

Letter of Intent

between

the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria

and

the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden

on cooperation in the area of social policy

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden, hereinafter referred to as the "Parties", considering the common will to actively participate in the general process of international dialogue, building on existing forms of cooperation at EU-level, desiring to develop and further strengthen the mutual friendly relations in the area of social policy, recognizing that mutual acquaintance with the experience of both countries in accordance with this Letter of Intent would promote beneficial initiatives and would lead to innovative solutions in the areas of cooperation, have decided to cooperate in the below-mentioned fields. The aim of this cooperation is to improve the life of the most vulnerable groups striving to give all citizens the possibility to reach their full potential in all areas of life. More specifically this cooperation will focus on gender equality, social welfare, children's rights, elderly care and people with disabilities.

The Parties are determined through this document to jointly contribute to the fulfilment of the European Union's common values, principles and objectives.

1. Cooperation in the field of social welfare/social security

Exchange of experience and good practices in the field of:

- Social inclusion and reintegration;
- Prevention of social marginalization and homelessness;
- Social protection systems;
- Social assistance and social services.

2. Cooperation in the field of gender equality

Exchange of experience and good practices in:

- Policies to enhance gender equality in the labour market, including policies for reconciliation of work, family and private life, and measures to close the gender pay gap and gender pension gap;
- The promotion of equal care for women and men, including protecting sexual and reproductive rights for all;
- Implementing gender mainstreaming in the public sector, including Government offices and national authorities;
- Policies to combat gender based violence, including sexual violence.

3. Cooperation in the field of children's rights

Exchange of experience and good practices in:

- Expertise to strengthen the protection of the child and promote the best interest of the child;
- Respect to the community based services provided to the families with children at risk;
- The area of improving the access for children to quality services and observing the rights and promoting social inclusion of children in vulnerable situations.

4. Cooperation in the field of elderly care

Exchange of experience and good practice in:

- The area of enhancing the participation of the elderly in society and promoting the opportunity to live an independent life;
- Different solutions for home based care and other flexible solutions;
- The area of equal elderly care for women and men.

5. Cooperation in the field of people with disabilities

Exchange of experience and good practice in:

- The transformation to alternative solutions for children and adults living in institutions;
- The area of supporting children and adults with intellectual disabilities;
- The area of the rights of persons with disabilities and in prevention and combating existing prejudices and stigmatizing;
- The implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and establishment of monitoring body according Article 33;
- Support and protection of rights of woman and girls with disabilities.

Cooperation under this declaration may take different forms, including exchange of information and knowledge; exchange of experts; field trips; participation in conferences and other events; joint projects and training of staff.

The cooperation under this Letter of Intent also aims to promote and facilitate cooperation between non-governmental organizations in the two countries.

For the promotion of the cooperation under this Letter of Intent a joint working group could be established. This group would meet regularly in order to have in-depth discussions on the different areas of the agreement and, where applicable, elaborate proposals on joint projects.

The Signing Ministers recognize that cooperation is important in contributing to the positive relationship between the two countries and are willing to promote further cooperation in the fields mentioned above and discuss how to further broaden their cooperation.

This Letter of Intent is not intended to create any legally binding rights or obligations. It will be examined after one year.

Signed in Sofia on 5th February 2016, in duplicate in the English language.

**FOR
THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR
AND SOCIAL POLICY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA:**

IVAILO KALFIN

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER**

**FOR
THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN:**

ÅSA REGNÉR

**MINISTER FOR CHILDREN, THE
ELDERLY AND GENDER EQUALITY**