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Digital divide during pandemic

General country picture

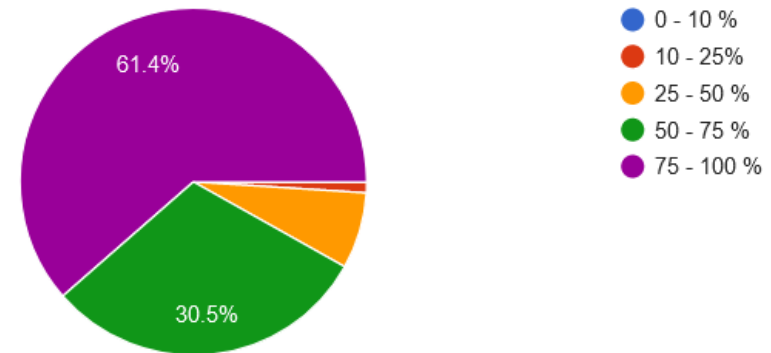
- Differing estimates of the Roma population in Bulgaria: from 325 343 (official statistics) to 750 000 (experts from academia)
- Out of 2 212 schools in Bulgaria 1 060 enroll pupils from vulnerable groups – mainly Roma
- Concentration of vulnerable children vary among schools from 20 to 100% (segregated schools)
- Overall number of pupils in the country – 706 000
- By July 2021, 43 000 pupils do not own suitable for learning 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

Колко % от Вашите ученици (общо) успяхте да обхванете през учебната 2020-2021г., след въвеждането на ОРЕС?

197 responses



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

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