

**TO THE PARTICIPANTS
OF
THE ROMA POLITICAL SKILLS BUILDING PROGRAM
OF
THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE**

Sofia, 7 October 2005

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to congratulate you on behalf of the team of the Ethnic and Demographic Issues Department at the Council of Ministers.

It is wonderful that twenty-five young people have decided to make a decisive step in their development and take the responsibility of being the leaders of their community.

The role of a leader is extremely important. It does not only mean prestige. The trust earned is easily wasted unless one constantly proves he/she cares about the problems of the people around, and unless he/she makes an effort to help their dreams come true.

There are huge challenges facing the leaders of the Roma community in this country. These prospective leaders should do anything possible for the ultimate integration of the Roma community in the modern society. Every piece of knowledge is invaluable capital. It makes us competitive and capable; it broadens the vision and spurs imagination.

I wish you successful training and professional accomplishment!

**Dr. Maya Cholakova,
Director of Ethnic and Demographic Issues Department
Council of Ministers**