

# 8 Goals: 8 Insights..

## Young peoples' stories on the Millennium Development Goals



Bulgaria





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stories on  
the Millennium  
Development  
Goals

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## forward

This is not a conventional United Nations Report. The outcome statement from the 14-16 September 2005 World Summit, was a result of discussions among leaders from 192 countries, based on work done by international “wise men and women” over the last years. Similarly, the UNDP Global Human Development Report released on 7 September 2005 drew from extensive academic research and professional exchanges to analyse whether the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were being accomplished and what could be done to meet them throughout the world.

This report is different. It directly presents the voices of young people in Bulgaria on how they think the MDGs relate to their lives and aspirations, and what can be done to better meet these goals for Bulgaria.

The result is a direct and honest account of their anger and pain, with the problems, they, their families, and their communities face. This is less pleasant reading than most UN reports. But the report is also a direct and honest account of their will, love, wisdom, strength, dreams and ultimately visions about how these universal development goals can be realized for them and for Bulgaria.

Since 1990, Bulgarians like other people from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have seen their lives change. Driving much of this change was a belief that “even if I as a middle-aged or older person will not see my life improve much, it will be good for my children and grand-children”. As this report shows, in Bulgaria this hope is not misplaced. However this hope is also not fully realized either. Young people face serious problems in their own lives, in their families and in their communities, and for many their faith in others to solve these problems is not high. While the report does show a divergence among young people in their optimism about the future, it also reflects the strong will of many to improve, the strength they have, and the optimistic visions they want to realize.

For any older reader, the question will be, “What can I do to help them realize their visions”. There is no easy answer, but this report should make it easier to find the right ones. If the young Bulgarians of today, whose voices are heard in this report, are to have lives with similar opportunities to young people living in the more prosperous European states, they must have an environment here, which permits them to increasingly realize their own aspirations, and to help others realize theirs.

This report is a result of a collaboration among people working for the United Nations in Bulgaria, with the lead taken, and the largest part of the funding provided by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, with additional support from the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Development Programme Communications Unit. Especially noteworthy has been the work of Marta Diavolova who led the work on behalf of UNFPA and the UN Resident Coordinator.

During the coming crucial years for Bulgaria, immediately prior to and after EU membership, we hope the UN agencies in Bulgaria can work with our many partners, young and old, to help realize the positive visions presented in this report.



Neil Buhne  
United Nations Resident Coordinator  
UNFPA Representative  
UNDP Resident Representative in Bulgaria

## foreword

### **“The Truth comes from our Children and ....” (Danish saying)**

The National Youth Report on the Millennium Development Goals is surely a report which squarely expresses young people’s wishes for the future. If we are serious about our ultimate goal, which says “we want to improve the quality of life of the people”, we must also add “but not on the cost of our future generations”. We have to take the recommendations in this report very seriously and we have to involve young people in all stages of implementing the Millennium Development Goals. If we do not do it, the goals are not achievable. Those who are young people today will be adults in 2015 and they can rightly judge us if we fail to implement what 147 Heads of States and Governments promised in the year 2000 in the Millennium Summit.

When we get older we often tend to forget how it was, when we were young and all the frustrations we had. This report really gives food for thought. It is my hope that it will not only be read by our leaders but that they will also seriously consider all its recommendations when they decide upon the future. Therefore, the voices of young people must be heard and thoroughly considered in all policy making processes.

We cannot plan on how to eradicate poverty and hunger without listening to the poor and hungry people. Likewise, we cannot plan for young people and their future without involving them in all processes of their life. All Governments need to develop policies for youth which involve young people and build upon their real needs.



Dr. Peer Sieben  
UNFPA Country Director for Bulgaria

## Acknowledgements

The idea for this report, and the way in which it should be written, was born naturally after many years of work for, and with, young people. Their confidence, surprising wisdom, commitment and readiness to take action make us feel certain that the young people of Bulgaria can, and want to, become “the builders of new Bulgaria”. Their equal involvement, and interaction with the main socializing institutions, like the family, the school, the community, the labour market and others, is what will ensure a better future and prosperity of the country. Young people’s active and focused participation in the processes of social transformation is crucial for achieving a change in institutional culture at all levels. Guided by this understanding, we invited the young people of Bulgaria to offer their reading of the Bulgarian Millennium Development Goals. It is the responsibility of us, the adults, to listen to what they have to say.

The invitation we sent out through the media, the education system and several non-governmental organizations elicited the response of 1,680 young people from different parts of the country. The strongest interest and readiness to speak out was shown by the 15-18 age group – a total of 941 young people. Next came the 11-14 year-olds – 572. The smallest group – 167 – were those in the 19-25 group.

The diversity of the forms which young people chose to express their positions and make suggestions illustrate the wealth of ideas and means of expression they use to communicate. It was a pleasure to read the essays, the narratives and letters sent by post and electronic mail. We enjoyed equally their drawings, multi-media presentations and photographic stories. For the purposes of the initiative a special card with the Bulgarian Millennium Development Goals invited young people to assume and declare their personal commitment to their achievement. Young people’s commitment to the country’s development over the next ten years fill the reader with respect and offer considerable food for thought.

Aware of the diversity and wealth of young people’s views we asked two Bulgarian journalists – Diana Ivanova and Denitsa Grozeva – to transform the stories into this book. We are sure that it would not have looked the way it does without them, and for this we would like



to thank them warmly. As this huge project went to press we lost Denitsa and feel sad that she did not live to feel the satisfaction of the work she had done.

I am sure that all of us who were involved in this project have changed – perhaps we have become slightly better people, more involved, more confident in the future. It is only time that can show whether this is indeed the case but if there is one thing I feel certain about it is that we shall return to this book again and again.

We are happy that the book has a new life with the dance “Eight Goals – Eight Insights” which was created for the report and its launch by the third year students of Dance Theatre in the Krustyu Sarafov National Theatre and Film Academy under Prof. Petya Stoilova.

This innovative project benefited from the invaluable advice, ideas and support of Maya Nyagolova, Public Advocacy Officer, UNDP.

We are happy that our joy at the completion of this book is being shared by Manoela Grozdanova, Programme Director of UNAIDS, Maria Zlatareva UNDP, Assistant Resident Representative, and Emiliana Zhivkova, Programme Analyst at UNDP.

We are grateful to Neda Deneva and Elena Georgieva, and also to Sashka Hristova and Raina Petkova who worked on the English translation and revision, and to Radka Boyadjieva for her editorial work on the Bulgarian language version. We owe many thanks to Ivana Mandadjieva from Color Studio for the wonderful design of the book.

Most of all, we are grateful to all young people who accepted our invitation to share their thoughts about the Bulgarian Millennium Development Goals.

Marta Diavolova  
Programme Officer, UNFPA  
Bulgaria

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## Eight Millennium Goals - Eight Insights

**Actually Bulgarians are now prepared for a moderate and dignified life and they will not be greedy.**

— Yana, 15 —

The new millennium is the millennium of new fears about global survival, but also of bold visions. These are visions of people returning to the ancient principles of simplicity, ordinary goodness, respect for one's own and the others' territory, clarity, acceptance, understanding and generosity.

Eight is the number of infinity and, according to many old Indian texts, the number of wisdom and prosperity.

Eight development goals until 2015 were set by the United Nations in order to achieve a new future, the new visions and a new beginning – reduction of poverty, better education, equality of men and women, improved child health, improved health of pregnant women and mothers, limit the spread of HIV/AIDS, syphilis and tuberculosis, a clean environment, partnership for development between states and people.

Bulgaria has committed itself to the efforts to achieve these goals.

What are the implications of this? What can young people do and what do they want for themselves? How do they see Bulgaria in 2015?

Eight insights about the millennium is what the young people of Bulgaria offer.

Why insights? Because their words often go deep into the meaning of our lives and bring to mind the best examples of Bulgarian thinking over the ages.

Compare for example the words of Rossitsa Tasseva, 17, from the village of Brestovitsa in Plovdiv Region – “A happy person does only good. Free people are strong with their goodness” - with the words of an 84-year-old man recorded by Ivan Hadjiiski in the 1930s – “To be happy is to feel a sweetness in your soul, to have an interesting conversation, and to put on a nice change of clothes”.

Others contain so much anger that we ask ourselves, is perhaps anger a natural state of the human soul? Perhaps it is the crude and unarticulated choice? What does it reflect – the soul of the child or the mind of the adult? Sentences like “people are not what they used to be”/followed by the amazing “actually before I was born”/ or “I am not going to go abroad and be somebody’s servant ” are revealing of the way in which a nation’s perceptions are created and perpetuated – young people repeat what they hear from adults without ever having had the chance to experience it.

Perhaps then anger comes from lack of experience and reflecting on it?

Can anger be transformed into a positive state capable of channeling energy into fulfilling personal visions and dreams?

One interesting thing about young Bulgarians’ insights is that few of them want only money and few of them see money as the solution of problems, unlike adults who continually grieve over lack of money. Young people have other ideas – “a class in civilized communication”, “human understanding – it costs nothing”, “if we stop feeling indifferent to the suffering of others we will become strong”. With this they offer another perspective on the suffering of the transition period which sounds wise and optimistic almost to the point of heresy. Could it be that the whole point of the impoverishment and the shortages we have been experiencing was to purge the Bulgarian body of all alien matter and take us back to the Bulgarian principles of simplicity and ordinary goodness?

These are some of the fundamental questions in which young people’s insights abound. In an amazing way these eight insights follow the eight phases of the universal human devel-

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opment cycle: anger is followed by pain as a personal internal state, then the will to do something to be free of it, then love which gives you understanding of the nature of goodness. It is only then that you are capable of acting with wisdom, of having the strength in order to dream and fulfill your bold visions of the future.

1 insight – anger

2 insight – pain

3 insight – will

4 insight – love

5 insight – wisdom

6 insight – strength

7 insight – dreams

8 insight – visions

Do read the insights of young people. A new generation is growing up with its own sensitivity to pain and openness to goodness. It can bring about a far-reaching and genuine transformation of our perceptions of ourselves and the world and ultimately make us all feel fine in our own Bulgarian skins. And also believe that Ivan Hadjiiski's "optimistic theory of our nation" is not just one, but a whole series of opportunities.

For every goal there is a key to understanding the insights which can lead us to the ways of doing this together.



1 goal

Halve extreme poverty  
and malnutrition

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria





## first goal - poverty reduction

### **“Halve extreme poverty and malnutrition”<sup>1</sup>**

Practically all texts in the fields of culture, sociology, literature and history address the issue of poverty in Bulgaria. In “Psychology of Bulgarians” /1934/ Konstantin Gulubov writes that “tomorrow Bulgarians will be what they are today, and they will not change for as long as they are eager for cultural development and remain as poor as they are now”.

The collective memory of poverty is so strong that it puts in the mind of today’s child the sentence, “you are either born poor or find yourself in poverty later in life”.

The years of transition brought about new levels of poverty, marked social stratification and a situation in which the majority of poor people do not know a single rich person and, in their views, “rich” is everyone with a monthly income of more than 1,000 leva (Open Society Report “The State of Society in 2002”).

This is why it is interesting to see young people’s attitudes to the poverty issue: on the one hand, they inherit the collective “Bulgarian” memory of poverty and on the other, live in a time of complete disintegration of the models, stereotypes and explanations of who is poor and why.

Here are the insights about the millennium born out of this “chaos”.

#### **1. The anger of the millennium**

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It will change the government.

— Teodor Vladimirov, 10, Harmanli —

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<sup>1</sup> Millennium Development Goals, National Report (2003)

**M**y advice to our poorly-educated politicians is not to make promises in vain because we are not so ignorant that we cannot see how much they are worth and I would ask them not to fill their pockets with so much public money.

— Tsveteline Kirilova, village of Cherkovitsa, Pleven Region —

**S**top the people who are plundering our country. Arrest all criminals and destroy corruption.

— Tsveta Subeva, 7th grade, Smolyan —

**I** do love my country. Everybody is looking for ways of stealing something from it or escaping as far away from it as possible. Those who stay here sink deeper and deeper into poverty, bitterness and illusion as the “responsible people in charge” build castles in the air and promise anything. How are we going to prosper if we are ready to trample on others and ruin them in the name of our own well-being?

— Gergana Hristova, 8th grade, Shumen —

**I**f this style of democracy and government continues it would become unthinkable to travel outside my city...

The people are at the end of their tether, they are tearing their hair and screaming for a little attention.

The people are the lifeblood of this country. Now they are ill and tired and instead of getting attention and treatment they have more worries coming down on them, and it is the government that is doing this.

— Milena Gospodinova, 17, Rousse —

**T**o reduce poverty you must get rid of corruption. First, create a branch of government, a commission, with the same status as the other branches, to make spot inspections of the

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politicians. What is needed is 100% efficiency. Penalties. This commission must be monitored by a public committee whose members change every two months.

— *Dimiter Nikolov, 16, Veliko Turnovo* —

Why can't our politicians understand that we are helpless to cope with this on our own and that it is for them to do something about it? Why can't they stop thinking only about their privileges and personal wealth? We don't want that much, surely. A normal life with decent education, a home, food and well-paying job. Because some people don't have even a small part of this and others have a lot more. Money, money, money. It is making us bitter towards each other. We must not allow this, this is the problem which unites us and the price we are paying. We must help and support each other, even if it is with small things and even with only a warm heart.

— *Ralitsa Hristova, 18, Shumen* —

A handful of people calling themselves the political elite have ruthlessly robbed people of the fruits of their labour and put them in a situation which is hard to describe in a few lines. The people who have worked honestly all their lives now live in poverty. Children forced to beg on the streets – nobody seems to notice this anymore. Our doors are locked. But worse, so are our souls. An invisible wall is rising between people. Everyone thinks that poverty and unhappiness won't happen to them. Individual survival is a bad strategy. We were born here and must find our happiness here. But to achieve what others have been having for years, we need to change our thinking. The sooner we realize that we can control our destiny the faster we will start tearing down the obstacles facing us. When this happens we will not say that the little beggar at the door of the church is not our problem.

The fight against poverty must start in our souls.

— *Nadejda Doncheva, 12th grade, Gabrovo* —

Poverty has come and will stay with us until greedy people are stopped from selling the factories and the country for small pennies under the table.

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If the politicians unite the people and lead them, the people will do miracles because they will know that they are working for their own future. But nobody is interested in the people. There are no real trade unions, all they do is talk and people no longer trust them. It is naive to think that somebody from outside will worry about us if we go on putting up with things. In other countries the people go out on the streets and protest if their rights are not respected. Our problem is that we need to change our thinking. We need to get up and fight for our rights instead of letting all these political parties lead us. After all, we all want one and the same thing – a better life.

— Yanka Georgieva, 11th grade, Gabrovo —

Poverty brings lots of other troubles. It may cause you to feel hatred and with it come violence, robberies, murder, illiteracy and many diseases.

With democracy poverty has come upon most Bulgarian families. People are tired of the endless transition from socialism to a market economy and protest more and more against the deteriorating quality of their lives.

— Ivailo Nikolov, 13 —

I nstead of investing in industry and business we look for ways to steal, instead of helping the country we look for ways to cheat it. This has to change, because it is not right to sit back and watch the country slowly founder, the people leave and disown it for a handful of Western coins.

During the transition years many people rose from rags to riches on the ladder of power and money by robbing ordinary people. The new “royals” built themselves pyramids on the foundations of people’s trust and money, and then pulled the pyramids down and fled abroad, far from the judgment of the people without feeling the slightest remorse for what they had done. Those who had believed in their promises continued to go down and remained as poor as ever but deprived of faith.

— Svilena Grajdanska, 15, Lukovit —

Burs is an absurd country ruled by anarchy. People are pessimistic and it is all because of the poverty. It is disgusting to see pensioners unable to afford a loaf of bread in the supermarket. I think there is something very wrong with this country.

— *Borislava Hristopva, 11th grade, Sofia* —

Bulgarian people have shown how hard-working they are, they are not lazy but lack ambition. They live in a world in which their difficult life and the pressure of material things makes them encroach upon the cleanness and purity of nature.

The reason we have hit the rock bottom as a country is that we lack organization and interest in the future.

— *Olga Stoyanova, 11th grade, Gabrovo* —

The conflicts between us have led to injustice. We have started killing many of our virtues and if we do not wake up and do something, soon we will not be able to tell reality from nightmare. We are turning our world into a giant mess of fears.

— *Maria Vassileva, Rousse, 9th grade* —

## 2. The pain of the millennium

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Poverty has invaded our home. We have to go without good food, visits to the doctor, even the school. I know I should not blame my parents. They thought they had a secure job, but as democracy arrived they found themselves out of work. It has been getting worse and worse. Now I know what it means to live from one day to the next. My parents tell me, "Get out of this country! There is no future here." But I do not know where to go ... in 2015 I will be 26. I hope I will be able to survive and overcome poverty.

May our children not live through what we have.

— *Dessislava Stoilova, 15, Zhelznitsa* —

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I read in the paper about two orphan sisters who do not know the taste of chocolate and oranges. I think that we children can help by giving our old toys or returning old newspapers for recycling and using the money to buy treats, fruit and gifts for poor children.

— Bozhana Burnekova, 10, Sofia —

Today I bought again a sandwich for the freezing gypsy begging on the street. Obviously I shall have to go without chocolate this week too.

— Liliya Buykliiska, 17, Rousse —

Of course I do not wish to live in this country. Every day I wake up with a dark thought in my mind – will my mother lose her job, like 80 percent of the people living in my town?

— Krustina Ivanova, 18, Kaspichan —

With this unemployment and with the salaries paid to our parents I don't see how we children can survive.

— Teodor Vladimirov, 4th grade —

We live in a country in which the king is not a genuine king, the princes are not Bulgarian princes, we are both in Europe and outside it – how can we even think of trying to save the country? Today nobody remembers the deepest wish of the old, real Bulgarians – long live Bulgaria. If we do not show respect for ourselves as Bulgarians we cannot expect anybody else to.

— Kiril Milev, Shumen —

I like animals and pets but I am afraid of the packs of dogs in the streets.

— Marinela Angelova and Bilyana Marechkova, 14, Turnovo —

**I** do not want to live in this hell of constant fear 12 years from now. I hope that the terror we are experiencing now will not be part of our lives in 12 years' time.

— Maria Zhelyazkova, 16 —

**O**ne day, when I learn to fly without falling I will be faced with the big dilemma: whether to be like the birds who spend their winters here – tired and sad but proud with not having betrayed their home, or take to the skies and never look back. Forget the past in the name of the future? One day, when the time to leave this world comes I shall make my last flight – the flight home.

— Vesselina Krusteva, 11th grade, Rousse —

**P**overty is the disease of our century and we live in it. Poverty means no dreams, no ambitions, no progress. You lose your past and do not think about the future. You just live for the moment without knowing if you will have something to satisfy your hunger and sooth your soul with.

Physical poverty leads to spiritual poverty.

— Manuela Deneva, 18, Gabrovo —

**I**t is unacceptable to live in a world in which Mercedes cars whiz past children begging for money. It is obvious that there are many things wrong with this society and they need to be set right.

— Genadi Ivanov —

**O**ur parents work for a pittance, when they come home in the evening they are dead tired and have no time for their families and children. Every day they work to exhaustion to provide a decent life for their children but we still live in deprivation.

We study in crowded classrooms in which the blackboard is so cracked that you cannot

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write on it and the worst thing is that we see how tired our teachers are.

Some of my friends have to stay home sick because they cannot afford medication. The parents are unemployed and those who have a job need to spend a whole month's salary to get treatment for their children. This is unforgivable. I find it difficult to understand why it is not stopped. Why does the suffering of Bulgarians get stronger?

— *Istislava Miteva, 11th grade , Razgrad* —

I think that in 2015 Bulgaria will be deserted and all Bulgarians will go abroad because our people are poor and many go hungry.

— *Alexandrina Sirakova, 13, Smolyan* —

If the kind of life my family is leading remains the same I will have to leave my country to study and work abroad, even though I am not very happy about the prospect.

— *Nelia Borisova, 13, Vidin* —

If, God forbid, someone from Al Qaeda decides to target us, the whole society will collapse and everybody will flee. Only those who have no money at all will stay behind. But who knows?

You are either born poor or find yourself in poverty later in life.

— *Petya, 15, Kurdjali* —

### **3. The will of the millennium**

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What I can do to help halve extreme poverty and malnutrition is to organize a kitchen serving hot meals to poor people three times a day. I can provide some of the money for this and turn for the rest to a foundation.

— *Nevena Petrova, 18, Rousse* —

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My own contribution to the problems – I would try to reduce unemployment by starting my own small business which would be at least a little bit useful to people.

— *Irina Yakovleva, 17, Rousse* —

I think that nothing is worse than poverty and if I was rich I would create new jobs, for example sewing factories.

— *Maria Pasheva, 16, Pazardjik* —

With a little help from the state I would create a company to address this problem and help all people overcome poverty.

— *Fatme Shekirova, 15, Satovcha* —

#### 4. The love of the millennium

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Ordinary people can help only with their love.

— *Reneta Yossofova, 11th grade, Gabrovo* —

I would be kind to people. I would keep nature and my soul clean. I would be grateful.

— *Albena Velikova, 18, Sofia* —

I think that compassion is one of the most human of feelings. We should all be able to feel the pain of others and help them. I believe that nobody can help feeling emotional at the sight of little orphans. I really want to change their lot and when I grow up I will create an organization to help children without parents.

— *Teresa Todorova* —

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Love is the shortest route to immortality and eternity. Pain and suffering are the door leading to love. To love is to suffer, to give a part of your heart to others, to hand out a piece of warmth to everybody – the desperate tramp on the corner and the sick old woman in your neighbourhood.

How easy it is to love and how hard to open your soul to goodness. For whom are we keeping our love, to whom shall we give it when it is no longer needed? It is easy to love when you have plenty, it is hard to open your heart and give warmth, protection and comfort to a desperate and lonely person.

— Martin Damyanov, 11th grade, Rousse —

Today I plead – don't walk past

— Sonya Avramova, 18 , Kurnalovo, municipality of Petrich —

## 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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There is something unfinished. Somewhere in space and time the Ariadna thread snapped. Then history continued to weave its carpet, bright and uneven, and the little holes from the broken thread opened the ladder of oblivion. Persons and families slowly disappeared from the memory of our city. The artistic spirit slowly dispersed in the air. Now the multi-colour carpet of the future has a large hole in it and the bright threads have disappeared from the yarn.

They must be tied together matching carefully the colours and the rows in order to stop each beginning from collapsing and each new endeavour from being so frayed. We must restore people's memory and tell them the legend of the city anew. Perhaps then the silent screams of the house fronts will stop, perhaps then the souls of their inhabitants will find rest.

— Venelin Todorov, Rousse 16 —

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Actually Bulgarians are now prepared for a moderate and dignified life and they will not be greedy.

— Yana, 15 —

You learn for as long as you live and if you really want it, you can change your world view and stop putting yourself in the centre of things. When you stop thinking that everything which happens – both pleasant and unpleasant – affects you, you will no longer blame others or circumstances.

— Galya Hristova, 12, Gabrovo —

I have only just noticed that my father is just like a stork. A large stork with long wings, bright feathers and red wings. Every month my long-legged daddy flies over blue mountains, sparkling waters and green fields to do his duty by his family and himself. This is a stork of the type which covers thousands of kilometers not to achieve his dreams, not even to flee from reality, but to bring money to his family – how would we survive otherwise?

What he has not realized is that he has failed to give us what really matters, and this is love.

— Velislava Krusteva, 11th grade, Rousse —

Nothing will happen if we do not break free from the triviality surrounding us and listen to ourselves for once.

— Alexandra Vladimirova, 9th grade, Pleven —

We have learned to receive from outside not only the decisions but the emotions too.

— Zhana Yordanova, 18, Shumen —

## 6. The strength of the millennium

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If we stop feeling indifferent to the pain and suffering of others we will become strong.

— *Nadejda Doncheva, 12th grade, Gabrovo* —

## 7. The dreams of the millenium

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I dream about a Bulgaria which is loved by everybody.

— *Irena Milanova, 10th grade, Rousse* —

We children can help by giving the clothes we have outgrown and the toys we no longer play with. Give our textbooks so that others can use them. Or return old newspapers for recycling and use the money to buy treats and gifts for poor children.

— *Bozhana Burnekova, 10, Sofia* —

I hate it when I am sad! Sad people have no dreams. Sorrow crushes dreams, clips their wings and they can never fly in the realms of imagination. When the dreams remain locked inside you they bring only unhappiness. To have dreams you need to be free, but to become free you must have dreams of freedom.

— *Ina Ivanova, 11th grade, Rousse* —

You cannot change the world, or your country, or the city you live in, but you can change yourself. If everybody believes this the world will become a better place to live.

— *Iliana Popova, 7th grade, Smolyan* —

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If I was a wizard I would make the world a better place for us.

— *Valentina Sandova, 15, Pazardjik* —

May be I will have my own plane then and the sea will be half the size it is now.

— *Sylvia Svetlinova, 14, Montana* —

I want all Bulgarians to be happy that they live in Bulgaria and not have to leave it only in the name of survival.

— *Maria Dimova, 16, Rousse* —

I think that reducing poverty is crucial for the survival of mankind.

— *Rositsa Venelinova 13, Vidin* —

All people – mothers with children, old women, unemployed men or presidents must achieve one simple thing – become better human beings.

— *Nina Trifonova 18, Montana* —

Increase wages and pay everyone the same.

— *Elena Raicheva 11, Dupnitsa* —

Dear Santa Claus, this is the first time I am writing to you and I ask for something very important. Yesterday I saw a little girl with blond hair and a grey ragged dress which covered her legs only up to the knees. How thin and blue with cold her legs were!

What I ask you to do for her is to give her stockings, shoes and warm clothes.

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Please give her a doll too so that she can have someone to love and make her happy.

*Desi 11, Shumen*

## 8. The visions of the millennium

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Dear Madam 2015,  
....will poetry be able to feed us poets then?  
Yours,

— Milena Nikolova, Sliven —

Bulgaria has become a new Switzerland and its development rates have surpassed even those of China. This became possible thanks to a new civil society, which is so harmonious and promising that international analysts decided the word boom was not strong enough. "Big bang" seemed a more appropriate term.

— Pavel Mitov, Shumen —

I want us to eradicate poverty by 2015 and live on a planet where the environment is clean. I would like to be involved in this process as a simple worker, a small screw in the machinery which will make all this possible.

— Emil Emilov, 13, Vidin —

For me this is a time when there will not be tramps, beggars and unemployed people. My eyes will see only children who have parents and grow up surrounded by love. There will be only well-to-do people and they will all be equal. The state will help the sick people with donations. But of course we too must show compassion - if we see a beggar on the street, hand him money.

— Zlatina Bacheva, Smolyan —

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Crepes pop out of the frying pan – smiles spread with honey.

— Diana Grigorova, 5th grade, Kurdjali —

Last night I had a strange dream. I had an appointment. With time? Or with life? I was tormented by an obsessive thought that something was wrong. Bombs, explosions, depleted ozone layer. And all this – on our small planet. And man behind all the evil. I kept asking myself, why did we end up here?

I was looking for an answer and a path to light. And I knew how to find it – put up a stairway, from here all the way to light. We called it the stairway of goodness. We made a rope to help us get to the stairway. The rope had knots and they were all meaningful. We first tied the knot of unity. Unity inspired us with hope and faith and made us happy. And happy people do nothing but good.

We came to the second knot. The light beckoned us to continue. We called it the knot of evil. Here each one of us had to throw away that part of himself which made him do evil things and, you know, we felt free and strong. And free people are strong in their goodness.

The third knot was the knot of faith. Each one of us had to believe in ourselves and others.

— Rositsa Taseva, 17, Brestovitsa —

I hope that in 2015 there will no longer be people who humiliate themselves looking for old iron objects or paper which they can sell in order to buy themselves something to eat. I dream that in the future I will be unable to open the newspaper and read in it that one more person committed suicide.

— Desislava Nikolova, 17, Razgrad —

## A key to understanding the insights

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Poverty can be cured with memory and with overcoming apathy – these are two of the most amazing insights offered by young people. They offer their wisdom that somewhere in time the nation lost its memory and it must now be restored by hearing the legends.

This is why do tell your children stories and personal legends. They can become a cure against poverty.

The strongest emotion poverty provokes in children is anger and pain. It triggers the basic mechanisms of their instincts. Anger however is not the state of their souls but the state of the environment in which they live. This is why do be careful about what you tell your children and how. Anger makes its way into the soul more easily than the other emotions because a young person's unformed character has few defenses against it. At the same time, once anger enters inside you it will not go away easily. It is easier to stop it from getting into our system than trying to get it out. Think about this.

Poverty is what distinguishes most strongly Bulgaria from the countries in the European Union. Incomes in Bulgaria are ten times lower than those in the European Union and twice as low as in the accession countries. According to the UNDP's Global Human Development Report only Macedonia and Albania have lower incomes in Europe<sup>2</sup>.

Poverty emerges as a permanent feature of the Bulgarian society; even if the millennium goal of increasing average monthly incomes three times from 91 to 280 Euros<sup>3</sup> by 2015 is met the sense of poverty will not change because Bulgaria will still be lagging behind the rest.

This means that we need to see differently the state of anger and pessimism which, as the surveys show, overwhelm young people at an early age.

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<sup>2</sup> Global Human Development Report, UNDP 2003

<sup>3</sup> Millennium Development Goals, National Report ( 2003)



Many studies, like the recent representative survey “An Optimistic Theory about the Pessimism of Transition” conducted by the Global Bulgaria Association and published in the Capital Weekly on 10-16 April 2004, show that even when economic indicators improve Bulgarians remain pessimistic: they are the most dissatisfied nation from the 13 candidates for EU membership. In 2004 54% of the Bulgarians were pessimistic about themselves and their country.

**In the interests of presenting the full picture we shall quote a few more parameters from the national report on the millennium development goals which reveal the long-term and permanent nature of poverty in Bulgaria:**

✱ Bulgaria has some of the highest unemployment rates among the European Union candidate countries

✱ Persons of Roma origin in Bulgaria are ten times more likely to be poor compared to ethnic Bulgarians; the same is true of ethnic Turks – the ratio is 1:4 in favour of Bulgarians

It is young people who will have to bear the burden of coping with these problems and the above discussion shows clearly that what is needed is more than just economic strategies: it is necessary to reconsider models, stereotypes and attitudes which were pervasive in the country in the long period of its hermetic existence.

Therefore, the enormous challenge for young people will be to find and encourage “individual optimistic theories”, to promote investments in high-unemployment regions and villages, and support small family businesses, medium and small companies.

Poverty is also largely synonymous with the uselessness of the old rules in the new conditions. The models will have to be found by the young who have no memory and live in the vacuum of not knowing socialism and having witnessed mostly the negative side of democracy. This is why it is curious to read their pieces of wisdom which try to find an explanation of what happened /for example, “Bulgarians will not be greedy any more”/.

An optimistic note is struck by the sense of interrupted memory which must be revived, and the new poetic sensitivity /“I would be grateful”/.

With these insights young people are actually throwing a lifeline to adults because they have drawn a new field of individual expression, a personal story which does not depend exclusively on economic conditions. They are essentially an alternative strategy of coping with, accepting and adapting to the long-term situation of poverty.

**The messages and proposals which young people convey to adults can be summed up in the following way:**

- ✧ „All of us TOGETHER and each one of us SEPARATELY must do something“. The government, the private sector, the non-governmental organizations and the individual citizen are responsible for improving the well-being of the nation regardless of individual differences in origin, religion and prosperity

- ✧ Poverty and malnutrition can be reduced only by cultivating more tolerance, humanness and respect for others

- ✧ Poverty reduction can only come about by changing the thinking and attitudes of individuals in the direction of solidarity, tolerance, initiative and entrepreneurship.

- ✧ Poverty will not be reduced if the government does not adopt measures and policies to invest heavily in pro-active employment programmes. Reduce long-term unemployment by means of employment programmes for low-income people, especially in the underdeveloped regions with extreme poverty.

- ✧ Reduce unemployment among young people

- ✧ Reduce corruption and crime

- ✧ Curb inflation

- ✧ Gradually raise wages, pensions and benefits

- ✧ Encourage green-field investments

- ✧ Promote public-private partnership as a means of encouraging talented young people to stay in Bulgaria

- ✧ Commitment by the private sector to develop and implement more social responsibility programmes

- ✧ Encourage developments in the private sector and market economy which foster individual initiative, entrepreneurship and responsibility

- ✧ Attract more foreign investments
- ✧ Create incentives for the development of tourism
- ✧ Promote civil society with mechanisms of public control over the state
- ✧ Design programmes to facilitate access to education
- ✧ Put in place incentives for investment in the construction sector and creation of new jobs
- ✧ Reduce the tax burden
- ✧ Reduce the term of the members of Parliament to a maximum of 2 years
- ✧ Rational distribution of places in the universities depending on the demand for specialists. Follow the same policy in the vocational training schools and the re-training courses
- ✧ Raise the poverty threshold by designing mechanisms and incentives for the military industry to allocate a proportion of the money for weapons to support for people in need
- ✧ Reduce malnutrition by designing mechanisms and incentives for the small and medium enterprises in the food sector to give unsold food to foundations which help people in need
- ✧ Reduce corruption by means of a special independent authority which makes spot checks, imposes high fines and reports regularly to the public
- ✧ Create incentives for the small and medium enterprises to contribute to the poverty reduction effort by implementing charity programmes

**Young people see their personal contribution to the poverty reduction goal in the following way:**

- ✧ „I would organize a fund-raising programme to help the poor and needy”.
- ✧ „I would organize a campaign to collect children’s unused clothes, books and toys and give them to orphans”
- ✧ „I would create an organization to help poor people find work”
- ✧ „I would create a small business which will help people in need”
- ✧ „I would create a soup kitchen where the poor can receive food and care”.
- ✧ „I would build a home for homeless people”.



Згод

Improve primary and  
secondary education

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria



## Second goal - improve education

### “Improve primary and secondary education”<sup>4</sup>

Memories from the school years is something that you talk about if for the rest of your life. Our identity is shaped largely by these experiences and stories. Besides, education has always been sacred for the Bulgarians, something that you forego only in very extreme circumstances. “The Bulgarian people want to be educated, even the world is coming to an end”, wrote Naiden Sheitanov in 1930. How much is this “Bulgarian worldview” part of the system of values of today’s youth, and what sentiments does it provoke – pain, optimism, anger, encouragement? See for yourselves.

#### ↳ The anger of the millennium

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The students from practically every class become guinea pigs. At the beginning of every school year we hear one and the same thing – the final year students do not know whether they will have to sit for final examinations, what these examinations will consist of, and whether they will be entitled to exemption from them.

— Emiliana Koleva, 10th grade, Stara Zagora —

In this country people have no respect even for their own selves. I want a class in civilized communication.

— Durali Duraliev, 17, Kotel —

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<sup>4</sup> Millennium Development Goals, National Report (2003)

The new generation is not a collector of good advice. If you are not a pot plant, how can you be trimmed?

— Yoana Radulova, 11th grade, Rousse —

## 2. The pain of the millennium

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I live in a poor inner-city part of Kurdjali where the streets are unpaved, there is no sewerage or any other basic amenities for a normal life. We cannot afford textbooks or other materials for school because my parents are unemployed. My dream is to become a nurse and help people. But apart from textbooks and notebooks you need money for clothes, transport and food as well. My family cannot afford them and this is why I am disappointed – there is a gap between my dreams and reality. I do not wish to blame my parents because they are going through a difficult period and it is not just feeding us that they have a problem with.

— Guler Yussein, 14, Kurdjali —

In 12 years' time this town will have two primary and two secondary schools and it will be even quieter, but deserted too because many children will have left. I do love my home town of Smolyan and no matter what happens to it 12 years from now I will always love it.

— Bogalina Kalaidjieva, Smolyan —

## 3. The will of the millennium

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I would like to do something for education because it can develop our minds and lead people to do good.

— Aneliya Yurukova, 10, Nikopol —

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I would make paths with many flowers in the school yard, make sure there is heating in the classrooms in winter and a canteen with hot snacks

— Gulerman Yussein, 11, Kurdjali —

Start learning IT in the third grade

— Petya Sheeva, 15, Rousse —

Learn more things of practical value in my school

— Fatme Shekirova, 15, Satovcha —

I want to see the human rights and freedoms of every student respected in my school

— Fatme Dusheva, 15, Satovcha —

I would raise money to paint and clean the classroom so that my fellow-students, friends and teachers can feel better

— Teodora Trifonova, 16, Gabrovo —

#### 4. The love of the millennium

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I would be grateful.

— Albena Velikova, Sofia —

## 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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Our language is our Bulgarian memory

— Snezhana Keleveldjieva, 11th grade, Sliven —

## 6. The strength of the millennium

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When you feel love and pain open your soul to them and when you can do this you are ready for the world of your dreams. So free your senses. Don't wait for anybody.

Start working on yourself and give yourself a good clean-up. Take care of your own rebirth. Shut your ears to the cacophony of words and sounds. Listen to yourself. When you hear the soft sounds of Mozart you are ready for this world. When you feel the sweet smell of flowers you are ready for this world.

— Vasya Hristova, 18, Shumen —

## 7. The dreams of the millennium

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My dream is to become a scientist and work in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. I hope that this dream will come true by 2015. I see my town – Razgrad – a greener and cleaner place then.

— Kiril Djurov, 17, Razgrad —

I want to study in a large, clean school with many colours in the rooms. A school in a beautiful park with a swimming pool, huge library and playing fields.

— *Katerina Chaneva, 11, Vidin* —

I want to be able to speak many languages and work with computers. Also – to visit many foreign countries and learn about this vast and infinite world.

— *Vassil Todorov, 7th grade, Smolyan* —

In 2015 I will be 25 and I will be a journalist. I want to stay in Smolyan but this is impossible because there are no jobs here. Of course this might change by 2015 but I don't think this is very likely because this is a town where people think only about themselves and no one can yet afford to open new television or radio stations. There are stations and newspapers in Smolyan but they are not what I want.

— *Tsvetelina Stoimirova, Smolyan* —

Make classrooms more modern and put up a computer system in every classroom.

— *Borislav Anchev, 16, Rousse* —

More classes in physical education  
Dentists in the schools

— *Marin Alexandrov, 16, Shumen* —

I like playing basketball very much, I also like working with computers and I would really like to have my own some day. I also have to do my lessons because I am a student.

— *Tsvetan Karipov, 8th grade, Kurdjali* —

**I**ntroduce a subject like Bulgarian Studies which emphasizes high patriotism

— *Ivailo Dobrev, 18, Aitos* —

**I**n education take the example of Spain and Britain where the school year is divided into semesters and there are two weeks of holiday every three months

Classes in physical culture and music should be relaxing and not a source of additional stress.

— *Sylvia Bulieva, Pleven* —

**C**ompanies and business people should offer scholarships to gifted children.

— *Ivelina Dimitrova, 10, Gabrovo* —

## **8. The visions of the millennium**

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**I** had a dream: it is 2015, I have completed my university studies, have a job in the Ministry of Social Policy and receive many letters from people who thank me for helping them. It is to us, ordinary people, that the power belongs

— *Toni Tsvetovanova, 15, Harmanli* —

**I** think that tomorrow the world will be more computerized, more mechanized and more technically advanced. People will be talking to each other, writing letters and exchanging information over the Internet. With communication technologies normal conversations between people will stop and they will forget about books. I hope that then all parents will have a job and children will grow up happy.

— *Tanya Yaneva, 12, Smolyan* —

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12 years from now life may disappear, or aliens may be discovered. The computer intellect may change the world beyond recognition. There will be no terrorism, problems will not be resolved by war but by negotiations. I very much hope that the search for extraterrestrial intelligence will be successful. When this happens, there will be no strong and weak people, they will all be equal and live well.

— Nikola Chilingirov, 13, Smolyan —

Hello, dear friend from the future! We probably seem to you a society with mediocre intellect. I heard that you got on your new Litiny master 3000... Also, on your spaceship you made a stop-over in the mines of Mercury. I am sure you had a terrific time. I wish I could go too. In my dreams I usually get on a time machine and travel backwards and forwards visiting the Egyptians, the Aztecs in Mexico and the Maya in Peru. But all this is pure boredom for you. I want to go to Mars where they built a new station. They say its luxury makes even the most expensive hotels look dull.

— Peter Chakurov, 5th grade, Kurdjali —

We walked into a spacious room. We all sat behind the computers, I myself had to survey children in Iran, Vietnam and Egypt about their rights and responsibilities. I had also planned a competition with a child from Turkey. The new task was to study the plant and animal life of Siberia ... then we heard over the public address system that we had a guest – Girat from the star Sirius.

— Nikolai Popov, 5th grade, Rousse —

### A key to understanding the insights:

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Paradoxically education provokes the least anger. The children are not angry, they understand their teachers and they want to repaint their classrooms so that everybody would feel

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good in them. Two of children's dreams – a dentist and computer rooms in the schools – deserve attention. The children of Bulgaria are dreaming of dentist surgeries and computer rooms. Think about this.

The other dreams and visions children have are not about money, but about sensitivity: they want a class in civilized communication, flower beds in the school-yard, a clean and colourful school, and classes in Bulgarian Studies.

Traditionally education is regarded as one of the strong sides of Bulgaria's public image in the world. According to the UNDP's Global Human Development Index the level of literacy in Bulgaria is comparable to that of the most advanced countries in the world.

This lends an even greater urgency to the question, how to combine the good reputation with the need to live up to the needs of the new times and reassure young people that they are moving forward, that they are doing something for their future, and, no less importantly, that the school loves them?

This question is especially relevant for secondary school students in the medium and large cities. Probably one of the reasons for their sensitivity is their new realization that the school is not something children are forced to do, but an institution called upon to serve their interests and therefore take into account their ideas about the curriculum, the workload and the style of teaching.

There is probably another reason for young people's attitude: secondary education saw some of the most far-reaching transformations in the transition period and it recorded the lowest enrolment rates, according to the UNDP Report – Bulgaria 2002: Human Development Index. In 2001 the level of enrolment in secondary schools reached for the first time that of the beginning of the transition - 68.3 percent. At the same time, however, this positive tendency was combined with a negative one – a decline in the number of students who complete secondary education.

Children now realize that school is important and they have specific expectations of their parents and teachers. The knowledge which they want to gain is not an end in itself but has a specific and practical focus. Children want to be competitive when the time to start a career comes. And this is where the important challenge for teachers lies. Are they prepared to meet the needs of the children who are preparing for the new millennium? How will the adults of today fulfill their responsibility to train the people who will produce the wealth and social development of tomorrow? How will the adults of today support the development of the human capital?

One cannot help noticing that the teachers are the object more of pain than of anger. This is probably symptomatic of a change in attitudes. Children want to deal with partners who teach them not only knowledge, but how to apply this knowledge in practice too. They want clean classrooms and smooth blackboards so that they may feel comfortable together.

**Young people's responses confirm previous surveys conducted by the United Nations in Bulgaria which outline the following characteristics of the education system:**

- ✱ linking young people's education needs with the labour market
- ✱ modify as necessary the training process on a regular basis
- ✱ limit the number of subjects taught depending on young people's interests and career plans
- ✱ a limited number of taught subjects allowing a detailed treatment of the subject matter
- ✱ choice and early specialisation
- ✱ gear the learning process towards the development of practical knowledge and skills

A good educational system also requires permanent contacts between the educational institutions in the interests of a successful development of young people.

At the same time the pain and the dreams expressed in young people's letters from Kurdjali, Satovcha and Smolyan show clearly that geography too is responsible for some of the problems in education. As the Human Development Index in 2002 indicated, the remote municipalities and those with a high concentration of Turkish and Roma population are characterized with a low literacy and enrolment rate.

In addition, children have the distinct feeling that the school is not a place which welcomes modern developments.

Probably this creates in the young mind uncertainty as to whether education is indeed the path to modern living. The lack of computers, Internet and computer classes from the early years in school are the recurrent themes in young people's comments.

A new tendency is children's focus on "civilized communication". Another one is the need for Bulgarian Studies. Combined with the large number of Roma who drop out from primary school (the highest in Europe after Romania, according to a UNDP study in 2003) this tendency must be carefully followed and studied in order to find an effective response.

**A reminder of the educational policies formulated in the National Report on the Millennium Development Goals is needed here because they are a key to some of the problems raised by young people:**

- ✱ restructuring the school network so as to ensure access to education for children from rural and semi-mountainous regions
- ✱ improving school management through the school board and other civil society institutions related to education
- ✱ aligning secondary education courses with the labour market
- ✱ improving the qualification of teachers working with ethnic minorities

**Young people's recommendations to the education system can be summed up in the following way:**

- ✱ The government must address the problem of the condition of school buildings.
- ✱ Ensure that schools have computers and multi-media for interactive teaching
- ✱ More flexibility in the schedule to align the courses with students' interests and allow for specialization and elective courses.
- ✱ Reduce the excessive workload caused by the heavy content. As a whole it is necessary to reduce the content in all subjects. More detailed treatment should be reserved only for the specialised elective courses.



✂ More classes in foreign languages with an emphasis on English. The accession to the European Union and the opening to the world require foreign language skills as an indispensable tool for cross-border communication.

✂ Include more sport in the curriculum without assessment and grades to prevent physical discrimination.

✂ Bulgarian education can be competitive in the European Union only if it makes more use of interactive and out-of-school methods: visualization tools, like maps and atlases, films as an illustration of subject matter taught in class, visits to exhibitions, the cinema, theatre, museums, excursions to places described in class, participation in important community events, competition and sport contests, theatre groups, and others.

✂ Practical skills can be developed only by using more information and communication technologies (“computers and the Internet) as a learning tool.

✂ Enrolment levels in the Bulgarian schools can be raised by creating clubs – in information technology, music, or just clubs where people with common interests come together and talk, courses in cooking, billiard and others. The responsibility for the clubs should be shared by the school board which provides the infrastructure, and the students who take the initiative for the clubs and courses and their organization.

✂ Update textbooks and keep their language understandable and interesting.

✂ Use the same text-books for all cities and villages and do not change them over a period of two or three years. In this way the younger students can use the textbooks of the older ones and the financial burden on low-income families will be reduced. The textbook return campaign can be organized either by the private and non-governmental sector, or by the school authorities.

✂ The quality of Bulgarian primary and secondary education and the literacy levels can be improved by taking an individual approach to students. The compulsory nature of the junior high stage of primary education should consist in the guarantee that all children who complete this level have acquired the basic knowledge taught in school. To achieve this, teachers must take an individual approach to children.

✂ Schools must promote practical skills, not just theoretical knowledge.

✂ Corruption of teachers can be reduced by increasing their remuneration.

- ✂ „Catch all teachers who take bribes and take away their license”.
- ✂ The vulnerable social groups, especially from the Roma community, must be fully integrated in Bulgarian schools.
- ✂ The state must ensure equal education opportunities for all.
- ✂ The enrolment rates and literacy can only be raised by supporting the low-income families by means of monthly allowances, free textbooks provided by the schools, and scholarships. The responsibility for supporting these people must be shared by the government, the non-governmental and the private sector.
- ✂ The success rate and competitiveness of Bulgarian schools can be increased by creating incentives for the private sector to invest: „prosperous business people could give scholarships to gifted children”.
- ✂ It would be a good idea to make secondary education compulsory too because it ensures the development of a civic consciousness which is crucial for the achievement of the millennium development goals.

**Young people are prepared to be involved personally in the efforts to change the school environment:**

- ✂ “We could organize ourselves by classes to clean the school yard”.
- ✂ „I would raise money to re-paint and clean the class-room so that my fellow-students, friends and teachers may feel good”.
- ✂ „I would make paths with many flowers in the school yard, ensure there is heating in the classrooms in winter and a canteen with hot snacks”.
- ✂ „When I complete my university studies I will have a job in the Ministry of Social Policy and receive many letters from people who thank me for helping them.”

3 goal

Promote gender equality  
and empower women

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria



## Third goal - Gender Equality

### **“Promote gender equality and empower women”**

This is an area in which Bulgaria is in a curious situation today – it has a better record of all eastern European countries in the “women in Parliament” indicator: the proportion of women in the 39th National Assembly was the highest in the last 50 years.

From the point of view of equal pay of men and women our country is ahead of Luxembourg, Austria, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Probably this is the reason why society does not perceive gender equality as a problem, much less a sensitive one. Opinion polls indicate that there are no negative attitudes to women, but nor are there expectations that their involvement will make a difference in governance.

How is this “weak sensitivity” reflected in the minds of young people and what are the insights it gives rise to?

#### **1. The anger of the millennium**

I hate men. Actually what I hate is the way they keep reminding us that they are the strong sex. This is an illusion. They may be strong physically but when it comes to psychological stamina we have much more of it. It is not right to say so and I know it very well. My parents taught me that extreme views are wrong. Now I am being wrong and have the good grace to admit it. It is not fair to be harsh on men. They are just as sensitive and misunderstood as we are. May be it is the disguise of their stronger bodies and their different

lifestyles that makes them look more confident and not as frightened. But deep down there is no difference.

— Liliya Buyukliiska, 17, Rousse —

## 2. The pain of the millennium

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One-third of women in Bulgaria are treated by their husbands as slaves and they accept this. Why are these women doing nothing about it?

— Ilvie Yanuzova, Satovcha —

All Bulgarian men are domineering and all women – beautiful.

— Reneta Raikova, 18, Rousse —

## 4. The love of the millennium

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They say that in war and in love everything is permitted. I don't think so. Deceit, lies and insincerity are forbidden. You have no right to hurt anybody or anybody's feelings, to make fun of the other because love is sacred. If there is indeed a war between the sexes, then it must be the only war during which both sides regularly sleep with their enemies.

— D.D. —

A loving heart does not care about money or beauty, all it cares about is the kindness of the other's heart. After I fell in love I feel like the sun. I want to warm and illuminate the sky. I feel like a white moon which lights up the dark paths where he is groping to find his

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way. Love itself puts the sky in your hands. And you yourself become like the sky – your soul is infinite and vast, there is room in it for you, for him and the whole world. Love gives you the freedom and the power which only the sky has and you become invincible. Emotions are a force which rises above everything and everybody. It makes you see other dimensions and realize that when you love you are free. Your soul sheds all inhibitions, laws and rules. You shake off everything and look at the world with different eyes.

— *Velislava Nikolova 11th grade, Rousse* —

## 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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For a person to feel complete and not ashamed of himself it takes human understanding. It costs nothing.

— *Milena Radoslavova, 18, Rousse* —

Equality will only happen when women are taken seriously.

— *Simona Stefanova, 12, Vidin* —

## 6. The strength of the millennium

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I want to say to you all – do not be afraid!! ... Never think you are nothing.

— *Tsvetelina Madjarova,-17, Kurtovo Konare, Plovdiv Region* —

## 7. The dreams of the millennium

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For our country's development to improve people must first become equal. People shouldn't be divided into rich and poor. Women should not be seen as less capable to work. There must be work for both men and women. Catch all teachers who accept bribes and take away their licenses.

— Blagovesta Petkova, 10th grade, Rousse —

Another thing I want to see in Bulgaria is equality of men and women, not the way it was in the past when women had to obey men. Women have rights too, they must not depend on the men. We cannot do without men, nor can we allow men to treat women like slaves. It is true that women cannot do without men but men without women are nothing too.

— Aigulen Ahmedova, 16, Rousse —

Equality of men and women can be achieved by improving women's career prospects and changing the critical attitude towards them. Better education is needed too so that all new developments are conveyed and explained on time.

— Katerina Genova, 17, Pernik —

## 8. The visions of the millennium

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For the first time since it became a republic Bulgaria has a women president. For me today, 14 April 2015 is a special day, now I can honestly say that I live better than my parents.

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I remember that when I was 17 I looked through so many newspapers and magazines and did not find a single photograph of happy children. Yesterday, when I was walking in the streets of the city I remembered what they looked like ten years ago. God, these were streets of hunger and poverty. Close to the place where I lived there was a dustbin and there were always people who were scavenging.

— Albena Doynova, 17, Razgrad —

## A key to understanding the insights

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There is nothing to be surprised about – young people are not yet sensitive to the problem of gender equality. They have no personal experiences of it and what they know they have heard or read from others. For them it is an abstraction. This is why they have no will vis-à-vis the problem, they do not know what they can do and how.

Young people's insights make us think whether this absence of reflection is perhaps the root cause of the lack of sensitivity to personal territory and the territory of others, and the respect for this territory – a problem which is passed from one generation to another?

Come to think of it – how do adults talk about equality? How aware are we of the equality of sexes not just as a social problem, but as an individual problem of respect for personal territory and the territory of the other?

The main problem – lack of sensitivity – can be addressed by policy means which consist of promoting political sensitivity to gender equality.

Observations of the 39th National Assembly show that even though the proportion of women in the group of the ruling majority exceeded 38%, which brings it close to the situation in the Swedish parliament, only two women chaired parliamentary committees, even though 17 of the 20 committees were chaired by members of that group.

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Clearly what is needed is policy that encourages reflection and awareness of what gender equality means and why it matters, as against declarations in favour of equality.

This may raise awareness of the paradoxes in the attitude towards the issue: on the one hand women are equal to men but, on the other, this does not translate into a change in the quality of life. Why then does equality matter?

Statistics (see the Report on the Millennium Development Goals for Bulgaria) shows that as a general rule women are employed in lower paying jobs than men, even though the problem of income inequality of men and women is more or less limited. Further, women rarely occupy senior positions in management, they are typically in the middle levels, as information from the International Association of Professional Business Women shows.

Young people often associate inequality with one of the parents being more overworked than the other. Their attitudes contain vestiges of the patriarchal sensitivity of “Bulgarians of old times” which sees relations between the sexes as determined by the same economic factors as the relations between the rich and the poor. The realisation that these relations are based on choice and individual freedom still seems a far-fetched notion for young people. This is why they find it difficult to offer a vision of overcoming gender inequality.

Once again the alternative strategies in this area consist of realizing the need to encourage “individual optimistic theories” and the fact that social processes are not independent of the personal ones, but their projection.

The messages and suggestions for promoting gender equality put forward by young people may be summed up in the following way:

- ✱ Pool efforts to overcome old-fashioned ways.
- ✱ Be more tolerant.
- ✱ Try to understand the other. Introduce gender training focusing on the rights and responsibilities of the two sexes as a way of promoting understanding.

- ✧ Regulate gender equality by law.
- ✧ Promote stronger public awareness of the issue.
- ✧ Involve the media and design educational programmes which make wider use of the notion of “parenthood” as against only “motherhood”, and emphasise the rights and responsibilities of parents.
- ✧ Insist on the idea of the man and the woman sharing responsibilities.
- ✧ Introduce changes in the tax legislation provides for tax-deductible expenses for raising, upbringing and educating the children.
- ✧ Introduce a quota system in the public sphere which is fair to both sexes.
- ✧ Professional qualification programmes for women of different ages.
- ✧ Equal pay for men and women.
- ✧ Tax benefits for employers who hire women, to cover the “risk” of female employees taking maternity leave or time off to look after their children.
- ✧ Assign a higher role to the municipalities in the process of supporting women’s participation in the executive branch.
- ✧ Introduce quotas for women in government.



4 goal

Reduce child mortality

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria



## Fourth goal - improving children's health

### “Reduce child mortality”

“May the children be happy and have a long life”, “long life and good health for the children” – these are the traditional words of well-wishing exchanged by Bulgarians. “The health of the child” is the other sacred phrase carried from one generation to the next. This is why it is so painful for society to accept that the average child mortality rate in Bulgaria is the highest in Eastern Europe and three times that of the countries of the European Union. For a society traditionally “in love” with its children this is the most cruel indicator of decay and deep crisis

Do the insights of young people express optimism and ideas for a new path and vision of how to overcome this problem?

#### 1. The anger of the millennium

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Every child is a potential asset but left without care, forced to carry the burden of survival from an early age, it will probably turn the expected asset into a burden.

— Dimiter Dimitrov, 21, Sliven —

#### 2. The pain of the millennium

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There are many children in Vidin who suffer from asthma. This is caused by the polluted environment. The factories should be outside the city. For the sick children there should be free clinics in parkland.

— Mihaela Pavlova, 11, Vidin —

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I would try to explain how bad it is not to have a mother and how even worse it is not to have a father. I am sure that people will understand that we must help the orphans not to feel like orphans.

— Stella Vassileva, 15, Rousse —

### 3. The will of the millennium

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All I can do is protest.

— Petya Markova, 18, Sliven —

I would try to convince the younger children that they shouldn't be afraid of going to the doctor or the dentist because this is in the interest of their health. I would sort the garbage before putting it in the dustbin and I would criticize those who litter. If I could I would protest against the privatization of Kozlodui because this would increase unemployment.

— Madlen Marinova, 13, Veliko Turnovo —

For children under 18 going to the dentist should be totally free without limits on the number of teeth they can get free treatment for, and without limits on the type of treatment! All secondary schools should be turned into vocational training schools so that children from low-income families too can get training.

In the village of Cherkovitsa where I live there are good living conditions, the people are nice and hard-working but there are many things which are lacking. For example we need a sports ground, more green areas and trees in the central part of the village and streets without pot-holes.

— Tsvetelina Kirilova, Cherkovitsa village, municipality of Nikopol, Pleven Region —



**I** will eat healthy foods to stay in good shape. I will not steal or lie. I will also preserve something of the little child in me.

— Victor Morenski, 11, Kurdjali —

#### 4. The love of the millennium

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**A** man's life is worry and pain – from the first cry, the first tooth, the first step, the first “I love you”, the first failure, Mother's first white hair. What a lot of energy and devotion it takes to wipe off the tears when you are crying with pain yourself, to extend a helping hand when you feel helpless and insecure yourself, to show the right way when you yourself see no way.

— Martin Stefanov, 11th grade, Rousse —

...“happiness glows in the sweet eyes if their soul feeds on love”

*Neven Mohamedova Baltova, 12th grade, Hristo Botev Secondary School, Aitos*

#### 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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**C**hildren are the birds of autumn

— Mirella Kalinova, 15, Rousse —

## 6. The strength of the millennium

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As you look for the good you will piece together the new  
— *Stamena Dimitrova, 16, Stara Zagora* —

## 7. The dreams of the millennium

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I will try, whatever it may cost, to improve at least a little people's health. I want to become a doctor.

— *Reni Hristova, 16, Pleven* —

My dream is too remote in time, sometimes clouded in mist, at other times I see it clearly as in a film. For a few years now my dream has been to become a doctor.

— *Peter Todorov, 5th grade, Rousse* —

I want free visits by the doctor for children at all times of the day and healthy food for all of them. I want a life free of worry for all families so that the health of every child may be protected.

— *Violeta Grahovska, 11, Dupnitsa* —

Dentists' surgeries in the schools.

— *Marin Alexandrov, 16, Shumen* —

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I would advise politicians to observe more often the play of children and learn from them.

— Eva Popova, 12, Krichim —

## 8. The visions of the millenium

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I hope that being a child in 2015 will be as wonderful and fun as it is now. Probably aliens seem perfectly ordinary to you and if you happen to see a Delvian say hello from me. Oh, a piece of advice: do stay away from the Laxans, they often fly into hyper-rage and you may suffer.

— Petko Hadjipenkov, 11, Kurdjali —

My dear unknown friend, I would very much like to meet you. Our paths may cross at the time you live in. Then, dear friend, the two of us, myself an adult and you a child, can sit down and talk in a McDonald's or over an ice-cream.

— Erai, 5th grade, Kurdjali —

My name is Boris and I am 10 years old. My friend, you have probably organized your transport in such a way as to avoid crashes.

## A key to understanding the insights

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The American psychologist William James said, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes".

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Once again, children associate the improvement of health not with a lot of money but with a change in thinking.

They remind us of the insight by the German writer Angelika Schrobsdorf who said, “Bulgaria does not wish to be understood, it wishes to be embraced” /“Grand Hotel Bulgaria”, Munich, 1997/

And here is the Bible of the millennium which children are giving to the adults:

1. I will eat healthy foods to stay in good shape.
2. I will not steal nor lie.
3. I will always keep a part of the little child in me.

In 2001 the child mortality rate in Bulgaria was 14.4 per thousand /the data is from the National Report on the Millennium Development Goals/ - considerably higher than in other countries: in the Czech Republic it is only 4‰, in Poland – 8.1‰. The fact that the vision of the future of a child today is that there would be no car crashes “there” shows clearly the psychological traumas of children.

The mortality rate of children under 5 remained alarmingly high in the past decade.

A Bulgarian child’s chances of survival are three times higher if it was born in Sofia where the mortality rate of 7.6‰ is close to the European levels.

Health is a direct reflection of attitude to life and children have a very fine sensitivity. What they demand is precisely a change in the attitude towards them.

Bulgaria’s policy formulated in the millennium goals report aims to encourage such a change by means of medical and social measures to promote healthy eating habits, regular check-ups by the family doctor, close attention to domestic violence against children and the traumas they suffer.

This policy will be effective only if it is specific and reaches different regions. Only then will it create a sense of genuine care and the effect of the “embrace”. Everything else has proven its uselessness.

For the fourth goal, “the children’s goal”, many different recommendations for coping with the main problems are offered. Besides recommendations to the government and foundations to undertake activities in support of child health, young people offer specific initiatives which they are ready to implement themselves. This shows their awareness of the need to share responsibilities. Many of the essays by both younger and older children emphasize the common responsibility for dealing with the problem and the need for pooling the efforts of all stakeholders to achieve good results.

**Here is what the young people of Bulgaria are telling us:**

- ✧ Organize targeted national campaigns to appeal to the consciousness and compassion of the more affluent members of society and raise funds for the people who are in need.
- ✧ Organize local campaigns, such as collecting clothes and shoes for orphans.
- ✧ Another possibility is to collect old newspapers and return them for recycling and donate the proceeds to an orphanage.
- ✧ Organize free medical check-ups in schools.
- ✧ Organize street campaigns promoting awareness about these check-ups.
- ✧ Provide free medicines for children up to a certain age. This will boost the birth rate because it would reassure parents that they can cope with raising their child, at least from the point of view of health care.
- ✧ Higher child allowances, free health care.
- ✧ Lead the overall development of the country in the right direction to make young people want to have children.
- ✧ Better career prospects for young people. Unemployed people do not want children because they cannot look after them.
- ✧ Work to prevent smoking and drug abuse by means of campaigns to inform young people about the numerous hazards associated with these habits.

✂ Ensure understanding and support for those who wish to give up drugs – in school, by friends, and the family. The attitude towards drug addicts must not be one of contempt or rejection; compassion, understanding and support are much more effective.

✂ The government must commit itself to improving life in the social institutions. No less important, however, is the contribution of foundations and all non-governmental organizations which raise money and try to find donors.

✂ Everyone should help, as much as they can. For example, a small amount, e.g. 5 levs, can be deducted from all salaries. It would not affect an individual's financial condition but the total collected amount would make a valuable contribution to orphanages.

✂ It is the government's responsibility to cope with the problem. Safe streets are needed with traffic lights and pedestrian crossings, as well as entire pedestrian zones in the streets close to schools and kindergartens.

✂ Another responsibility of the government is to enforce compliance with road traffic rules and impose fines for offences.

5 gda

Improve  
maternal health

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria





## Fifth goal - Improve the health of pregnant women and mothers

### “Improve maternal health”

“I have none other but you, Mother, for me you are love and faith”

— Poem by Hristo Botev —

Some of the best verses in Bulgarian poetry are devoted to the mother. A mother's health and happiness are the main indications of the state of a society, this is what conveys a sense of security and assurance that everything is the way it should be.

This is why a society which has preserved the noble reverence for the mother finds it difficult to accept the fact that the maternal death rate in Bulgaria is four times higher compared to the European Union.

Another fact which creates a gap between Bulgaria and the European Union is that abortions remain the most important family planning method: their number is three times that of the EU and considerably higher than the countries of eastern Europe.

How is the clash between the traditional highly noble attitude to mothers and the somber reality perceived by the young and what does this perception give rise to?

## 6. The anger of the millennium

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Mothers and pregnant women today are afraid they would lose their jobs if they have children. Why should our mothers have to choose between us and their work?

— Monika Donkina, Vidin —

It seems to me that if pregnant women were happy that they are going to have a baby they would not abandon their children in orphanages, sell them or even dump them in a dustbin, as I read once. On the other hand, is not pregnancy one of the best things in life? Giving life should make us happy, and not sad just because we do not have the money to raise our children, our offspring.

Poverty incites to murder; if we do not want more young people to take their lives, let us try to talk to them and understand what their problems are.

It is not only the government but the people too that make a state what it is. If not today or tomorrow, then at least at some point in the future let us try to bring out what is human in us, show consideration to other people and not be selfish.

— Dessislava Nikolova, 11th grade, Razgrad —

## 7. The pain of the millennium

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I am already an old woman. You want to know why? Let me tell you – I don't have a mother. I will always feel the pain of this. My wish is that there will never be mothers who fell sick and died, and left behind them only broken hearts.

When you do not have a mother everything seems pointless.

May diseases never put an early end to mothers' lives.

— Stella Vassileva, 15, Rousse —

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I wanted to have a mother who would be gentle and wake me up in the morning with a caress. I do have a mother but she is severely disabled. I do not have a father who could give me what Mummy could not. I lived without tenderness with my rag dolls and dreamed of many things. I talked to the dolls as if they were people and I was their mother because I know how many children need her.

Then they put me in an orphanage. They thought I was mentally retarded because I was very quiet and uncommunicative. My heart was locked. I dreamed that a miracle would happen one day and I would feel a real joy.

Later I started listening to songs and singing quietly. I began to dream of becoming a singer – music takes me to another world where I can pour out my soul. I am now 15 years old. I dream of becoming a model, of wearing beautiful clothes, walking in the brilliant light and being admired. May be if I work very hard this dream will become true. I want to have a nice and happy family one day. I want my husband and my children to have everything which I did not.

— Petya Petrova, 7th grade, Kurtovo Konare —

### 3. The will of the millennium

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I would like to create a center for mothers in distress.

— Teodora Nenova, 13, Veliko Turnovo —

### 6. The strength of the millennium

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The power lies in us, ordinary people.

— Toni Tsvetanova, 15, Harmanli —

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## 7. The dreams of the millennium

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I see the future of Bulgaria filled not with treachery, insidious plans and plotting, but with love between people.

You don't believe this ideal world exists? What kind of a world would it be without good friends? Whom would you turn to for help, if not them? Friends cannot be bought with money. I believe that the best friends we all have are our parents. They know best what you like and what you do not, what makes you sad and what makes you sad. Mother says, "Even if you do the most terrible thing I would still understand and support you".

— Teresa Todorova —

Pregnant women should be under constant supervision.

— Alexander Marinov, 10, Pleven —

Every community should have a resource centre whose doors are always open to women and children in need of advice from psychologists. And one more thing – a school for parents.

— Tsveta Kaleinska, Veliko Turnovo —

## 8. The visions of the millennium

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In the world of the future it is enough to offer something new and interesting for money to start flowing your way.

In the world of the future the only way for people to receive what they want is through projects. Women are rushing to become mothers.

— Galina Shekerova, 18, Satovcha —

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## A key to understanding the insights

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Young people feel a pain when the mother is mentioned. The word “mother” is associated with sorrow and pain. The mother in their stories is either absent or sick.

This is one of the insights expressing the most acute pain and the least vision. It is worth thinking about this because, after all, the mother is the main arch-type in life with which the sense of security is associated. A symbol of what is she for each one of us and do we have the time to play this role in our life? When and how often do we do it?

To change this indicator it will probably take a lot more efforts and out-of-the-box thinking by many different types of organizations. Even if it achieves the goal of reducing maternal deaths by 2015 to 12 per 100 000 live births, compared to the current 19.1, Bulgaria will still be short of the average values in the European Union. The rate there is 5.1 per 100,000 live births.

All this shows why reducing maternal mortality is a priority for the National Reproductive Health Programme which is expected to integrate the efforts of a broad range of non-governmental organizations and government institutions.

One worrying fact is that there is an increase in the number of home births, especially among Roma mothers. Another source of concern are the number of abortions; even though it has gone down, it is still much higher compared to the other European countries.

The above two facts are symptomatic of a poor health awareness and if they are not carefully analysed, they can severely damage Bulgaria's public image precisely at the moment in which the country will need a positive impetus in the process of EU accession.

**The policies in this field contained in the global report on the millennium development goals are:**

- ✧ measures to prevent complications during pregnancy and delivery – they are particularly necessary in the remote rural areas
- ✧ medical supervision of the abortions which consists of stricter control of registration and reporting, and greater reliability of reported results.

**The specific suggestions made by young people:**

- ✧ Financial support by the government for mothers until the child is one year old.
- ✧ Stronger financial support by the government to pregnant women.
- ✧ The government/Ministry of Health should provide free examinations and counseling during pregnancy and after delivery.
- ✧ More attention by doctors to pregnant women.
- ✧ Awareness and educational campaigns in the schools and with the public at large on different aspects of conception, pregnancy, abortions, and the rights and benefits to which pregnant women and mothers are entitled to. The responsibility for these campaigns should be shared by the schools and the non-governmental organizations active in the field.

Logdal

Limit the spread of HIV/AIDS,  
syphilis and tuberculosis

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria





## SIXTH GOAL - Limit the spread of HIV/AIDS, syphilis and tuberculosis

HIV/AIDS remains the biggest world epidemic; according to UNAIDS the number of deceased persons is 28 million while the number of HIV positive persons is 45 million.

There is also a marked increase in the syphilis and tuberculosis cases and according to the World Health Organisation they may become the new epidemics unless control is improved.

At the same time there is a paradoxical tendency in the world : even though the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases is rising, young people underestimate or ignore it. This is due to different reasons: girls are afraid to ask questions because they might be suspected of being sexually active, and boys do not believe that the consequences concern them. Neither sex wants to appear more interested than they really are, as the 2003 State of World Population Report by the UNFPA shows.

How do Bulgarian young people fit in this general tendency, what is the drift of their insights and is there a specifically “Bulgarian optimistic theory” in them?

### Σ. The pain of the millennium

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I live in Blagoevgrad – it ranks third on the Balkan peninsula and second in Bulgaria in the sale of drugs and the number of addicted young people. You can buy grass or something stronger in front of any school.

— Ivelina Angelova, Blagoevgrad —

### 3. The will of the millennium

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I would disseminate brochures and leaflets with easy to understand health information about keeping personal hygiene.

— Polina Dobрева, 7th grade, Veliko Turnovo —

### 4. The love of the millennium

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I am a communicative girl and I like to talk to boys and girls alike. We are at an age when no matter how you start a conversation it always ends in the same way: the first time, sex, kissing. I found out that boys are much more ignorant than we are but they will never admit it, they just pretend they know everything. About a month ago my best friend called me to say he had had sex with a girl for the first time and he almost did not use a condom. I explained to him how high the risk of catching a disease was. I think he understood and this stupid whim will not happen again.

— Vassilena Slavova, Veliko Turnovo —

### 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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It is very important to care about personal hygiene – dirty and unwashed people are more vulnerable to diseases.

— Naile Yusseinova, 15, Satovcha —

## 6. The strength of the millennium

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Do not be shy! Talk to your children about sex and, which is much more important, about the importance of safe sex.

— Teodora Novakova —

## A key to understanding the insights

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What does it mean when children have no dreams and visions about limiting deadly diseases? Here is the insight: limiting them is not a matter of the future but of the present. “Personal hygiene” will and wisdom. “Personal hygiene” is always today, never tomorrow. Cleanliness is a matter of personal choice. If you want to change something about your health habits – do it today. Do it every day.

The Bulgarian young people are no different from everybody else – they do not attach sufficient importance to the risks of sexually-transmitted diseases. This is the familiar syndrome “I know it happens but it will not happen to me”. According to studies conducted in different parts of the world, in their sexual behaviour and practices young people rely on chaotic sources, like the street, friends, the Internet, television, films, school, parents. The result is an attitude to sex which is a combination of knowledge and ignorance, wrong notions and myths. Girls are more willing than boys to discuss this subject with their mothers but as a general rule the parents everywhere are at the bottom of the list of sources of information, as a study by the UNFPA in the State of World Population Report in 2003 shows.

Where Bulgaria is different is that it is situated in the region with the fastest spread of HIV/AIDS, a fact which casts a shadow over the optimism that the AIDS prevalence is still quite low. Bulgaria is also different with the explosive growth in syphilis cases – almost eight times

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over nine years – which puts our country in a very awkward position vis-à-vis the European Union, where the syphilis prevalence levels are twelve times lower. The tuberculosis cases in Bulgaria too are four times as many as in the European Union.

**The goal to prevent an epidemic of these diseases can only be achieved by means of the focused prevention measures outlined in the National Strategy and National Programme for the Prevention and Control of AIDS 2001-2007 adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2001:**

- ✱ health promotion among adolescents, young people and vulnerable groups
- ✱ introduce health and sexual education in the school curriculum
- ✱ epidemiological monitoring and testing policy
- ✱ health and social services to persons with HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases
- ✱ treatment of patients with HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases

**A** “Bulgarian optimistic theory” is still absent and it must be founded not just on the general health programmes of the specialized institutions, but also on an analysis and reflection on the question, how to talk to young people if we want them to really hear about the risks and the “tricks” to use?

**The successful school curricula (surveys by the United Nations Population Fund in Mexico, Thailand and South Africa) make use of the following “tricks”:**

- ✱ The teachers are prepared to deal with all kinds of students: those that have no experience, those with extensive experience and those who were forced to have sex
- ✱ Present information by means of real stories of people who live with the disease
- ✱ Emphasise the use of condoms: starting sex in this way and enjoying it after learning how to use them properly
- ✱ Take into account group syndromes: peer pressure to have sex, the feelings of masculinity, femininity and ego-boosting it gives rise to.

**The most important conclusion about a future “optimistic theory” is that young people want information, appreciate it and are prepared to change their behaviour provided the information is suited to their age and development, is accurate and easily accessible.**

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**Young people's ideas about coping with the problem have to do with enhanced awareness and knowledge, caring about health, availability of protection:**

- ✧ Knowledge about how you can be infected and also about how you cannot be. Knowledge about precaution methods.

- ✧ Know where you can get tested.

- ✧ Know how to delay the disease.

- ✧ Health education classes in school attended by all young people.

- ✧ Organize awareness and information campaigns and other public events which attract the attention of young people and provoke their interest in issues related to HIV/AIDS.

- ✧ Implement the peer training approach in different forms – both formal and spontaneous.

- ✧ A crucial factor for limiting HIV/AIDS and all other diseases is awareness of one's own responsibility and taking care to protect one's health.

- ✧ Take precaution measures. Young people must be convinced of the need to use a condom; this requires the help of parents, (eliminate the stereotype that sex is an uncomfortable subject in the family) teachers and other respected figures.

- ✧ Regular medical check-ups: the government must ensure availability of free check-ups twice a year. This would encourage people to visit the doctor regularly and when they feel they have a health problem, instead of attempting self-cure.

- ✧ Organize more campaigns with handing out information leaflets. The value of this is twofold: young people who cannot afford condoms will receive them, and a strong message in favour of using them more will be sent.

- ✧ Install condom vending machines in every school to enable boys and girls who feel too shy to ask for a condom in the shop to buy one.



**Ensure a sustainable  
environment**

United Nations



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria





## Seventh goal - a clean environment

### **“Ensure a sustainable environment”**

Surveys of Bulgarians living abroad and here about their perceptions of Bulgaria /“Imagine you are Bulgarian”, Radio Free Europe and the Foundation for New Culture, 2003/ showed that nature and the environment are what they most often associate their country with. “A white rose, pine forests, a wonderful fragrance of forest flowers, carpets of leaves, mist, a fiery sky, paradise, twilight” – are some of the positive images of Bulgaria.

“Smoking buses, broken streets, street dogs, old people living off the dustbins, tears, concrete apartment blocks, the market on Graf Ignatiev street, the Ariana lake“- are some of the negative and neutral ones.

Bulgarians perceive their country largely through nature and the environment. The beautiful countryside, the hospitable and peaceful people, and good education are a stable part of the traditional perception of Bulgaria. Similar to the collapse of the other myths, i.e. the deteriorating child and maternal health, the higher mortality rates, the problems in education, the drastic increase in the syphilis and tuberculosis prevalence, the abrupt degradation of the environment have come as a shock, reflected in the statement “this is not the country I had pictured in my mind”.

The facts that Bulgaria has a huge number of informal dumping sites and, that it is the last of all EU accession countries to start sorting waste are not yet seen through the prism of personal strategies for living.

Is this true for young people too? What feelings does dirt provoke in them? Are new strategies for living contained in their insights?

## 6. The anger of the millennium

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It is not a bad idea to punish people who pollute the environment with community service. For example, punish those who just drop their cigarette ends in the street by collecting cigarette ends for a certain period of time.

— Teodora Petrova, 18, Sliven —

Why do Bulgarians take off their shoes before they enter their homes? Because of the mud and dust in the dug-up streets, the mess of construction materials, the knocked down dustbins and the dog pool.

At least once we should all put on rubber boots, a cloak and gas mask and get an idea of what life could be like if this foolish attitude to the environment continues.

— Vanina Vurbanova, 15, Veliko Turnovo —

As I was walking in the streets of my city once I saw polythene bags floating in the air and some of them had landed on the bare branches of the trees. What a dismal sight!

— Adriana Dragneva, Rousse —

What is the point, I wonder, of talking about sunshine, air and nature when our life passes amid mud and garbage? And what is there left for us to do – put on rubber boots, a mask on the face and drink boiled water.

— Vanina Vurbanova, 15, Veliko Turnovo —

If we do not wish Bulgaria to be polluted we must not allow the existence of polluters.

— Dessislava Daskalova, 10, Sofia —

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The city I live in is not the dream of my life. Yes, of course, it is a very beautiful city but the streets are incredibly dirty, most of the waste containers are broken and overflowing. The streets are full of poor and hungry people. There are gypsies who look appalling. And they are always in large groups and you are afraid of going out on your own. Of course I am not saying they should be banned from the streets, they are human beings too. But they make little children beg, especially in summer. I have seen gypsy women breastfeed their babies in the street.

— Iva, 16 —

Maybe we are not thinking and acting like a foreigner who truly admires our landscape and its inexpressible beauty.

— Milena Todorova, 14, Veliko Turnovo —

## 2. The pain of the millennium

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Humans are so insignificant compared to Mother Nature that if we do not stop and think about what we are doing to it, it will stop being our home and turn into our disaster, an infertile and barren land the only way out of which is our death.

— Petya Atanassova, 12th grade, Rousse —

We are a group of students in the Aleko Konstantinov Secondary School in Lukovit. We have an eco-club Shamrock 2 and every year we organize contests, plant trees, flowers and green areas.

Our school is situated in the worst possible place right next to the Roma neighbourhood and cemetery. But the bigger problem is in the school-yard itself which the Roma use for a dumping ground and is overgrown with thorns. It is the place where we least like to be.

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On behalf of the eco-club in Krichim we appeal for your assistance.

— *Sibel Turmazova, 14, Krichim* —

On my way to school every day I cross the bridge of the river Muglzhka and I see this beautiful landscape. Every time I go there I wonder, why do people dump their garbage in the river? When I was a little girl I often asked mother, why are there no fish in the river and why is the water so dirty? Now I know that all this garbage has a negative effect upon the environment. I don't want my children to ask me the same questions.

As to garbage, you can find it everywhere – in the rivers, the forests and even in public places. There is a place right next to the coach station. Everybody dumps their waste in this small street.

Every day at 5 a.m. our neighbours throw their waste bags in the back-yard and everyone who comes to this street can enjoy the landscape. Once there were fruit trees and vegetables there. Now everything is ruined.

It is amazing how people find all kinds of ways to pollute the environment. Most of them do not care about the consequences because “they will not live to see them” – I am quoting several people whom I asked whether they are concerned that in 100-150 years litter will have a negative effect on man.

About 85 per cent said they didn't care.

— *Yuliana Aldinova, Muglzh* —

Don't let us throw our garbage from the windows. I never want to see again old people dressed in rags fighting for a piece of bread taken out of the garbage bin.

— *Irena Milanova, 10th grade, Rousse* —

### 3. The will of the millennium

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If I could change our city, the first thing I would do is to employ unemployed people, plant grass in the green areas and put up dog and cat asylums to stop them from spreading disease.

— Tsveta Subeva, 7th grade, Smolyan —

I would like to become an eco-policeman and fine the polluters of the environment.

— Dilyan Cholakov, 10, Gabrovo —

I would take part in a campaign to plant trees and flowers in the riverside park and the spaces between the apartment blocks in Vidin.

— Vladislava Danovska, 13, Vidin —

We would clean our “Gabrovski” Park

— Simoneta Ilieva, 12, Veliko Turnovo —

With a little help I can make bird houses.

— Yanitsa Brunzelova, 13, Veliko Turnovo —

On my way to school tomorrow I will buy myself some wafers because I really have a sweet tooth. I will throw away the wrapper not on the pavement but in a dustbin, even though their number on the way is very small;. And if in the meantime I see a little beggar I will give my wafer to him. Why? I need a diet anyway, and I am not that fond of chocolate.

— Maya Krusteva, 18, Sliven —

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Install containers which look like cartoon film characters in order to make children interested in using them.

Allocate 2/3 of the money for the decoration of new buildings to art objects.

— *Teodor Totev, 18, Sofia* —

I plan to help homeless animals by making asylums for them and feeding them.

— *Tatyana Chalukova, 12, Veliko Turnovo* —

When I become a veterinary doctor I will take all homeless animals to my clinic, will cure them and then give them to people who can look after them and take responsibility.

— *Polina Petrova, 11, Vidin* —

I want my country to be clean and beautiful like other countries are, so I will not litter, walk on the grass, nor break tree branches and bushes.

— *Nikolina Ivanova, 12, Kurdjali* —

A clean environment is very important for people. We need to bathe and brush our teeth regularly, and throw garbage in the dustbins, not the street.

— *Ralitsa Petkova, 7th grade* —

If I had the money I would pay the cleaners to clean Pazardjik.

— *Zhana Andonova, 15, Pernik* —

I want to become a veterinary doctor because these people are needed by people and animals. They control the way animals are raised and used, and protect people from dis-

eases carried by animals and animal products.

— *Dobromir Iliev, 10* —

I want to help promote sport because without it people's health will deteriorate. If I see someone dumping litter on the street I will stop them and tell them how bad for the environment it is. For the poor I would organize a party and help them overcome their problems.

— *Sylvia Nikolova, 13, Veliko Turnovo* —

I know what I can do. I can move around the city on a bike, rollers or on foot instead of using the car. I could say "No" to smoking. I could dump waste in the dustbins. I could return packages to be recycled. I could turn off the tap while I am brushing my teeth. I could clean the area around my home and see that no one litters. I could plant at least one tree in my life. I could use recycled products. These are things I could do until 2015 and after.

— *Teodora Pterova, 12th grade, Sliven* —

We could get down to work, join our efforts and pull the Earth out of the bog in which it is sinking with every passing minute.

— *Deyana Vulcheva, 17, Razgrad* —

Create a Joint Committee of Nature Lovers, Nature Polluters and Natural Environment Protectors whose responsibility would be to see that the environment is not polluted.

— *Stella Stamatova, 22, Bourgas* —

Clean up the area around the block you live in, plant a tree and sing with joy – this may seem trivial but if we all see it as a positive thing we would produce a beneficial effect on Nature.

— *Reni Hristova, 16, Pleven* —

I am the chairperson of a club of young environmentalists in Pazardjik. We have the support of our parents and my geography teacher M. Gyulemenova. This year we completed several projects to clean and plant grass and trees in the city.

My brother Georgi is not such an active environmentalist but he shows a keen interest.

— Betty and Georgi Sirakov, 17 and 14, Pazardjik —

#### 4. The love of the millennium

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Every bird song is for me like a hymn.

— Dessislava Daskalova, 10, Sofia —

#### 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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A single small piece of litter can cause the world to collapse.

— Anita Angelova, 5th grade —

#### 6. The strength of the millennium

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A happy person does only good. Free people are strong with their goodness.

— Rositsa Tasseva, 17, Brestovitsa, Plovdiv Region —



Each one of us has the right to be himself, just as it is in Nature – every leaf floats undisturbed by the others.

— *Antonia Hristova, 17, Sofia* —

## 7. The dreams of the millennium

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If people continue to pollute the environment at these rates, by 2015 very little of it will be preserved and we will have to compete for a spot of clean nature. When I grow up I will fight to prevent all polluting.

— *Georgi Trendafilov, 7th grade, Smolyan* —

I want tourism to develop. Not only by the coast and in the mountains, but in other parts of the country as well. There is beauty not only by the coast and in the mountains. There are many other lovely places in the country that people don't know about. The problem is that they must be discovered and nobody is looking for them.

— *Aygulen Ahmedova, 16, Rousse* —

I would protect the environment and help animals in trouble.

— *Victor Morenski, 11, Kurdjali* —

I want to see the world transformed. I want people to stop and think before they break and scratch park benches and kill. When they do think they will see that if they stop doing all the bad things the world will become a wonderful place.

— *Tsveta Vulchetsova, 12, Smolyan* —

## 8. The visions of the millennium

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People grow the fruit and vegetables they need.

— Nadya Alexandrova, 18, Gabrovo —

In 2015 I will change the way Nature looks, as much as I can.

— Karolina Popova, 12 —

In 2015 I see a prosperous Bulgaria, a member of the European Union, a country with a higher living standard. To achieve this I will try to change and throw waste only in the dustbins.

— Manol Andonov, 6th grade, Smolyan —

## A key to understanding the insights

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“A single small piece of litter can cause the world to collapse” – this is the insight of the millennium which carries the force of a poetic spark.

It is not “the litter”, but “a single small piece of litter” that can cause the world to collapse!

This is essentially the rise of a new environmental awareness in which personal choice is all important. Cleanness is a matter of personal choice, a reflection of the internal principles of an organization, not of investments and governmental decisions.

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With a single sweep this insight deletes all possible alibis from the adults' list of excuses: "everyone else does it", "it was always like this", "there is nothing I can do about it" are not acceptable explanations at a time when "every single litter" can make a difference.

More will than anger is expressed in this insight. Young people have a very fine sensitivity to dirt, and cleanness for them is associated with the desirable future.

The fondness for clean nature is what really unleashes their will and readiness for change. This is the field in which their active essence wishes to find realization.

They know what they can do and they say it.

Some of the insights we find here remind us of the best examples of Bulgarian thought: the exchange of energy between man and Nature as exemplified by the "clean the place around you and sing with joy and produce a beneficial effect on Nature."

Remember this – "a single small piece of litter can cause the world to collapse".

Cleanness, tidiness and prettiness are a matter of personal will and choice. Children express a readiness to look after the spaces which surround them and in this way become the source of a new attitude toward Nature and the environment. The polluted air, litter on the streets, the lack of organization to clean the public areas annoy and anger young people. Not only do they protest against this, they also come up with ideas about cleaning up. In this respect children's opinions coincide with the position of the Millennium Development Goals. Young people describe in their own words the poor quality of the environment. The data contained in the Development Report confirms their worry. It is a fact that despite the shrinking industrial output more and more areas are taken up by waste. In Bulgaria there are 663 landfills which cover an area of 724.9 hectares. And only a handful of them meet the requirements of the European Union. Another important problem is the sewage network and the waste water treatment facilities which are underdeveloped compared to the water supply systems. The share of urban areas with sewage facilities is 70.2% and the share of rural ones is only 2.1 %. More

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than 20 % of these facilities are obsolete and need to be reconstructed. Waste water treatment plants present a similar picture. Only 61 are fully built and operational. They serve 63 communities where 35.7 % of the country's population lives. The other communities make use of cesspool/septic treatment which pollutes the underground waters.

Optimism is not in the good facts but in the realization of the facts as they are, and of the paths to change. It is this kind of optimistic strategies that young people draw up. Actually they have many strategies: there is intolerance, pain, rebellion, many verbs. Encouragement should be given to this will to actually do things because it has the potential to give rise to a new group consciousness and become established civic behaviour.

This is what will make it impossible for the institutions to shelve the issues.

**For the achievement of this goal young people offer the following recommendations:**

- ✱ Government initiative to pass legislation which deters people from polluting the environment. Fines for people who litter the streets and factories which pollute are one example. Non-corrupt inspectors who set the fines are crucially important but this can be achieved if they are paid well.
- ✱ Move the industries which pollute the air, water and soil out of the cities.
- ✱ Reduce to a minimum the polluting industries and factories. Promote clean industries and encourage factories which have installed purification equipment.
- ✱ Create waste recycling centres outside the cities.
- ✱ Improve the animal protection law.
- ✱ Regulate the felling of trees. It can be reduced by replacing timber with alternative clean materials.
- ✱ Promote eco- and rural tourism.
- ✱ Organize campaigns to raise people's awareness of the importance of living in a safe and clean environment.
- ✱ Create in every Bulgarian school Green Patrols who clean up waste, plant grass and trees and look after animals.
- ✱ Anyone can clean up the spaces between the blocks, plant flowers or trees.

✂ Dispose of waste properly – this is a responsibility of individuals but there should also be control by the municipalities.

✂ Organize cleaning campaigns which involve not only residents and students but also businesses in the area and their staff. These campaigns are best organized by the municipalities or local non-governmental organisations.

✂ Limit non-organic waste.

✂ Parents and children have a responsibility to make children aware of the importance of protecting the environment and avoiding pollution. Educational programmes and lectures for children on environment protection topics would be useful.

✂ Put more waste containers in the street.

✂ Create a good organization of Green Patrols who look after the protection of parks.

✂ Put up signs in places easy to see which invite the citizens to protect the environment, and set up groups to clean up on a daily basis.

✂ More companies cleaning the streets.

✂ Build new eco trails. Clean up the forests.

✂ Install containers which look like cartoon characters to attract children to use them.

### What will I do?

- ✂ I will participate in all environment protection and tree-planting campaigns in my area.
- ✂ I will criticize the people who pollute.
- ✂ I will throw away waste only in dustbins.
- ✂ I will vote for a mayor who would be committed to cleaning up and preserving the sea coast.
- ✂ I will help organize a “Clean environment” campaign.
- ✂ My friends and I will organize „Recyclable materials collection day”. We will join campaigns to plant trees and flowers in the riverside park and the spaces between the blocks in Vidin.
- ✂ At school we put up a notice-board presenting environment protection topics. We will talk with the other students and our friends about the problems in environment protection.
- ✂ I will become an eco-policeman and will fine the polluters. I will fight those who poison the fish in the rivers and pollute the air.
- ✂ I will pick up litter.
- ✂ I will create a good non-governmental organization which is committed to environment protection in Bulgaria.
- ✂ We will clean up our park.
- ✂ I will organize small teams to clean the parks and I will make houses for the birds.
- ✂ I will use my own money to produce a leaflet which says, “If you do not wish your home to become a dumping site help keep Nature clean”
- ✂ I will encourage my friends and family to keep the environment clean and look after it.

8 gda

Partnership for development  
between states and people



A Time for Renewal

Bulgaria





## Eighth goal- partnership for development between states and people

During the last 15 years two revolutions happened over a short period of time: Bulgarians entered the ages of democracy and globalization. These two revolutions brought to the surface inapplicable views, made visible the national fears and ultimately raised once again the old question, who are we and where are we going? Bulgaria is now a member of NATO and will soon become member of the European Union, possibly in 2007. The country is now a partner with its responsibilities in international politics and yet, this fact, which was the dream of many generations, is contributing more to tension than a sense of reassurance.

This tension will probably be the hallmark of the years to come and therefore requires special attention. When it debates its future, Bulgaria adopts the typical position of the “peripheral culture” (Prof. Ivailo Znepolski, “Cultural policies in the age of globalization”, 2003, Soros Centre for Cultural Policies). This is a culture which is not “different” but needs a centre to keep it in the common space and bring it into the centripetal motion.

“The periphery” and “the centre” are the probable new starting points for debate, tension and polemics which will shape the values of partnership.

These are qualitatively new processes for the Bulgarian society for both young people and adults, and their direction is still unknown.

What is the thrust of young people’s views? How do the “periphery” and the “centre” shape their sensitivity? What are their insights into where we come from, who we are and where in fact we are going.

## 6. The anger of the millennium

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The winds of migration have now become a storm. What power can stop it? Is it my life or my mind that is in need of change? Why does everything fail? Discover the biggest threat and root out the cause. People head where they think they can find fulfillment. This is a battle and everyone wants to win. When the problem threatens to drown you everything seems bad. But this is when you must rise and attack with the power of your youth. And don't be interested only in the gain. Don't turn into a money machine because money does not buy everything.

It is true that I want to go abroad but only on holiday, not to live there. Life may be better there but why should I let them humiliate me and ask me to be their servant? No, this is not the life I want. I will try to set myself up well in my own country. And I will make it because for me victory is an order, not a suggestion.

The new generation is not a collector of good advice. If you are not a pot plant how will you be trimmed?

— Yoana Radulova, 11th grade, Rousse —

We lived through absurd totalitarianism, experienced lost socialism and ended up in wild democracy.

— Stanislava Tasheva, 23, Kurdjali —

Perhaps if we had been under French or British rule things would have been different now. We are Europeans but the only thing to show for it is the map.

— Iskra Mladenova, 18, Shumen —

## 2. The pain of the millennium

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The foreign world we see in such a romantic light treats us as second-hand citizens and we are ready to accept this in pursuit of our goals.

And what are our goals? Unfortunately, not terribly original most of the time – a well-paid job no matter what it is.

— *Krassimira Dimova, 21, Harmanli* —

And thus rotates our Earth ready to be swallowed by a dragon. This dragon has many names: greed, sorrow, unhappiness and poverty, illiteracy, war and death are all here, and for a good reason too.

— *Peter Plamenov, Shumen, 16* —

You can't blame small ethnic groups for not being like the big ones. Why should we try to change them? I remember the forced change of names in Bulgaria. This event might be repeated if the occasion arose.

— *Svetozar Petrov, Nikoleta Petrova, Rousse* —

## 3. The will of the millennium

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In the interests of a better life for all of us, I shall try to be more tolerant to all people.

— *Marta Georgieva, Novi Pazar* —

We need more events in Bulgaria and Razgrad like the festival of yoghurt; it would be nice if people from different continents took part in it.

— Kalina Ivanova, 12, Razgrad —

#### 4. The love of the millennium

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I would just tell people: it's fantastic to talk to foreigners. I do it so why shouldn't you? Let us all start to speak the same language – the language of love.

— Yolina Sotirova, 15, Rousse —

My contribution to the millennium will be to help make the world a better place and I will do it by becoming a better person myself.

— Denitsa Djodjeva, 17, Rousse —

#### 5. The wisdom of the millennium

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All of us are trying to achieve immortality even though few would admit it. This means that we all keep inside us a piece of eternity. The world I live in is a miniature universe which is reproduced on a universal scale. There are two very important things in it: to share with someone your amazement at the miracle of the world and to prove yourself to others. To show that you exist.

— Roxena Laleva, 18, Shumen —

We call “the world” everything which surrounds us. But there is another world which lives inside us, and this is the inner world. This is the world as we see it in our dreams. People try to turn these imagined worlds into reality because they are a better and safer place to live.

— Gergana Ivanova, 18, Sliven —

It occurs to me that life is outrageous when we think about it, and beautiful when we live it.

— Stefka Stancheva, 11th grade, Rousse —

## 6. The strength of the millennium

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When people realize that faith is a fiction, that the colour of the skin is just another whim of Nature, and that the reason for so many languages is to urge us to overcome new obstacles every day, they will come to the simplest and most human truth - we are all the same and it is better to hang together than be separated.

— Liliya Buyukliiska, 17, Rousse —

I think that music is the language with which countries can work in partnership together.

— Ralitsa Mileva, 15, Shumen —

## 7. The dreams of the millennium

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A person's dream is his little secret. For example, I have a friend whose dream is to meet Arnold Schwarzenegger; another one wants to be able to sing like Britney Spears. I suppose these dreams seem a little silly. But who are we to judge whose dream will come true and whose will not? Yes, I will admit that the future depends on our dreams. So, please, keep dreaming..

— Ivona Dimitrova, 10, Shumen —

I would really like to see scientists invent something which can change life and make it much better. Something like the computer. Of course, it could be a flying car, or at least a computer-controlled one. To be able to fly to other countries. To have money for all. I don't like it when one person orders another one about. Show interest not only in the big cities, but in the smaller communities too.

— Nadejda Sevova, Smolyan —

I had invited to my light-year birthday many of my alien friends. Unfortunately, some of them did not come. Still it was hyper fun, except when one of the Marsians gave me a laser-controlled cat which I blew up I don't know how.

— Karina Malinova —

I can't wait for 2015. I will be a ballet dancer then. Through ballet the whole world will learn about Bulgaria and love it.

— Deyana Assenova, 10, Sofia —

We are about to join NATO and the European Union. This opens up incredible opportunities, I will be able to join the “Doctors without Borders” movement and be where there are disasters, epidemics and catastrophes.

I hope people’s love and interest in me will not disappear because this is where I see the richness of life, not in money.

— Peter Todorov, *Rousse*, 11 —

## 8. The visions of the millennium

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The future lived on the most remote planet in the universe. It was tall and loved to sit in a swing made of flowers.

— Gergana Mladenova, *15, Sliven* —

If my country joins the European Union and receives the support and understanding of Europe it will be spurred on to achieve great things.

— Polina Plamenova, *13, Vidin* —

But even back home things are not the same anymore. I get up at 6 in the morning, just as I did in Germany. At 8 I am at my workplace. After work I come home feeling totally drained. From Monday to Friday my time is planned down to the last minute. The Oriental timelessness we were used to once and spending hours in the cafe are gone. On weekends, when I meet with my friends we talk about accounts in credit cards, the mortgages we are paying, and the savings we have to make in order to send our children to good schools.

The truth is that things are not as rosy as they are in films. There are days when the stress and rush drive me mad. But now I know that everything comes at a price. If I want to spend Christmas in Paris and not be afraid to take the turn to the shopping streets I must follow the rules.

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And yet my generation is a lucky one. At the beginning of the century a genuine European prospect before the country emerged. Those who did not falter, nor complain, nor wait for someone else to do their work made it.

26.12. 2015, Paris

— *Plamena Radusheva, 11th grade, Razgrad* —

Variety is the key characteristic of the new world. People discover every day that they are different and this is at the core of human dignity.

— *Yolina Dimitrova, 18, Shumen* —

Once I had a strange dream. I was in an oak forest picking flowers. All of a sudden a strong light blinded me. In a second I found myself in a very strange place. The people there looked very different; they stared at me in wonder. A little boy told me it was 2989. The boy's name was Andrei and he was six years old. He told me that next year he would go to school and felt nervous about it. I reassured him and told him he would like it there. Probably children had remained the same they had always been.

— *Yana Simeonova, 11* —

## A key to understanding the insights

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This is an area of pure chaos in the minds of young people which can be traced back to the adults' influence. The two simultaneous revolutions – democracy and globalization – have produced a confusion of values and directions.

The anger against the “wretched existence in foreign land” with the humiliation we are subjected to is in clear conflict with the vision of the outer world whose doors will open to us after EU and NATO membership and provide us with limitless opportunities. Which “foreign

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land” is the true one and how will young people regard it in 2015 – as the one which victimizes us, or as the one in which we are partners?

This is the question the answer to which must be found by all of us.

The anger expressed by young people is not their own anger; it is the anger of the adults they listen to. Where does the idea about the “foreign land where they will humiliate me and expect me to be their servant” come from? This perception is derived not from personal experience but hearsay. However, this perception is about to become a stable part of the mental make-up of the generation which will achieve the civilisational dream of the transition period and the adults – membership of the European Union.

Think about this then: if you think they “humiliate” us abroad, think about the choices you made in your own life “here” – when and in what situations did you feel humiliated? How did you respond? Do you humiliate others yourself? Do you discuss this with anybody? Do you try to find a solution?

Write your thoughts down and share them with somebody.

Don’t forget: anger finds its way into the soul of young people easily because they have weak defences against it, but is difficult to get out.

Central to the eighth goal is the idea to develop global partnership for development. According to philosophers, globalization creates equal chances for small and large cultures because “today’s culture is the culture not of a place but of a moment” (Konstantin von Barleuven).

This in itself is sufficient to be optimistic; as a small culture Bulgaria has equal opportunities with the rest by virtue of the globalization process. For these equal opportunities to materialize, however, there must be an awareness of them.

This makes things more complicated because young people experience primarily the emotional world of their parents and the environment they live in.

Young people see “partnership” as opportunities to establish contacts for work, business, projects, travel, learn from foreign experience, and partnership between Bulgarian and western companies. Often children convey the negative experience of their parents who found it difficult to adapt to life in a foreign culture. This does not weaken their interest in the world. It rather confirms the belief that it is better to set yourself up in your home country and seek development there. For this to happen, however, Bulgaria must become an attractive place to invest. Globalization is as big a challenge for small cultures as it is for the big ones. The challenge consists in the uncertainty whether you will be able to express yourself in a universally understood language. At this stage, as the Report on the Millennium Development Goals shows, the distribution of foreign companies in the country is very uneven. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics until 2001, the total direct foreign investments in the non-financial sector in the regions of Montana, Yambol, Kurdjali, Kyustendil, Silistra, Turgovishte, Vidin, Pazardjik and Pernik were 2.5% of the total for the country. The share of Sofia is around 50%. This is why in addition to external competition, Bulgaria will also come under internal pressure for a balanced regional distribution of the limited foreign investments. The interesting thing is that on a national level Bulgaria will probably replicate the model of the new tension between “the periphery” and “the centre”. This process will be governed by the principle of globalization: the winners are those who succeed in expressing themselves in a universally accessible and understandable language.

This is why, once again, one of the strategies which could encourage young people as they try to find their place is support for “individual optimistic theories”, for individual creativity in all areas, which is “the surest and most direct method for the peripheral cultures to gain access to the global field and overcome isolation” ( Prof. Ivailo Znepolski, “Cultural policies in the age of globalization”, 2003, Soros Centre for Cultural Policies/

## Will the world hear the young?

- ✧ Partnerships on different levels are needed: globally, between individual states and world organizations; nationally, between government institutions and individual organizations; locally, between individual local institutions and non-governmental organisations, and individually, between people, or interpersonal partnership – this creates the need for more tolerance and mutual assistance between people.
- ✧ Relations of mutual support and assistance between countries.
- ✧ Heightened role of international organizations as mediators between countries who encourage partnership initiatives.
- ✧ The more advanced countries share their experience with the other countries and help them take the next steps in their development.
- ✧ The richer countries help the poorer ones financially by means of direct assistance, investments and project funding.
- ✧ Organize more international festivals.
- ✧ Charity on all levels – the richer offer scholarships to children from poor families. Everyone donates as much clothes, money, food, etc. as they can afford to orphanages and low-income people.

## What I will do

- ✧ Learn foreign languages to be able to communicate with the rest of the world.
- ✧ Seek more information and materials about different cultures, customs and traditions and disseminate them among peers.
- ✧ Participate in exchange programmes for young people with different countries.
- ✧ Exchange experience in coping with problems – keep my eyes, ears, mind and heart open to what others do and try to learn from their experience.
- ✧ Help orphans – I will visit homes and do something useful for them.
- ✧ Do charity work.

## we and the insights of young people



Diana Ivanova

To be honest, I have always been skeptical about questionnaires and surveys. I always try to imagine – who decides to respond and how, do they respond because they have something to say or because they have nothing better to do? It seems to me that one of the most difficult things in this world is to sense when somebody is ready to share and let them talk. It also seems to me that this is the only way to obtain a real story, a story which helps the speaker and the listener to connect their own meaning with a more general one. I had said to myself that I would undertake this assignment only if I sense the readiness to share.

This is how these insights were born; I got engrossed in these stories because I could relate to them myself, in a strange way many of the letters made me think about my father and his accounts of poverty; I compared the stories of today's youths with my own non-existent stories about "this kind of poverty", because I was born in 1968 and remember the lines for oranges before Christmas, but there were no scavengers then. It seems to me that every generation of Bulgarians can find in these stories their own insight, wisdom, pain and love. I have my own wisdom:" It occurs to me that life is outrageous when we think about it, and beautiful when we live it" and my favourite haiku "a single small piece of litter can cause the world to collapse".

You should try too.



Denitza Grozeva

The first thing I felt when I read these letters was surprise. I realized that these children are very perceptive, compassionate and vulnerable. They can identify good, evil, beauty and ugliness. I had never seen them like this before, perhaps because I do not know them and I have not talked to them.

The children have answered questions formulated by adults which are important and meaningful in themselves but are not a part of children's thinking and sensitivity. I thought their answers would not surprise, let alone affect me. I was wrong. Children see everything and are not indifferent to the adults' world. They show an empathy in a way typical of their age, and they are often wiser and more mature. They talk about life as they see and feel it on the street, frankly and without inhibitions. They cannot accept poverty, the beggars, the litter, the lack of care and the injustice. And in doing this they do not pass judgments nor point a finger. Unlike the adults who find an explanation of the world and then accept it, children cannot find an explanation or accept. They ask questions, talk about their feelings and are ready to do something to make things better.

For some this may seem the idealism of youth. And this is why I rebelled inside me: what will happen to them? From the position of an adult I understand that this is the power and energy they have and if they do not lose it, they may become very different from us. Children cannot see how beautiful and vulnerable they are, and how valuable, precisely the way they are. At the present. The question for me is, what will happen to their sensitivity and strength? What will it be transformed into when they join the world of adults? And what is our responsibility for them and their future?

## Postscript

It has been more than a year since the survey and this report. A lot has happened since then – floodings in Bulgaria, garbage collection crisis in Sofia, new terrorist attacks in the world, the untimely death of our colleague Denitza. It seems Bulgaria started to turn more evil and messier.

To make such a claim, however, would be both correct and incorrect.

On many recent occasions I reread the completed questionnaires, the report itself, I went back to the time when we, together, worked on it. And it now seems to me that the power of its messages continues to rest in those personal winding paths and insights in them that each of us brings to order on our own and thus becomes part of bringing Bulgaria to order – this very same Bulgaria, now even more evil and messier.

And this because every statement regarding Bulgaria I make is ultimately a statement regarding me. Which means that maybe I, too, am messy and evil.

If we can, as children do, take seriously the idea that everything has its reflection in everything else, and everything depends on everything else, we will make, it seems, an important step. For sure, the feeling this brings is unique – as if the whole universe was specially waiting for you to make this step.

I think we all deserve to make ourselves this present.

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Diana Ivanova







United Nations

A Time for Renewal