

**Roma Integration in Secondary and Tertiary Education in Bulgaria:
Evaluating State Capacity for Future Partnerships with Roma, pro-Roma
NGOs and Donors**

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Author`s declaration

I, the undersignedDancho Borislavov Yakimov.....
hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non – degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract

The existing literature on the relations between states and civil society organizations in service provision for the most marginalized and deprived strata of the society is the leading empirical instrument that contributed to the development of this work. This thesis elaborates on the low level of enrollment and graduation percentage of Roma in secondary and university education in Bulgaria. It promotes the state as a leading initiator of partnerships with emerging civil society organizations and donors for the betterment of Roma education in the country.

I measure the state capacity through a combination of evaluative frameworks, applied on different levels through the National Roma Integration Strategy in Bulgaria. State capacity to initiate partnerships is revised in three dimensions: normative, institutional and financial. The findings suggest that roles, responsibilities, and resources of institutions within the National Roma Integration Strategy should be revised to provide for the leading role of the state to initiate fruitful partnerships for Roma education in Bulgaria.

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List of Abbreviations

CSMR – Civil Society Monitoring Report

SNSP – State/ Non-state Partnership

FP - Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society

EU – European Union

NRIS- National Roma Integration Strategy

MoES- Ministry of Education and Science

REF- Roma Education Fund

CEICSM- Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Minorities

NSI – National Statistical Institute

AP – Action Plan

OP- Operational Programme

CoM- Council of Ministers

RIE- Regional Inspectorates of Education

Introduction

There are significant disparities in educational achievements among Roma and non-Roma in Bulgaria. Roma people have the biggest percentage of young people who do not enter in primary and secondary education (National Statistical Institute Bulgaria 2011). Most Roma in Bulgaria have primary education, a small percentage of them have secondary education and the number of persons with tertiary education is insignificant. Furthermore, the Roma ethnic group in Bulgaria is the only one with the highest proportion of young people who are economically inactive and are not enrolled in the educational system (National Assembly 2012).

Due to lower socioeconomic standards, most Roma households are unable to support their students to continue their education, especially in secondary and tertiary educational institutions (FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and European Union 2016). In addition, the existence of segregated schools with poor educational services limits opportunities for Roma to access secondary educational institutions and to further continue their studies in universities (Open Society Institute Sofia 2007).

It is proven that Roma in Bulgaria with secondary and tertiary education have bigger chances for employment and higher earnings compared to Roma with primary education. An investment in secondary and tertiary education for Roma minimizes the productivity gap between Roma and non-Roma and prepares the next generation of people that contribute for the economic growth and financial stability in the country (World Bank 2010). Therefore, the successful inclusion of Roma in secondary and tertiary education requires active governmental interventions. An increased access and graduation of Roma from higher educational institutions is a tool that creates educated

Roma who can be fully integrated into the society and in the labor market (Open Society Institute Sofia 2007, 40).

However, governmental mainstream policies have been ineffective so far. The state has been making poor attempts to cope with school segregation, to adopt proven mechanisms and interventions against school dropouts and to apply targeted schemes for the inclusion of young Roma in secondary and tertiary education. (Center Amalipe 2015a, 14). Although models of interventions of non-state actors have proved to be effective, the government has not adopted any of these initiatives within its educational public policies.

The literature on Roma education is mainly concentrated to explain the low educational achievements of Roma and to identify obstacles they face in relation to enrollment and graduation from all levels of education. While issue within state educational policies are identified mainly through Civil Society Monitoring Reports (CSMR) and reports from independent national and international organizations, CSMRs also suggest that initiatives of Roma, pro- Roma NGOs and donors have been stimulating the enrollment and graduation of Roma in secondary and tertiary education (see Tilkidzhiev 2009, 114; Center Amalipe 2015, 10–11). Numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors have been contributing to the enrollment and graduation of Roma from secondary and tertiary education for a long time. Roma and pro-Roma organizations have been implementing national programs for transportation and accommodation of Roma students enrolled in secondary education. They have been providing financial support for Roma to enroll in preparatory classes in relation to their application to state universities and to acquire professional competencies while enrolled in tertiary education. In addition, REF as the main donor has been supporting Roma in secondary and tertiary education through targeted

scholarships and academic mentorships. (see Center Amalipe 2015b, 2; Roma Education Fund 2015).

It is obvious that state capacity to contribute to Roma education is quite limited and main causes come from weaknesses on levels of policy adoption, formulation, and implementation. The importance to incorporate non-state actors for the educational advancement of Roma is quite relevant and necessary step that could accelerate the educational achievements of Roma students.

A new state-led partnership approach to utilize existing good practices and resources from NGOs and donors as an alternative to increase the enrollment and graduation level of Roma from secondary and tertiary education has not been discussed within the literature on Roma education in Bulgaria. This new approach would open opportunities to shift the paradigm of mainstreaming and to establish targeted interventions through state/non- state partnerships (SNSP) where resources reach directly their beneficiaries. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is ***“To what extent does the Bulgarian state have the capacity to initiate future partnerships with Roma, pro- Roma NGOs and donors for successful Roma integration in secondary and tertiary education?”***

In order to answer the research question, I mainly use the schematic framework on state capacity provided by Batley and McLoughlin (2009). Following their approach, I measure the capacity of the state in three dimensions: legislative and normative, institutional and administrative, and financial. Within this framework, I identify main legislative and normative documents that prescribe roles and responsibilities of the state to initiate or enter into SNSP for Roma education. The selection of those documents is justified in the methodology chapter. Based on prescription in legislative and normative documents, I identify main responsible institutions for the advancement of Roma educational integration and evaluate their administrative and financial capacity to initiate

SNSP. Based on my overall evaluation, I assess the extent of state capacity in three levels – higher, medium and low.

In addition, I have conducted interviews with one representative from Roma NGO and one representative from donor organization in Bulgaria who are directly involved with educational initiatives towards Roma in Bulgaria. Their perspectives on collaboration and partnership experience for Roma education with the government serve as additional sources that answer the research question.

The thesis will contribute to the literature on SNSP between the Bulgarian government and non-state actors. Specifically, it contributes to the literature on Roma education and incorporates SNSP as a tool for the advancement of the access and graduation of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. The thesis provides a different perspective on the provision of educational services towards vulnerable communities in Bulgaria and presents innovative information tool for policymakers, NGOs and donor organizations. Hence, the thesis informs policymakers and non-state actors on opportunities and limitations of joint initiatives for Roma education.

Furthermore, the thesis suggests an evaluation framework to measure the capacity of the Bulgarian government to initiate and enter in SNSP for Roma education. Outcomes from the application of this framework can inform the state about weaknesses and strengths of its legislative, administrative and financial capacity. Furthermore, the evaluation framework can serve as a tool for future research on the capacity of the Bulgarian government in SNSP in areas where a joint provision of public services can emerge.

The thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter one provides background information on main factors that affect the enrollment and graduation of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. It

gives information on the current situation of Roma education and explains main state policies on the subject. The second chapter deals with the literature review on SNSP. It also includes sections that explain state capacity in terms of legislative, institutional and financial variables. Chapter three presents the methodology of the thesis.

Chapter four provides an analysis on the Bulgarian government in terms of legislative and normative capacity. Chapter five continues with the analysis of the institutional and administrative capacity of four institutions related to Roma education. Finally, Chapter 6 provides discussion on main findings of my evaluation.

Chapter 1 - Background on Roma Education in Bulgaria

1.1 Factors Affecting the Access and Graduation from Secondary and Tertiary Education

Changes in the national economic system after 1989 led to the closure of around 1 300 000 working places, occupied mainly by Roma people. As an outcome, the unemployment among Roma population increased to 66% and families have not been able to provide financial resources to send their children to school (Tomova 2009, 5). Last estimations show that 9 of 10 Roma have per capita incomes that equals the earnings of the poorest four-tenths of the Bulgarian society. 67% of Roma are among the poorest 20% of the Bulgarian citizens. High level of poverty is the main obstacle for parents to provide for school supplies, transportation, and financial support especially in secondary and university education where there is increased mobility and necessity to cover university taxes (World Bank 2010). Only for the 2004/2005 academic year in Bulgaria, around 60% of Roma

children have dropped out in the initial period of their primary education and were not able to continue in secondary classes (Unicef Bulgaria 2006, 17). As suggested by the literature, the biggest cause of low enrollment and graduation among Roma in all levels of education is their vulnerable socio-economic status.

Institutional factors also cause a negative effect on the enrollment and graduation of Roma from secondary and university education. The Open Society Institute in Sofia explores that between 44 and 70 percent of school-aged Roma, study in segregated schools. The same source reveals that in 2005, there were 554 segregated Roma schools in Bulgaria which were around 20% of the total number of schools. Segregated schools close to segregated Roma neighborhoods are characterized with lowered quality of preparation and weak monitoring on attendance where children are left to pass to a higher grade without meeting basic standards (Open Society Institute Sofia 2007, 137). It can be strongly predicted that poor preparation of children in lower grades affects their readiness to consequently pass the mandatory standardized state exams after secondary education and further excludes them from enrollment in universities.

Although some schools in Bulgaria organize preparatory courses for entrance examinations in secondary and tertiary education, the educational system does not cover those expenses and families are responsible to pay for those courses or for private tutoring. In general, there are no state mechanisms that could provide financial support for students to pass a preparation for enrollment in secondary and tertiary education. (Roma Education Fund 2007). With a consideration of the low socioeconomic status of the majority of Roma families, the transition from secondary towards tertiary education is a big issue that deprives Roma students of achieving a quality education. It is quite disturbing that plenty of motivated students willing to enroll in secondary and

tertiary education lack that opportunity due to financial constraints and absence of state supportive mechanisms.

1.2 Secondary and Tertiary Education Among Roma

The last population census in Bulgaria for 2011 concludes that the Roma ethnic minority is traditionally the third biggest minority in the country, comprising of 325, 343 individuals and making 4.9% of the overall population (National Statistical Institute Bulgaria 2011, 3). Since the census allows people not to identify their ethnic origin, it can be admitted that the real number of Roma in the country is much higher. Other estimations claim that the actual number of Roma reaches around 750 000 individuals, or around 10% of the overall population (Council of Europe 2010). In comparison with the last census in 2001, the educational level of Roma in secondary and tertiary education shows negligible improvements. **Table 1** shows the general progress that Bulgaria has made for a period of 10 years:

Education

Education/ years	Bulgarians		Turks		Roma	
	2001	% 2011	2001	% 2011	2001	% 2011
Higher	19.2	25.6	2.4	4.9	0.2	0.5
Secondary	47.6	52.3	21.9	29.7	6.5	9.0
Basic	24.9	18.0	46.9	44.5	41.8	40.8
Primary	6.9	3.4	18.6	13.4	28.3	27.9

Table 1: Educational Levels of Roma in Bulgaria. Derived from the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, page 23. Document available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf

For the period between 2001 and 2011, the secondary education among Roma has increased only with 2.5% while in other two ethnic communities there is an increase with 4,7% and 7.8%. The “progress” in tertiary education among Roma can be hardly considered. While ethnic Bulgarians and Turks show a gradual improvement, respectfully with 6.4% and 2.5%, Roma people have barely reached 0.5% - an insignificant change with 0.3%. This data undoubtedly shows big disparities in educational achievements among Roma and non-Roma. It also puts under question the effectiveness of the integrational policies since the country adopted its Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society¹ (FP) in April 1999.

1.3 State Policies on Secondary and Tertiary Education for Roma

Before 1989, Bulgarian governments have failed to recognize the problems of Roma in all spheres of life and in fact, did not have an adequate legislation to address the integrational issues of Roma people. (Russinov 2001). It is important to be acknowledged that the FP was adopted as a needed step within the pre-accession requirements by the European Union (EU) where the existence of mechanisms for protection and integration of minorities was one of the strongest conditions for future membership in the EU. In relation to secondary education, Part V of the FP acknowledges that “(...) the common discrimination, the poverty, the lack of acting programs (...) lead to avalanche increase in the number of Roma children, who do not attend school or drop out before graduating from secondary education” (Council of Ministers April 22, 5 Section V).

¹ The adoption of the FP is a step of the Bulgarian government towards its full integration to the European Union. On 10 November 1994, the Council of Europe adopted the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and opened the document for signature by member states on 1 February 1995. Furthermore, states were invited to implement the principles through proper legislation and policies. As a direct response to the invitation, Bulgaria has ratified the Convention on 18 February 1999 and consequently adopted its FP on April 22, 1999. Source: <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst/ns/6/ID/1461> Accessed 03.06.2018

In the same section, the FP identifies key strategic priorities in order to prevent the lagging behind in Roma education: full desegregation of Roma schools, elimination of the practice to send normal Roma children in schools for mentally disabled and counteractions against racism in classrooms.

Vague positive measures such as the organization of preparatory courses for Roma applying to universities was envisioned in the FP but has never been implemented. Although the FP is the first official document after 1989 that raises the issues of Roma people, resources towards desegregation and transportation to schools, support for Roma students in secondary and tertiary education were not allocated at all (Petkova, n.d., 12). Measures for educational integration of Roma in secondary and tertiary education were not supported by governmental authorities because there was no mechanism for interventions. Efforts to comply with EU accession requirements have been further transformed into a bulk of consequent weak strategies and programs that “imitate initiatives related to the development of minority integration policies by governments” (Petkova, n.d., 9).

Since 1999, major integrational initiatives and strategies for the Roma integration were adopted by decision of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. Only on 1 March 2012, the National Assembly ratified the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) as policy framework document that leads the overall directions of the policies for the social integration of Roma in Bulgaria with a period up to 2020 (National Assembly 2012) .

The NRIS and its action plans have been following the same paradigm of formal engagement with Roma education. The first CSMR on the NRIS for 2012 identifies that long-term measures are missing, most of them follow project-based implementation with major EU financial contribution and scarce resources from the national budget. The report also acknowledges that while mainstream educational policies do not capture Roma education, only for the academic 2012/2013 initiatives

of Roma, pro-Roma NGOs and donors have helped more than 280 Roma to enroll in and continue their tertiary education (Dimitrov and Decheva 2013, 39).

The same pattern of inadequate state engagement has been identified in the last CSMR from 2018. It acknowledges that the first ever action by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) to provide “positive discrimination measures” through targeted scholarships and mentorship for Roma in secondary education in 2016 has encountered parliamentary and public discontent that did not terminate the initiative, but influenced the role of the state: scholarship was provided by the Roma Education Fund (REF) while the state covered the honoraria of mentoring teachers through its Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Minorities (CEICSM) . The crucial role of NGOs and private donors in the area of Roma education is again acknowledged and elevated as a main supportive instrument for Roma inclusion in secondary and tertiary education (Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance et al. 2018).

The NRIS and all previous initiatives related to Roma integration in Bulgaria have been implemented with consideration of the 10 Common principles of Roma Inclusion recommended by the Council of the EU to member states in 2009 (Council of the European Union 2009). Principle 2 “Explicit but not exclusive targeting” and Principle 4 “Aiming for the mainstream” can be considered positive approaches since integrational measures for Roma are included in all policy strategies targeting vulnerable citizens. Despite this, it cannot be accessed to what extent interventions for marginalized communities have had an impact on Roma education in Bulgaria. The latest report by the EU Court of Auditors regarding the implementation of the NRIS for the period of 2007-2015 concludes that “In Bulgaria, no specific monitoring and accountability procedures were provided for the NRIS. Moreover, not all measures had quantifiable targets.”(European Court of Auditors 2016, 32). Ultimately, the actual contribution of EU funds

and governmental spending on Roma education in Bulgaria remains a question that can not be answered.

Since the literature on SNSP in Bulgaria is limited and provided mainly through foreign foundations and institutes, the literature review on the topic will encompass these works but will mainly draw information from foreign research on the topic. The next section of the thesis will explain the meaning of SNSP and will explore the necessary factors in which partnerships can be established and developed.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

In the following sections, I will present how SNSP is described in the literature, main prerequisites that keep SNSP strong and added value that is expected after stakeholders enter into SNSP. In addition, main approaches to systematize governmental capacity to initiate SNSP will be examined to justify the operational framework of state capacity used to answer the research question. Due to the nature of my research question, I will concentrate on the literature that engages specifically with the concept of SNSP between states, NGOs, and donors.

2.1 Definition of SNSP

SNSP is defined as an interaction between the public and the private sector. The practice and the definition of SNSP itself are inspired by the wide philosophy of the New Public Management that gained strong support after 1980's. In its new concept of public administration, governments decentralize the provision of public services and open space for private actors to participate in the process of service provision through competition (Kalimullah, Alam, and Nour 2012). In other words, the ideology behind SNSP is related to deliberative actions of states to use available resources of non-state actors for the provision of adequate public services.

SNSP is as an interactive process between governments NGOs and donor agencies. It is also emphasized that the existence of common objectives, mechanisms for interaction, sharing of information and resources are pivotal variables that define the level of successfulness in every SNSP (J. M. Brinkerhoff 2002, 20). Likewise, Derick Brinkerhoff discovers that SNSP creates a network of synergy. It occurs when actors understand their operational limitations and seek joint actions for better results (Derick W. Brinkerhoff 1998). He concludes that SNSPs are "cross-sectoral interactions whose purpose is to achieve convergent objectives through combined efforts of both sets of actors but where the respective roles and responsibilities of the actors involved remain distinct" (Derick W. Brinkerhoff 1998, 2).

Similarly, Gazley and Brudney (2007) use the term "collaboration" in reference to all joint activities undertaken by governments and NGOs that include mutual planning and implementation of public services. Both definitions imply that NGOs are recognized as crucial institutes that support states in their efforts to provide better public services. Additionally, willingness for cooperation and mutual understanding on common objectives are represented as factors that

predefine the successfulness of every partnership. It can be asserted that SNSP as a process occurs under constructive collaborations that grow into joint activities and in the same way SNSP cannot be realized if actors follow confrontational ideologies.

2.2 Nature of Collaboration in SNSP

SNSP can be realized when NGOs engage with governmental institutions on a centralized level which is perceived as the highest collaboration between the two parties. It mirrors political willingness and openness of state authorities to delegate or share resources with non-state actors for the provision of public services. This level shows high commitment but is the most difficult and demanding. A limited number of experienced and resourceful NGOs are able to fulfill requirements by states. In these set of relationship, NGOs operate under contracts with the state. They are given obligations to manage the provision of public services that otherwise fall under the jurisdiction of the state. In contrast, an engagement between NGOs and local authorities are defined as local SNSPs. Although local SNSP offer public services within limited geographic and population scopes, there are considered the most successful ones. Reasons for that are numerous: local authorities are keener to engage in collaboration with NGOs because these organizations have knowledge on issues related with the local population and can propose successful measures that correspond to the needs of beneficiaries. Full contractual arrangements for the provision of public services can be established, but common methods such as partnership agreements and collaboration schemes give additional flexibility of interactions on the local level (Toftisova 2001).

The literature identifies different types of governmental engagement in SNSP. One of the most comprehensive and explanatory types of governmental engagement in SNSP is given by Batley (2006). According to him, state engagement with NGOs and donors can occur under three dimensions:

- **Tight hierarchical contracts** - The role of the state in this type of partnership is characterized by strict steering, monitoring, and control over partners. At this level, states establish precise contractual relations, provide adequate funding and resources to NGOs or donors and dominate with their agenda on the implementation of joint activities. This type of state engagement requires adequate state capacity to fulfill its responsibilities and to monitor the activities of the partners (Batley 2006, 10).
- **Loose but hierarchical agreements** – the government engages in SNSP but engagement rules are not clear and consequently, not respected by both sides. Here, although the state has the power to monitor and steer the activities of their partners, vagueness in responsibilities affects the quality and sustainability of interventions (Batley 2006, 10).
- **Loose agreements** – SNSPs operate on the basis of complementary efforts from both sides but there are no clear obligations, roles, and responsibilities. States in such partnerships support activities of NGOs but not on a regular basis, they do not engage in monitoring or steering activities and the collaboration is considered rather horizontal. This kind of SNSP deems to be ineffective since there is no mechanism to measure actual engagement in the provision of services. (Batley 2006, 10–11).

The three dimensions of state engagement in partnerships suggested by Batley show that the level of governmental willingness to initiate or contribute to service provision can be identified through the nature of the agreement they define with NGOs and donors. Therefore, NGOs and donors' role in SNSP is clearly predefined by governmentally established systems of engagement. Batley's typologies also resonate with the understanding that state capacity to initiate, steer and monitor SNSPs is probably the most important variable that determines the overall effectiveness and sustainability of public services provided through SNSP.

Batley's dimensions of engagement guarantee that tight, coordinated and monitored state-led partnerships yield better provision of public services. His typologies clearly show the prevailing power of states to either elevate or minimize the nature of SNSP. As an outcome, it can be concluded that equity and reciprocity in SNSPs depend mainly on governmental willingness to embrace those values. The next section identifies the added values of SNSP and specifically, the positive impact on engaging non-state actors in educational support for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

2.3 Added value of SNSP in Education

NGOs have numerous advantages in terms of ideology – they follow philanthropic purpose that excludes collaboration for profit maximization. NGOs are more likely to seek collaboration and SNSPs, based on their missions to work for the development of social capital among the society (Batley and Rose 2011, 2). That argument can additionally strengthen the concept of the explicit contribution of NGOs to Roma education in Bulgaria. It assures that better and targeted interventions in Roma education can be successful, once the Bulgarian government fully recognizes Roma and pro-Roma NGOs as partners, and facilitate collaboration with them.

NGOs are more open to collaboration when states lack financial and management resources to initiate interventions. NGOs are flexible partners. They are also altruistic risk-takers that achieve higher results with scarce capacities. NGOs are entities that fill the gap between governments and the private sector in terms of service delivery in social areas like education, where achieved goals are visible in a long-term (Solana 2014). It can be predicted that partnership with NGOs leads to better utilization of state resources in education. Interventions in SNSP can be implemented in cost-efficient way and sustainability can be reached with minimized expenditures.

Studies on NGOs and their impact on community development promote NGOs explicit role in the provision of innovative practices for social inclusion and support for the most deprived strata of the society. NGOs tend to raise the voice of poor and marginalized communities through advocacy campaigns and empowering initiatives (Mercer 2002, 8). SNSPs establish opportunities for states to be better informed on beneficiaries' issue and to device adequate policies towards them.

Donor's participation in SNSP is also important. In her review of donor participation in SNSP, Brinkerhoff informs that donor-funded SNSPs have a positive impact on the relations between the actors, they stimulate both sides to engage in dialogue and mutual actions for better service provision. (J. M. Brinkerhoff 2003). In a similar manner, it can be noted that resources provided by donors through NGOs are a strong stimulus for states to enter in SNSPs and to improve the provision of public services.

Previous chapters have identified that mainstream education policies in Bulgaria have not been effective in increasing the enrollment and graduation levels of Roma from secondary and tertiary education. The background of Roma education in the country also reasons that a positive change in educational achievements within the community requires targeted interventions. For instance, NGOs and donor's direct outputs for access to secondary and tertiary education of Roma have

proved to be effective. Especially in developing countries like Bulgaria, the future presence of NGOs and donors as supportive instruments for Roma education is quite necessary.

NGOs and donors can provide targeted support through innovative and effective mechanisms that complement states in expanding the access and quality education for students. NGOs and donor's outputs are concentrated mainly in the provision of education service - delivery initiatives, voucher and voucher-like initiatives, professional and support services as well as philanthropic initiatives (LaRocque and Lee 2011). They encompass different targeted interventions that affect the enrollment and graduation level of vulnerable communities and consequently, contribute to the overall educational agenda of a country.

Within main initiatives identified by LaRocque and Lee, there are some interventions by NGOs that correspond to the educational needs of Roma in Bulgaria and have been applied by Roma, pro-Roma NGOs and donors. NGOs can provide tutoring services to students, targeted scholarship programs, ancillary services such as coverage of transportation and accommodation costs (LaRocque and Lee 2011, 21). This support is relevant for most Roma students in Bulgaria who experience financial and educational difficulties. Such interventions can contribute in application periods for secondary and tertiary education, and can have added value for successful attainment of higher education.

All in all, diversified tools used by NGOs and donors are either established to improve the quality of educational services provided by states, or to complement them. In both cases, the reasoning for NGOs and donors to engage in SNSP is directly related to their efforts to contribute for efficient treatment of people in need.

Although there are numerous positive outcomes for states to engage in SNSPs, it is up to authorities to decide on whether to collaborate with non- state actors or not. Equivalently, state capacity to engage in partnerships is the most important precondition for successful joint interventions. In the next section, I will explore main theoretical frameworks related to state capacity and SNSP.

2.4 State Capacity to Initiate Partnerships

State capacity is a broad term and encompasses different values, depending on what type of contextualization of state capacity is adopted. In my work, I use the definition of state capacity given by Derick W. Brinkerhoff. According to him, state capacity “deals with the aptitudes, resources, relationships, and facilitating conditions necessary to act effectively to achieve some intended purpose.”(Derik W. Brinkerhoff 2007, 3). He indicates that performance of governmental structures on different levels is used to properly measure state capacity. Those levels are individuals, organizations, sectoral or national strategies, institutions, institutional rules, policies, customs, and practices. Performance of all levels of state capacity explains the overall system of governmental effectiveness to achieve the desired purpose through collective performance (Derik W. Brinkerhoff 2007, 3–4).

This broadened definition of state capacity encompasses indicators that can be related to all kind of state performance and undertakings, including initiation of SNSP. Therefore, state capacity to initiate partnerships depends mainly on legislative, normative and strategic frameworks that prescribe procedures and roles of states to enter in SNSP. Legislative and normative frameworks define a certain level of authority, roles and resources of governmental institutions to initiate

partnerships. At overall, state capacity to initiate partnership is directly related to its legislative, institutional and financial readiness.

2.4.1 Legislative and Normative Capacity

Legislative and normative frameworks established by states shape the overall capacity of states to initiate SNSP. On the one hand, legislative and normative frameworks predefine the ability and the organizational structure of governments to engage in partnerships. On the other hand, the existence of supportive legal and regulatory frameworks can either impose boundaries on NGO's and donors to engage in SNSP or to independently provide services for their beneficiaries. (Derick W. Brinkerhoff 1998, 12).

It is obvious that legislative, normative and regulatory environment define rules in SNSP and strengthen the dominant position of states to establish the nature of relationships. In a set of defined system and procedures of state engagement in SNSP, states are the actors who shape the environment of interaction. If normative frameworks are weak and do not prescribe a leading role of a state to initiate partnerships then the capacity of state authorities to lead SNSP can be judged minimal or at least ineffective. In the worst case, when there are no normative frameworks, a leading governmental role will never occur, its roles and responsibilities in SNSP will be vague or inadequate.

2.4.2. Institutional and Administrative Capacity

Institutional and administrative capacity is the second core variable that determines the leading role of a state in SNSP. To initiate partnerships, the state needs institutions that have authority and capacity to actively seek initiation of SNSP. Institutional capacity means to have the necessary administrative bodies that operationalize key objectives set in legislative and normative frameworks. They are administrative units that are vested with authority, expertise and sufficient resources for policy implementation (Batley and McLoughlin 2009, 10). Based on this argument, limitations of institutional capacity can be derived as well. While institutions are the units that materialize policy objectives into actual implementation, their capacity depends on how legislative, normative and strategic frameworks define institutional roles. Following that, legal, normative and strategic prescriptions can be outlined as factors that influence the institutional capacity to initiate partnerships.

Brinkerhoff suggests that states need to have institutions and administrative structures that are able to enter in collaboration with non-state actors. In his approach, effective leading institutions are characterized by favorable administrative practices, technical and manpower capacities that enable them to facilitate SNSP. In order to reach this effectiveness, Brinkerhoff urges states to empower their public sector agencies with necessary resources, monitoring, and management capacity to actively engage and collaborate with non-state stakeholders (Derick W. Brinkerhoff 1998, 16). Overall, it can be concluded that one of the biggest barriers to successful state-led partnerships is the shortage in public sector's capacity. A lack of authoritativeness, available financial resources,

and competent staff minimizes opportunities for institutions to lead or engage actively in partnerships.

2.4.3 Financial Capacity

The third factor within administrative capacity is connected to financial resources. Here, the financial capacity of institutions to share, contract or delegate resources to NGOs plays an important role. Previously, I acknowledged that institutional capacity to initiate partnerships is correlated with the authority of institutions in having financial resources when entering into partnerships. Therefore, state capacity to provide financial resources for common interventions is a precondition for successful SNSP.

The World Bank Governance indicators suggest that state institutions with adequate financial resources are able to promote the development of the private sector as well (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2009, 6). It is highly expected that institutions with sufficient resources will not face boundaries but can lead to successful SNSP.

Funding arrangements initiated by governments can strengthen the legitimacy and the authority of state institutions in future SNSP. In contrast, the lack of financial resources from states can lead to the so-called "resource dependence" where one of the actors is engaged in a partnership, but due to its inefficiency to provide resources for common intervention, these actors become dependent on their partners' resources and dominating contribution (Batley 2011, 309). Therefore, a state with limited financial resources risks losing its authority and legitimacy when entering in SNSP. Similar recognition on negative consequences for resource-dependent states is acknowledged by Batley

and Rose (2011, 309) who add that in a scenario when a state is a resource-dependent partner, its bargaining power over joint intervention is decreased as well.

The literature on SNSP identifies three core variables that provide a favorable environment and empower states to take the leading role in SNSP. These variables also determine the extent to which a state can initiate SNSP for the provision of public services. These three variables are legislative and normative frameworks, institutional and administrative capacity, and financial resources. In order to answer my research question, I will assess the capacity of the Bulgarian state through these three variables. The next section of the thesis will present the methodology that I adopt.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

I mainly adopt the schematic framework of government capacity devised by Batley and McLoughlin (2009, 31–32). The framework is appropriate for my research question since it addresses insufficiency levels of governments with legislative, administrative and financial character. It gives an added value to my research since it encompasses measurements that define state capacity in three levels – higher, medium and lower. I address those measurements in my analysis and provide an estimated level of governmental capacity in relation to partnerships for Roma in secondary and tertiary education.

I measure the legislative and normative capacity of the Bulgarian government through an analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategy (2012- 2020)² and its last adopted Action Plan (AP)

² National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria. File available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf. Accessed 03.06.2018

(2015- 2020)³. Within this evaluation, I explore main prescriptions of the NRIS and its AP in relations to partnerships with NGOs and donors for educational integration of Roma and evaluate to what extent initiation of a partnership is suggested within the NRIS.

Second, within the NRIS and its AP, I identify main institutions engaged with the educational integration of Roma. My evaluation on the institutional and administrative capacity is applied to identified entities. I observe to what extent the NRIS and its AP suggest those institutions to initiate partnerships for Roma education. I identify main responsibilities of those institutions as well as reports related to their engagement with Roma in secondary and tertiary education.

My third level of analysis explores to what extent financial resources to initiate partnerships for Roma education exist within observed institutions. The level of financial resource is identified through external evaluation documents and reports issued by these institutions. At all levels of measurement, I tackle main capacity issues and address possible outcomes from those on SNSP as well as the impact of those outcomes on integrational policies for Roma in secondary and tertiary education.

In addition, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with Deyan Kolev, the director of Center Amalipe, the biggest Roma NGO in Bulgaria and with a representative of REF, who asked for anonymity. I codify all references to, and quotations of REF representative's opinion in my analysis as (I1). Similarly, I codify all references to, and quotations of Mr. Kolev's opinion in the analysis as (I2). Insights from NGO and donor perspective on their relations with governmental authorities

³ Bulgaria's National Action Plan for the Period 2015 – 2020. File available (in Bulgarian) at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy2_bg.pdf. Accessed 02.06.2018

related to partnership experience and collaboration for joint activities for Roma in secondary and tertiary education are incorporated in my analysis.

3.1 Limitations

The topic on state capacity for initiation of partnerships has broad scopes and cannot be limited only to legislative, institutional and financial variables. Factors such as political willingness and historical background of relationships between the Bulgarian government, NGOs and donors can have an impact on current state relations with non-state actors and these factors are not included in my analysis.

Additionally, schools, universities, regional administrations and other responsible institutions have direct engagement with Roma education in Bulgaria. The capacity of those institutions is not evaluated within my framework.

Furthermore, the limited number of my interviewee can only provide single experiences related to their collaboration and partnership with the state. While both of my respondents represent institutions that are operating widely in Bulgaria, their opinions and reflections do not provide wide representation of state engagement with non-state actors in initiatives for Roma education.

Chapter 4 - Analysis

4.1 Legislative Capacity

It should be acknowledged that currently, the Bulgarian government does not have structured legislative or normative framework that prescribes procedures for partnerships with non-state actors. A research on existing partnership frameworks reveals some weak aspects within Bulgarian legislative capacity. It suggests that, although Bulgarian legislative framework recognizes the potential of NGOs and donors to contribute in interventions (considered public services as well) this recognition is scattered within different policy documents that have mainly declarative character for potential SNSP. Initiation of SNSP is not accompanied with favorable legislation and regulation. The lack of an appropriate framework for collaboration minimizes the chances for the emergence of partnerships and structured regulation still awaits its adoption (Toftisova 2001, 4).

A research on state engagement with NGOs reveals that since the Bulgarian accession to the European Union in 2007, the only favorable framework which has been incentivizing state authorities to engage in SNSP have been the EU co-financed Operational Programmes (OP) (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) that explicitly require expenditures and interventions to be implemented through partnerships between governmental institutions at all levels and NGOs⁴. The research describes that although this mechanism exists, NGOs are the main actors that seek SNSP. In the

⁴ According to Article 11 (Partnership) from the general provisions on the usage of EU Funds given by the European Council, states are obliged to establish partnerships when implementing policies through national Operational Programmes. Data derived from Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006. Source available online at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006R1083&from=EN>. Accessed: 03.06.2018

area of joint interventions in public services, the work accentuates that the only form of state engagement with NGOs which is still not developed is the preferential willingness of the state to outsource the provision of public services through NGOs (Gorchilova 2010).

The lack of legislative structure is also recognized by my respondents:

“Overall, there is no specific legislation or regulation by which the state can create a mechanism for debate, cooperation, and initiation of partnerships that can lead to joint and targeted efforts to support Roma in secondary and tertiary education. Everything else that emerges as collaboration is on the basis of ad hoc initiatives undertaken by NGOs. Usually, we [the NGOs] take the leading role to meet with governmental structures on central level and to suggest mutual interventions related to Roma education“ (I2).

Based on presented research and the feedback from Roma NGO representative, I conclude that the government does not have a legislative framework that addresses procedures for state authorities to either initiate or engage in SNSP. Despite weaknesses in legislation, incentives from OP are identified as positive tools that may encourage state authorities to initiate or engage in partnerships with NGOs for interventions in the area of Roma education.

Legislative weaknesses have been recognized in the last years and measures for that have been undertaken. Since December 2017, a working group established by the Council of Ministers (CoM) and NGOs representatives have been discussing the establishment of a new consultative unit that will support the state administration in the creation of policies for collaboration and support for NGOs. One of the leading principles of the future entity will be to stimulate SNSPs on a national and local level (Council of Ministers 2018). The establishment of this unit may provide options for future SNSPs and adoption of favorable regulations. Until then, the initiation of partnerships for

educational integration of Roma depends on prescriptions in normative and regulative frameworks such as the NRIS and its Action Plan.

4.2 Normative Capacity

4.2.1 NRIS

The NRIS, further used as the “Strategy” is a policy framework document that leads the overall directions of state policies for the social and economic integration of Roma in Bulgaria. It is a strategic document that unites measures and aims from other strategic documents in the sphere of Roma integration. Therefore, I consider the NRIS as the main document that provides normative ground and procedures for interaction between the state and non-state actors.

The Strategy says that the government leads a “policy of promoting investment in human development and citizen active participation in overcoming the existing challenges” (National Assembly 2012, 18–19). This argument is strengthened in its conclusion, where it is emphasized that the collaboration of state authorities with NGOs and Roma people in formulation and implementation of integrational policies is of a high importance for the successful Roma integration (National Assembly 2012, 23).

However, partnerships for interventions in Roma education are not prescribed. Municipalities are the only institutions that are encouraged to implement interventions through their own resources or in partnerships with NGOs (National Assembly 2012, 21).

Within the NRIS, specific prescriptions for state authorities to initiate partnerships do not exist and the role of NGOs is limited to consultations only. Participation of NGOs is envisioned only in key consultative and coordinative institutions on a central, regional and local level, responsible for

Roma integration. Within these bodies, NGOs' roles are only related to consultations and collaborations for policy formulation in the area of Roma integration (National Assembly 2012, 20).

The last CSMR also reveals that NGOs are mainly included in consultation with governmental authorities. It describes that Roma NGOs are effectively engaged in consultative committees and subcommittees in discussions on priorities within the new period of the OP 2014- 2020. Even the word "partnership" is used in reference to a successful consultative environment created by governmental authorities (Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance et al. 2018, 17). Ultimately, normative prescriptions within the NRIS and actual governmental practice suggest that the accepted form of NGOs engagement is collaboration within consultative bodies. NGOs' role there is mainly to consult state authorities in formulation and prioritization of policies rather than the actual partnership for mutual interventions. I previously acknowledged partnership comes to a degree where actors combine common resources and initiate joint policy implementation – a level of collaboration that goes beyond consultative interactions and which has not been established yet.

4.2.2 AP to NRIS

The same vague references to partnerships are translated to its AP as well. There are 31 indicated activities in relation to Roma education. Out of 31 activities, NGOs are included as “responsible institutions for implementation of the measures” in 7 of them, but a further explanation on how exactly the state delegates responsibility towards NGOs is not given. The AP establishes a communication framework where NGOs are included as groups for communication and sharing of

information. Although "Partnership" is one of the leading principles in the communication framework, the AP only specifies the establishment of close partnerships with national media. In a similar manner, the AP promotes the partnership principle where collaboration between the public sector, the business, and NGOs are leading (Council of Ministers 2016, 61). However, mechanisms for such partnership is not further presented.

Despite all proven initiatives by Roma and pro-Roma organizations in increasing the enrollment and graduation level of Roma in secondary and tertiary education through targeted initiatives, the state has not either adopted those practices within its educational policies, neither has sought partnerships to contribute to proven practices by NGOs and donors. CSMRs highlight that although NGO and donor's interventions are recognized by MoES as effective measures to combat dropouts and to boost enrollment and graduation levels of Roma, the absence of governmental support and contribution to these positive interventions is an issue that has been existing for a long time. The lack of state mechanisms to support those initiatives is represented as one of the biggest weaknesses which impedes possibilities for the state to actively engage in Roma educational integration (Center Amalipe 2015b, 3).

Based on my analysis and acknowledgments of CSMRs, I consider that within the Strategy, a minimal importance of the establishment of SNSPs is given. This leads to my conclusion that the document does not provide a normative framework for interventions in Roma education through SNSP. It is questionable whether the government recognizes the importance of SNSPs for Roma education. It cannot be assessed to what extent the Strategy elevates the importance of state-led partnerships in Roma education. All in all, the normative weakness in state capacity is obvious – the Strategy does not indicate how state authorities can initiate partnerships, it does not provide and can not serve as a normative framework for SNSP.

I identified that Bulgarian government does not have legislative and normative frameworks that can prescribe roles for governmental institutions initiate or enter in partnerships. Therefore, it can be concluded that Bulgaria does not have a legislative and normative capacity to initiate SNSPs. In the next section, I will continue with elaboration on institutional and administrative capacity.

Chapter 5 - Institutional and Administrative capacity

MoES is a leading responsible institution for implementation of measures in NRIS under priority “Education” (National Assembly 2012, 13). Additionally, the AP to the NRIS recognizes Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE), CEICSM and municipalities as main institutions, responsible for the implementation of measures related to Roma education (Council of Ministers 2016, 1). My evaluation of institutional capacity will be concentrate on the above-mentioned institutions. Since financial resources to initiate and enter into SNSP are mainly related to institutional capacity, I will evaluate the financial capacity of these institutions as well.

5.1 MoES

The MoES is a centralized institution with executive authority that leads the national policy in the area of education and science. Main responsibilities of MoES are concentrated in the development, coordination, monitoring, and control of national education programs in all levels. The operational functions of MOES are managed by its general and specialized administration (Council of Ministers 2010). Based on its regulation, MoES is a centralized institution that is mainly responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring the overall political program of the

Bulgarian government related to education and is an institution for strategic policy formulation. Hence, its responsibilities are mainly related to establishment, coordination, and monitoring of educational curricula for schools and universities.

The structural regulation document of MOES does not include responsibilities to initiate partnerships or to delegate authority to NGOs to operate any kind of programs or interventions. Although MOES holds budget, its duties are to distribute finances to its secondary authoritative units under its supervision. Roles and responsibilities of 4 of its specialized administrations are mainly related to administrative management of partnerships agreements and contracts between secondary authoritative institutions related to MOES with budget and external state and non-state institutions. Additionally, the main responsibilities of specialized administrations are to "fulfill activities in preparation, application, implementation, management, and reporting of projects, financed with resources from European Structure and Investment Funds" (Council of Ministers 2010, 36 Art. 52). Here, it should be acknowledged that within MOES, there is no specialized administration that deals with educational integration.

The example of the scholarship program for Roma students in secondary education in 2016 reminds that MoES can delegate budget to CEICSM to enter into a partnership with REF and therefore, can be considered a partner for joint interventions. However, MOES as a centralized institution cannot directly initiate or engage in SNSP. Alternatively, I consider MoES as an institution with dual characteristics. On the one hand, MoES, an educational institution on central level and its specialized administration do not have authority, the institutional and administrative capacity to pursue and lead SNSP. On the other hand, through its authority to delegate budget, MoES can indirectly enter into partnerships through its subordinate institutions.

5.2 RIE

Inefficient administrative capacity is identified within MoES' RIE as secondary authoritative institutions with a budget from MoES. According to their statute and operational responsibilities “as territorial administration for management and control of the system of pre-school and school education RIE implement methodologic support to kindergartens, schools, regional centers for support in the process of inclusive education and centers for support to personal development in respective territory”(Minister of Education and Science 2017, chap. 3 Art.9 (1)). Based on their regulation document, RIE also do not have specific administrative units that deal with educational integration. The statute of RIE suggests that they are mainly responsible to implement prescriptions, recommendations, methodologic support and control upon schools and kindergartens. Although they are considered secondary authoritative institutions, their budget is allocated mainly to support the operational activities of staff members within RIE and other administrative units under their supervision.

My findings reveal that RIE does not have responsibilities, authorities and financial resources to initiate or engage in SNSP. Ultimately, they can be considered as institutions that do not have the capacity to initiate SNSP.

When asked to comment on the administrative capacity of MoES and RIE my interviewee also identified weaknesses within these institutions:

“MoES and the state have fundamental obligation to develop educational policies. Within MoES, there is no administration that works only with educational integration. State initiatives for secondary and tertiary education for Roma will happen only when such policies are envisioned on a centralized level. On a level of RIE, there are no experts who work only for Roma educational

integration. That is to say, there is no administrative capacity on policy formulation level and the absence of this capacity affects the overall implementation of educational integration policies towards Roma" (I2).

Mr. Kolev also comments that MoES and RIE are institutions that are mainly responsible for policy formulation and coordination. The fact that there are no specialized administrative units which can observe the issues of Roma in secondary and tertiary education and device favorable strategies leads to the assumption that the educational integration of Roma is still not recognized as filed for policy formulation and implementation. It is quite affirming that the absence of administrative units engaged with Roma education blocks further opportunities for state authorities to identify issues that prevent the access and graduation of Roma in secondary and tertiary education.

The lack of information can be an obstacle for the establishment of future policies that directly correspond to the needs of Roma students in secondary and tertiary education. Here, the presence and initiatives of NGOs and donors play an important role. Donor's perspective on informing state authorities on the needs of Roma students are clearly emphasized by my respondent:

"One of our goal from an advocacy point of view is to initiate conversation with governments, to prove that our initiatives to support Roma in secondary and tertiary education lead to great results. We have proven that our interventions bring positive change and the further result is that we established a fruitful partnership with the government for the provision of mentoring services and scholarships for Roma students in secondary education" (I1)

In addition, donor's overall aim indicates that proven initiatives by non- state actors need to be embraced by state authorities:

"Among others, our overall aim from an advocacy point of view is to bring the knowledge, the know- how. The idea is, good practices to be recognized by the state and to see that successful policies are created out of our model. In the end, a successful model grows into actual public policy" (I1)

However, the suggested scenario requires the existence of responsible institutions for policy formulation that are able to identify initiatives established by non- state actors. With references to the current limited administrative capacity on a central level, it is not promising that joint partnership that follows proven models will grow to national policies for future.

5.3 CEICSM

CEICSM is a secondary unit with budget credits from MoES and supports the policy of MoES in implementing policies for educational integration and of children and students from the minorities. CEICSM is registered as specialized territorial administration with a statute of a juridical person. CEICSM is responsible to develop, finance and support projects that have the purpose to encourage the equal access to quality education and improvement of academic results of students from ethnic minorities. Its main responsibilities include the provision of additional support for students that face difficulties in grasping the educational material, activities to bring back in school students, who dropped out from the educational system and programs for improvement of their educational results. The work of CEICSM is closely related to the implementation of educational issues of students from ethnic minorities, identified within the NRIS and its AP (CEICSM 2005).

Based on its statute, CEICSM receives annual complementary financing from MoES for the implementation of its activities. The main responsibility of CEICSM is to raise financial resources from national and international institutions through donations and other forms of support. Most importantly, those financial resources can be used only to provide project-based support to state and municipal kindergartens and schools, and other units related to them (Council of Ministers 2005, 1 Art. 10). The institution does not have operational means to establish SNSPs with NGOs and donors. In terms of initiation of a possible collaboration with non-state actors, CEICSM is a

passive institution which does not have the authority and the obligation to play an active role in SNSP. In contrast, the nature of CEICSM is opened for all external attempts and calls for collaboration and establishment of partnerships. In such cases, CEICSM has the administrative and financial capacity to enter into SNSP. Ultimately, CEICSM can be considered as a “state foundation” that has the sole responsibility to accumulate financial resources and to distribute them to state educational institutions nationwide. To sum up, I consider CEICSM as an institution that does not have the capacity to initiate SNSP.

5.4 Municipalities

As I acknowledged in my previous chapters, the normative framework presented in the NRIS clearly identifies municipalities’ responsibility to implement measures for the educational integration of Roma through their budgets or in partnerships with NGOs. Almost half of the educational activities include municipalities as responsible institutions for implementation within the AP to the NRIS. A municipal contribution is indicated to support Roma children and students through their inclusion in kindergartens and schools. In relation to Roma education, municipalities are targeted as responsible institutions for coverage of Roma students in after-school activities in order to prevent difficulties in education and to minimize dropouts.

The communication plan in the AP to the NRIS indicates the crucial tasks for municipalities to establish municipal plans for Roma integration based on strategic priorities in the NRIS, to provide a favorable mechanism for coordination and collaboration with local NGOs in order to correspond to challenges that emerge within Roma on a local level. Nevertheless, municipalities are

encouraged to follow the principle of partnership with local NGOs in order to provide sustainability and inclusion in all their undertakings for Roma integration (Council of Ministers 2016, 59–64).

Roma NGOs have been pursuing municipalities to continue their plans to NRIS for the new period of 2015- 2020. However, a general pattern of limited budgetary allocation exists. Most of the initiatives envisioned in municipal plans do not include own budget for implementation. In contrast, the implementation of activities for Roma integration relies on funding from OP. According to CSMRs, for the period of 2015- 2020, municipalities will be mainly engaged to apply for projects and to rely on their approval (Center Amalipe 2015a, 68). Their argument brings me to the conclusion that unexperienced municipalities will not have the opportunities to apply with strong project proposals and will consequently limit their chances to initiate activities for Roma educational integration. Without allocation of own finances, a failure to receive support through projects leads to direct stagnation in educational policies on a local level.

The pattern of insufficient municipal allocation for implementation is the biggest weaknesses of local authorities and this practice continues to impose uncertainties on effective implementation of initiatives for educational integration. The number of municipalities having integration plans has decreased to 194 by the end of 2016. The last CSMR informs that funding through OP to municipalities requires local authorities to have updated Roma integration plans after 2017 (Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance et al. 2018, 16). Based on that information, I assume that access to additional financial resources will be a strong stimulus for municipalities to be eligible and the number of local authorities having Roma integration plans is expected to increase in future.

The existence of municipal plans for Roma integration is a positive step towards the educational integration of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. Collaboration between municipalities and

NGOs is relatively strong on a local level and has contributed to coverage of tuition fees, provision of scholarships and support for accommodation costs for young Roma to enroll and graduate from universities. Nevertheless, once implemented, since SNSPs tend to be recognized by governmental authorities as policies that can be adopted and undertaken without the support of non-state actors (see Kolev 2016).

All in all, a positive trend of municipal engagement in SNSP is visible. In 2016, 79 municipalities include NGOs as institutions, responsible for the implementation of numerous activities related to local plans for Roma integration. Other 60 municipalities indicate the existence of SNSPs with NGOs (Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance et al. 2018, 16). This outcome can be considered a strong indicator of openness and willingness of municipalities to establish SNSP.

Although municipalities face difficulties to provide own resources to implement educational policies towards Roma, there are successfully adopting practices of NGOs and provide support for Roma students for access and continuation of their education in universities. Moreover, numerous examples note that municipalities delegate the provision of public services to NGOs and successfully maintain SNSP with them. Based on my analysis, I conclude that municipalities in Bulgaria have the capacity to initiate SNSP for Roma inclusion in secondary and tertiary education.

Chapter 6 - Discussion on the Findings

My evaluation reveals that the Bulgarian government has failed to comply with most of the state capacity factors, identified by Batley and Mcloughlin (2009). The lack of legislative and vague normative prescriptions indicates that Bulgaria has a weak and inconsistent framework which does not give an adequate prescription on state initiation and engagement in SNSP.

Generally, MoES, RIES, and CEICSM do not have the administrative and financial capacity to initiate SNSP. Therefore, they do not have the capacity to coordinate, facilitate, contract or provide financial resources in SNSP. Municipalities, on the other hand, are considered the only institutions that have the capacity to actively initiate SNSP. Their ability to contract, coordinate and finance SNSP is considered satisfactory. Based on my analysis, it can be concluded that in general, Bulgarian institutions have a low level of administrative capacity to facilitate and regulate SNSP.

Ultimately, I affirm that Bulgaria has an unsatisfactory and low level of capacity to initiate future partnerships with Roma, pro-Roma NGOs and donors for successful Roma integration in secondary and tertiary education.

6.1. What does low capacity mean for the state?

The low capacity of Bulgarian government suggests that the state is inefficient in establishing favorable policy environment and initiating non-state actors in dialogue (Batley and Mcloughlin 2009, 4). Municipalities are the only authorities that can engage in dialogue, collaboration, and partnerships with NGOs. All other institutions are unable to engage directly with NGOs and the process of interaction there is limited.

The absence of administrative units within MoES that can collaborate and interact with NGOs limit their chances to draw experience from proven methods and initiatives for Roma education. Institutions on a central level will not be able to formulate favorable policies that correspond to the needs of Roma students who mainly experience financial and preparatory difficulties. The general outcome from these issues is that a process of social learning between the state, NGOs and donors cannot be established. The presence of NGOs and donors is an added value that gives opportunities for the state to enhance its capacity and knowledge through the implementation of diverse initiatives that are not included within mainstream policies. To put in another way, engagement with NGOs and donors provide chances for the Bulgarian government to experience and observe the impact of different intervention models which can be consequently adopted as proven methods with less hesitation on their appropriateness or effectiveness.

In a non-responsive institutional environment where donors observe that state authorities are reluctant to embrace their models of interventions in Roma education, the Bulgarian state risks to lose investments from important contributors to the educational advancement of Roma. Since there is no administration on the central level that can seek collaboration with non-stat actors, it is unpredictable whether donors will stay interested and satisfied to constantly seek recognition and signals from governmental authorities that their practices will be embraced and acknowledged as future policies.

6.2 What does low capacity mean for Roma students in secondary and university education?

Weak state capacity to facilitate basic services such as education can create skeptic attitudes and discontent among people who do not see governmental willingness to respond to their needs. As an outcome of this issue, state legitimacy in the provision of public services can be largely questioned and criticized (Batley and McLoughlin 2009, 10). The lack of state engagement with people in need can lead to a hostile public environment. The Roma population can become reluctant to collaborate with institutions and may recognize non-state actors as favorable entities that respond to their needs. All in all, these scenarios can bring issues such as an unregulated expansion of non-state actors' services and weakened cooperation between the government and its citizens.

The absence of adequate public policies and institutions that can initiate SNSP brings me to the conclusion that Roma, pro-Roma NGOs and donors such as REF remain the main entities that effectively respond to the needs of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. These non-state actors have been directly leading the increase in the number of Roma students who successfully access and graduate from secondary and tertiary education. Nevertheless, municipalities are the other institutions that can bring change on a grassroots level and adopt targeted measures for Roma students. However, a strong presence of NGOs on a local level is needed to make sure that educational measures by municipalities are established and implemented. It is not known to what extent municipalities can independently initiate policies and projects for Roma education without being fostered and encouraged by NGOs.

My analysis and interviewees made multiple references to the EU co-financed OP in Bulgaria. It should be acknowledged that for a first time, targeted measures for Roma in secondary and tertiary

institutions within three of these programmes are acknowledged and resources have been allocated for such initiatives for the period 2014-2020. 142 million euro has been allocated for 8 targeted operations towards Roma education. Within those operations, initiatives for socio-economic integration, integrated measures for improving the access to education of Roma and initiatives for support of Roma in higher education are envisioned (Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance et al. 2018, 21).

Since the principle of partnership applies for implementing these initiatives, it is expected that municipalities, CEICSM, NGOs, schools and higher education institutions will enter in collaboration for joint implementation of projects. It is expected that collaboration between state authorities and NGOs in the implementation of diverse interventions will positively contribute to successful access and graduation of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. Although it is not known to what extent project-based initiatives will grow to actual public policies, the positive impact from such activities brings hope and belief to many Roma students that their pursuit of academic development will face fewer difficulties and much more support.

Conclusion

Long-term engagement of non-state actors in Roma education has contributed to the successful educational advancement of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. Nevertheless, models of non-state support have proved their effectiveness, sustainability and potential to become public educational policies.

In contrast, the Bulgarian government has been leading a mainstream educational policy that does not encompass and address financial and preparatory issues of Roma who actively pursue higher

educational achievements. The lack of effective governmental engagement has increased levels of school dropouts, especially among young Roma people. Passive and ineffective state response brought educational stagnation, specifically in the attainment of secondary and tertiary education among Roma.

The lack of state capacity to boost the educational advancement of Roma in secondary and tertiary education can only be compensated through the establishment of partnerships with NGOs and donors. This new targeted approach to Roma education represents a shift from mainstream policies. It promises successful and timely results which the state is currently unable to achieve by its own means.

My analysis observes that even within SNSP as a positive method of joint interventions the Bulgarian government cannot take the leading role to initiate SNSP. Inefficiencies within its legislative, institutional and financial framework deprives state authorities to encompass the knowledge and capacity of non- state actors. Actual progress in Roma access and graduation levels can be observed once state inefficiencies are transformed into favorable tools for interactions with non-state actors.

Roma inclusion in secondary and tertiary education promises positive impact upon their social and economic status in future. In order to provide for this aim, the state needs to encompass diverse and multidimensional approaches that can bring adequate and timely changes. Collaboration with non-state actors in SNSPs represents only one of these approaches which need recognition and stimulation by the state. All in all, the state needs to address issues within its capacity in order to be able to lead the new paradigm of fruitful and long-term interventions in Roma education through SNSPs.

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