Digital divide during pandemic
General country picture

- Differing estimates of the Roma population in Bulgaria: from 325 343 (official statistics) to 750 000 (experts from academia)
- Out of 2 212 schools in Bulgaria 1 060 enroll pupils from vulnerable groups – mainly Roma
- Concentration of vulnerable children vary among schools from 20 to 100% (segregated schools)
- Overall number of pupils in the country – 706 000
- By July 2021, 43 000 pupils do not own suitable for learnins digital device, 34 000 – do not have access to internet (Ministry of education)
Reach of online remote teaching - study

• Study conducted in schools with Roma pupils after school year 2020-2021 – end of June 2021
• 150 schools responded
• Over 61% reported they were able to involve in remote teaching between 76% and 100% of the pupils
• 31% of schools involved 50% to 75%
• 8% of schools were able to reach less than 50% of students
Main causes

• Poverty
  • Ghettoization – reinforcing poverty
  • Schools segregation - lower quality, demotivating environment
  • Rampant illiteracy in families
  • Absence of internet access – pupils and some teachers
  • Lack of devices – pupils and some teachers
Measures taken, effects

*Overall 6% improvement compared to previous 2019/2020 school year*

- Ministry of education pushed to create profiles in Teams for all teachers and students, distributed 20,000 laptops and tablets, ready to buy mobile internet sticks
- Campaigns for donations of devices and internet access
- Many NGOs initiated and supported donation campaigns – some telecoms and IT companies responded
- Involving national networks of education and health mediators in local communities supported by local authorities
- SIC developed and disseminated short tips and guidelines for remote teaching to teachers and parents
Conclusions

*To be able to narrow digital divide:*

- Joint efforts are needed – governments, civil society and industry
- Root causes should be addressed both on national and European level
- Strategic policies and plans in place – European and national programmes and plans

Vulnerable children should not be left behind