't feel less bad if it happens online or not: *“it can make you feel bad and sad”*, they don't report many discrimination episodes and unfortunately, students were unable to provide any explanation of what is discrimination, stereotype or prejudice; everybody stated they have heard of these, but couldn't actually explain. The only answer was of a girl saying: *“it is something that someone has said about a group of people, without knowing them”*. The few examples they gave refer to actual situations from schools where somebody is being avoided because they are obese, or *“strange”*, or has *“dark skin”* (of Roma origin). One student reported himself as a witness of an unpleasant event on the street when a group of children were insulting another child for being Chinese. Several children pointed out the Roma population as being discriminated as not being hired to work by Bulgarians, because the Bulgarians consider Roma people stupid and lazy. Another student told researches of a discrimination episode on public transport: a refugee was accused of being irregular (without a ticket), without considering that he doesn't know the language and maybe doesn't know what to do. Then a women defended him and the rest of the people started criticizing her for defending him.

Most of them say they haven't been discriminated neither offline or online. Only one girl shared that she felt discriminated because she is a girl – the high schools she wants to apply require higher grades from girls and lower from boys in order to be accepted. Another couple of girls also felt like being discriminated because they are girls – generally by boys who would tell them they are not good enough in sports or other “boys’ activities.” Unfortunately, this is rather common situation in the Bulgarian schools (and society, respectively). Our society is still conservative and even relatively young families with parents in their 30ies share what is considered “traditional” gender roles: men are strong, women are weak; this is not a woman’s task; the man is the head of the family, etc., which repeats among students.

### 3.3 Sources of information and fake news

The topics our interviewed students were interested in were music, sports, fashion. They are mostly interested in websites about their interests, they are interested in general news and like very much following their Instagram news feed and stories. In general, students consider Instagram more reliable than Facebook.

Students shared that they don't believe everything they read or see on the Internet - information about teenage idols, music and movie stars and other celebrities. ***On the opposite, the interviewed teachers on the topic shared that according to their observations, students cannot make a difference between fake news and actual information.*** Despite that, a few of the students shared that they know how to spot a fake profile (in Instagram for example) which produces fake news and that they would “google” what they have read if they feel something doesn't feel right. They also feel free to share and often share news stories or information with their friends online, as well as they discuss news face to face. Their general idea about fake news or disinformation is *“something, which some people make up in order to draw attention and spread a news which is not true.”; “this is done for gain – such news will be more watchable and popular, the more scandalous the news is, the more attention it has”.*

## 4. The gaze of teachers on students

### 4.1. Teachers' perceptions and views on students' experiences on line

Teachers are well aware of the social networks their students use and how they communicate in different chat groups. One teacher shared that a chat group often is used by students to bully somebody, in which case she intervened.

Main difference pointed out by the teachers was that students use Internet and social media in order to attract attention and show themselves, while teachers use for information, communication and work-related activities. Those teachers who use multimedia in their classes believe that it is easier to present their lessons and involve students in the learning activities. Such an example is the website <https://ucha.se> which is

a learning application for students. Teachers also pointed out that students use and communicate more easily through social media.

#### **4.2 Teachers' perceptions of students' experience and awareness of discrimination of third county nationals and fake news**

All teachers were definite that their students cannot identify neither fake news, nor propaganda or actual facts. This happens mostly because students don't have enough information to reflect and compare and are not active in searching for it. It is definitely a problem for students because as one teacher said: *"they will believe everything at once"; "they somehow react on a very basic level because they don't have life experience and their reactions are spontaneous"*.

Teachers also pointed that believing fake news is related to how parents at home react on news in general – are they critical and reflective about what they see and read, or they would just believe and act as if it is a real fact.

As a matter of fact, teachers shared that they haven't seen or heard their students using typical stereotypes related to migrants and third countries nationals. How the students would react in case of discriminative content, teachers shared that that depends on the child's personality – some will be passive, other will defend the weak, most will remain indifferent and others will react more aggressively, by adding up to the situation. Teachers who were representatives of the private school shared that there are children with different origin (Bulgarian, Turkish, Chinese) in the school and they are used to everybody being different somehow.

### **5. The gaze of parents on students**

#### **5.1 Parents' perceptions and views on students' experiences on line**

Parents consider their children to be using Internet mostly to connect and share. They look for attention and it has become a regular part of the process of "searching" for their own personality. Chatting is also consuming a lot of time and energy of children whether at home or outside. For parents chatting has become the main way for children to "present" themselves. Parents explained that children have their own special way of communicating with emoticons and various initials and teenage jargon.

#### **Parents and mediation**

Parents have negotiated limits and boundaries of their children using Internet which are different for each family and child's personality. Rules are stricter for those children who are or have been through some kind of a period of addiction (gaming, online chatting, and constantly being in Instagram). Sometimes the time spent online depends on school grades and performance. One parent has set the ultimate restriction and recommendation like this: *"we have firmly negotiated that whatever happens on the*

*Internet it is not that scary and she can share it and talk about it with me if doesn't know what to do".* Parents are also considering the private space of their children and have noticed that children: *"quite passionately keep their things for themselves and it is very unpleasant for them if you keep wanting to know everything they do or write online".*

And finally, one parent explained that when you set limits or try to control children's time online, you should explain why, so they know it will be for their own good and safety.

## **5.2 Parents' perceptions of students' experience and awareness of discrimination of third county nationals and fake news**

All of the parents consider their children not being able to distinguish between fake news and real fact or information. They sometimes happen to "defend" what they have read online from their parents explaining that it is not true, it is fake and created just to attract attention. One parent compared children believing in everything with the old people are naïve and truly believe deception.

The interviewed mothers agreed that parents are responsible for their children's behavior and opinions: *"If I avoid certain media or directly comment that some news or articles or content is not true and explain the reasons why, this is how I provide the basics for my children to be reflective".*

An interesting view on children's awareness of discrimination was identified. The interviewed parents said that their children's opinion also depends on their surroundings and even if they try their best to talk about discrimination and relations to people who are different. One mother shared: *"it is difficult for my son to defend his opinion among what is "accepted" by his classmates: dirty gipsies, Taliban, etc.; the common stereotypes are refugees and migrants are terrorists, they steal, rape and are here to turn us into their religion, only take huge social welfare from the state..."* These are all stereotypes which some parents have noticed children use, are "inspired" and are following the examples in their families. The same mother also shared her experience when she defended a Roma person who was accused by the whole bus of people that he had pushed one child who had fallen down. Then they started verbally attacking this mother for defending the Roma person. The situation played before her son, who later shared that he felt frightened by the majority of the people and how aggressive they were.

<p>It was also expressed by the parents that it will be a good thing to have a variety of children (with different origin) in schools, because this is how they learn that children are children regardless of origin.</p>
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## 6. Teachers' experience online

### 6.1 Teachers' access and use of internet

Teachers use mostly **laptops and smartphone**, rarely computers at home. They connect to the Internet at work and also at home. Social media websites are also popular among them – the difference is that they mostly use Facebook, while students use Instagram. A lot of their time is spent on school related applications and preparation of lessons for the week. Connection to parents and sending feedback on their children is also part of their work. Also teachers spent time reading news and consider it a main way to keep themselves informed. You can take a look at a resume of their “digital diaries”. On weekends teachers shared that they try to relax, to stay disconnected or to use Internet only for relaxation.

#### Digital diary – online activities during a week day.



##### Morning:

Checking e-mails/ reading news/ messaging on Viber and messenger/ working online – writing school grades and filing reports in the school digital diary/



##### Afternoon:

Checking e-mails/ reading news/ filling in topics of the classes and planning in the school digital diary/ going through the social network



##### Evening:

Checking e-mails/reading news/ going on Facebook/browsing websites about fashion, culture, history/ going through the schedule for the next school day/ preparing classes and presentations for the students

### 6.2 Teachers' activities and skills

Teachers have basic skills online: they can block messages; find information on safe use of Internet; make video clips; use YouTube; create Facebook page; create posts on Facebook. Most of them use Skype and use the Bookmarks option. Unlike students they don't usually use WhatsApp and Snapchat, they use Facebook rather than Instagram.

Other applications used by teachers are Viber, e-mail and school related applications for their work.

Almost all of the teachers shared that they believe that students are digitally well prepared and know more about Internet and electronic devices than them. They all agree that they cannot teach children any new things related to Internet, but willingly

assign them tasks which involve being online – research, presentations, projects, etc. One teacher shared: *“giving homework and tasks so they can use Internet is the only way to make my students read something voluntarily ... actually this is the only way to “reach” them”*.

Not everybody remembered when exactly and how they have learned to use Internet. Their memories are related to the first device they have used to go online and come up with an approximate year (ranging from 10 to 15 years ago). Friends have helped with providing “know-how” on what and how to do online, self-teaching and exploring the Internet by making your own mistakes were the other common ways how teachers have learned to use the Internet.

### 6.3 Mediation by adults

All of the teachers highlighted that they have set strict rules – no phones during classes and the main difficulties to keep up with this comes when there is no relevant supervision in the family and children are not used to observing the rules.

Again, all of them replied that students need to be supervised and some teachers actually try to stay in touch with their students on what they do online, even if it is about discussing celebrities: *“We have designated classes in which we talk on about how safe it is to browse on the Internet, to accept friends, to allow messages from strangers ...”*. Also they pointed that it is good to block the access to certain websites. The school actually has a Wi-Fi network and websites such as YouTube are blocked.

### 6.4 Subjective harm (Teachers’ view on what’s harmful for students)

Teachers are concerned about their students and have identified the following risks: the students’ level of activity on the Internet (are they careful or try to find interesting and provoking things), whether they look for possible harmful content, or they are exposed to it without realizing it. The greatest risk was defined as being **contacted by strangers**. One teacher even said: *“the risk is that there are too many risky and harmful things on the Internet”*. Being too much exposed to electronic devices and the risk of addiction were a couple of another harmful consequences teachers identified. Other harmful experiences mentioned were finding inappropriate content (pornography websites), or dangerous content (how to make bombs for example). In light with the objectives of NEMO it is worth to underline that only one teacher pointed that being discriminated or bullied online also represents a risk and harm for students.

## 7. Teachers and information, discrimination of third country nationals and fake news

### 7.1 Use of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination

Teachers consider stereotypes to be mainly disseminated through mainstream media and nationalists movements in the social media. They notice that students repeat what they have heard at home, from their parents, and their parents' stereotypes and way of thinking are reflected in the students' behavior. They think it is crucial to provide space at school to discuss what is happening online. All of the teachers stated that online discrimination and aggressive attitude towards migrants, refugees and third-countries nationals is politically charged as these groups of people are used by paid media to attract followers for certain parties based on hate speech and pointing out a "common enemy".

### 7.2 Discrimination online and offline

Teachers said that students are being affected by this in a way which leaves them unable to think, form an opinion, ask questions, etc. – half students just believe everything and stand on the side of the aggressors, the other half are like "numb" and stay indifferent. Migrants and refugees are presented to them and society as a "second hand" people, people who bring horror and rob the Bulgarians from their land and religion as it is in the presented Examples. Teachers also pointed that students react naively and that disinformation and manipulation affects negatively their development in forming critical thinking and affect negatively the children form and create relationships with other children and adults.

### 7.3 Sources of information and fake news

Teachers all expressed concern about fake news and especially how much of it is online in the last couple of years. Some of them feel mislead and disappointed when see and read something like this: *"you see a shocking title, decide to read and the moment you open the link you realize it is fake."* Some of them called fake news *"classical method for disinformation"*.

They also see fake news and online discrimination as a general problem in society on many different topics, even sports, people are being misled as if someone is playing with their political and religious views. Inevitable consequence of such methods of disinformation are related to large groups in the society have formed negative attitude towards migrants and third-countries nationals which causes people to act on what they now consider as "their" opinion and have somehow internalized whatever has been provided to them online. That is why they start defending this opinion.

On the question of what can be done about online discrimination and fake news, teachers answered that there has to be a way those who disseminated such narratives to be held responsible, reported, brought to justice.

## 8. Parents experience online

### 8.1 Parents' access and use of internet

Parents, just like teachers, use mostly **laptops and smartphone**. They connect to the Internet at work and also at home. Parents use online applications related to their work activities or free time – shopping platforms, sports applications, diets and food. You can take a look at a resume of their “digital diaries”. On weekends they try to relax, to stay disconnected or to use Internet only for relaxation.

#### Digital diary – online activities during a week day.



##### Morning:

Using Internet for relaxation / checking up weather forecast, reading news online/checking up the family schedule, do online banking/listening to music, chatting with friends/ watching online TV/ reading online newspapers/ chatting with colleagues



##### Afternoon:

Using Internet for relaxation/ looking up cultural and social events/ reading and answering e-mails/ going on Facebook.



##### Evening:

Scrolling the news/playing online games/ reading and answering e-mails/ going on Facebook/ checking school program and activities of the kids for the next day.

### 8.2 Parents' Activities and Skills

Parents also have basic skills online: they can block messages; find information on safe use of Internet (although some shared that they haven't been looking intentionally for such information); use YouTube to listen to music or to watch funny videos; create Facebook page; create posts on Facebook. Most of them use Skype and use the Bookmarks option. Unlike students they don't usually use WhatsApp and Snapchat, they use Facebook rather than Instagram.

Other applications parents shared they use are Viber; e-mail; various Google applications and work related applications.

All the parents were surprised by the questions regarding when and how they started using Internet. They don't have exact memories of when, but all shared that they were exploring and learning either by themselves or with friends. They now are asking their children for help and consider them more-educated about online applications, ways to

look for information, electronic devices, installing and uninstalling applications. These are the reasons why they don't do almost anything together with their children online – they have different level of knowledge and very different areas of interests.

### 8.3 Subjective harm

Parents consider pornography content and contacting with strangers the most harmful and dangerous things that can happen online to their children. Sometimes advertisements about erotic products or dating look like pornography and it is not restricted by law. Other types of shocking content is also considered harmful – scenes of violence or suffering people and furthermore – online game with violence. Other harms were identified as follows: virus e-mails, stealing one's profile in the social network and meeting in person somebody who have contacted children online.

## 9. Parents and information, discrimination of third country nationals and fake news

### 9.1 Use of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination

The parents were critical towards the usual stereotypes (already pointed out) and discriminative online examples regarding third countries nationals. One mother shared that her previous partner (father of her child) had expressed some of the same stereotypes regarding migrants and refugees and she was worried her daughter would do the same. With time and a lot of discussions, she managed to find a way to explain to her daughter that she needs to be critical and proactive in searching for information, curious and brave to ask questions.

### 9.2 Discrimination online and offline

The parents also seem to be very much aware of the discriminative narratives in social media and they were worried about their children being exposed to such aggressive communication. The main message which parents considered most disturbing was: *“migrants and refugees are presented as very different from all other people and are not equal. This is how children will build opinion towards differences.”*

Parents also tend to see migrants and refugees as actual victims of this aggressive online approach and that this approach, even online leads to actual reaction and events that occur in society: *“attitudes towards migrants and refugees are quite strong. This makes people hate the different ones and unfortunately this leads to physical clashes and conflicts which affect our status as citizens and our country as part of the EU”.*

### 9.3 Sources of information and fake news

Parents strongly felt annoyed by fake news: *“they are means to brainwash and that is why I don't watch news anymore and I feel I have influenced my child already”*. They also shared that have noticed their friends to believe all kind of false information, and sometimes *“even I find myself believing such things”*, shared one of the mothers. *“For us – normal people – this is disinformation which deprives us from our basic right, such as*

*the right of free choice. I cannot choose which position or opinion to support, because I don't have information."*

Regarding fake news, parents shared that they often avoid watching news or reading online only because they feel sick of too much false and/or aggressive information.

*There were several aggressive public campaigns in Bulgaria in the past couple of years. Migrants, refugees and Roma population were (and still are) under attack of nationalist's movements and political clashes, as you can see from the Examples, researched for this project.*

## **10. Comparison**

### **10.1 Similarities and differences between the groups**

Generally, the research showed that adults are aware for themselves of fake news, online discrimination and usual stereotypes, they distinguish fake news or at least look for information, but they are not entirely aware of how children and students react towards online discrimination. This remains an area to be better explored.

There are some similarities in the way both groups of adults, parents and teachers see children being affected by fake news and online discrimination. All the adults see children as being negatively affected by this and deprived of basic human rights such as to live in respect towards other people. The difference is that the teachers who were interviewed pointed out that mostly negative attitudes and interpretation of online discrimination come from the family environment, while parents considered the vast Internet world and the ease with which anybody can write anything to be the main factor for their children acquiring negative models.

The Team observations on the students' reactions when presented with the Examples pointed that students see themselves in a different light than their teachers and parents. They don't perceive themselves as exposed to negative influence because they don't distinguish between fake news and actual information. They are not aware of their exposure and if they feel like something is wrong, they prefer to ignore or avoid the matter instead of looking for information, talking to somebody, etc. In terms of third countries nationals almost all of the interviewed students believe fake news and are susceptible to enforcing negative attitudes – and even more, they couldn't criticize the Examples, the way the parents and the teachers did. The students reacted as if the Examples were true facts and information. One girl said (about Example 1): *"well, I don't mind that some of them will live in the mountain, but not everybody, I agree that we should keep our territory, otherwise it won't be us anymore"*.

The reason for the “success” of all false and negative information and discriminative online content regarding third countries nationals is that **there is no actual information**, neither about who these people are and where they come from, nor why these migration flows are existing. Social networks and Internet environment have become a free zone for everybody and there is no adequate filtration, nor restriction of the published content. It is a threat to everybody’s freedom and basic rights.

Also, it was an interesting and unexpected to observe and hear how parents and teachers start to identify migrants and refugees as victims of online discrimination, as well as their children and students as victims of false information and fake news. This opens up a space to think about how one’s position in society (a parent, a teacher), somebody who is taking care and guiding, could help in identification and exposure of the negative public narratives and harmful online content.

### III. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS THE MULTICULTURAL KIT

#### 1.1 Good practices against misinformation on migration and fake news

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7Pt\\_GMDdGo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7Pt_GMDdGo)

<https://gbvresponders.org/vision-victim/>

<http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/multimedia/video/against-hatred-and-racism/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/bg/%D1%83%D0%B5%D0%B1%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8>

#### 1.2 Suggestions of interviewees: Risks, opportunities and remedies for the multicultural kit

One of the most important and interesting things shared during the interviews were their thought on **SUGGESTIONS** for a possible application. Many of the interviewed persons mentioned that talking about the topic face to face and discussion with specialists is almost the most important. Other ideas were provided in the following manner:

##### Students



**Specialists on Internet** safety to be invited to discuss with students how to protect themselves online;

**Once a month**, during the designated class teacher time to discuss online discrimination, an application – no, not everybody would install and use it;

**An application like “trivia”;**

**Teachers could talk** about their experience related to online discrimination;

**Something like “word games”;**

**To have this as a topic** during

##### Parents



**Adequate teachers’ reaction** towards face to face discrimination;

**An application** to be easily used by teachers;

**More face to face** meetings and discussions; joint events with different children, so they can know each other;

**A game** would be interesting for children – to choose which news is fake or not, for example.

##### Teachers



**Teachers themselves** need to be better equipped, not just theoretically, but they need to have “digital skills”;

**Something like a game** of words, rather than something that children need to study, because this puts pressure on them;

**Students need to be informed** in general; adults need to look for the students’ point of view and explain what is wrong with fake information and that this is something we need to talk

computers classes;  
**To provide examples** on fake news;  
**Restricted access** to smartphones;  
**To create education** materials and to provide lectures;  
**To create website or** application which teaches how to recognize fake news  
**Designated “classes for safe browsing on the Internet”**

about;  
**Students need to be informed** about what discrimination is in general preferably with examples: videos with educational purposes;  
**The designated classes** on IT should have a special module on this topic;  
**Students need to see** the negative side on the Internet and to be compared to the good side, so they can see how it happens that the same thing can be used for good or for bad.

### 1.3 Our Suggestions for the multicultural kit

The main task of the multicultural kit that has to be elaborated during the project activities is to equip the young teenagers (11-14 years old) to enter the online world with proper tools.

From one side the qualitative report show how it is important to foster students' attention to the problems with the stereotypes, prejudices and hate towards the people that are “different”, because they *“don't perceive themselves as exposed to negative influence because they don't distinguish between fake news and actual information. They are not aware of their exposure and if they feel like something is wrong, they prefer to ignore or avoid the matter instead of looking for information, talking to somebody, etc.”* From the other – the desk research show how unfriendly is the country environment in this sense: *“the Bulgarian society is burdened with a lot of stereotypes towards the different people regardless of their ethnicity or country of origin. The main reason is the big influence the media have on opinions' formulation”*. In addition, parents and teachers see relatively well the problems, but they tend to transfer responsibility to one another and somehow fail to keep an open dialogue with children on these topics. This study once again has shown that adults are already lagging behind and moving after the children in the mastery of information technology because of their extremely rapid development. The reaction to fake news, the hate speech, and the use of manipulative new techniques to instigate mass fear among people is delayed and does not outpace events but follows them. These facts once again stressed the fact that we need a new approach in building our relationships with adolescents.

We, as adults, have to take in consideration that:

- The world is changing very fast.

- There is increased uncertainty at different levels. The accelerated pace faces new challenges and needs a new perspective on the development of humanity and the environment in which it develops.
- For this different world, we have to prepare different children - they are more empowered than previous generations because their brains are connected to peripherals that allow them to participate in different networks, both positive and negative.

The Toolkit should reflect the following dynamics of the Learning Process:

1. Content of the learning process - human rights, multicultural environment, internationalism, cultural differences, etc.
2. Leading principles - equality, equality, fairness, responsibility, freedom, dignity, etc.
3. Methods of teaching - interactive, including, stepped on the dialogue, etc.

It should involve a deep, structural reformation of the thought process, feelings and actions. It have to be an “education” for both the mind and the heart, which implies a radical change to interdependence and dependence, and creates opportunities for equality, social justice, understanding and co-operation among people. We need to make it possible for children to think critically in their dialogue with us – adults, by applying methods of participation - both at home and at school, so that they have the opportunity to express an opinion but also to take responsibility for their actions.