Increasing life expectancy in Bulgaria means that there is now a larger number of older people in the country. To enable these people to remain at home in a familiar environment even at an advanced age, this project has introduced a home nursing service in four districts. Home nursing by specialists enables patients to maintain a degree of independence and improves the quality of life of chronically ill or disabled elderly people.

The average age of Bulgaria's population is increasing. By contrast, the birthrate is low and young Bulgarians are now either emigrating or moving to larger towns. As a result, many older people in Bulgaria are now isolated, both in medical and in social terms. The project provides home nursing services and assistance and thus improves the quality of life of chronically ill or disabled elderly Bulgarians, including members of the Roma community.

MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE UNTIL AN ADVANCED AGE

The project has established four contact points for domestic care in four districts in the Bulgarian region of Vratsa. The service provides home nursing for over 350 people. This means that older people can continue to live at home in a familiar environment. They receive regular visits from staff trained to provide care and help with housework. This promotes the independence of the patients concerned until an advanced age.

Another advantage is that this method reduces costs, as home nursing is cheaper than hospital care. This method of treatment also creates jobs for the local population and helps to stem the tendency to move away from rural areas.
POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE SERVICES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The project will also develop national quality standards for home care, with clear definitions of who is responsible for which tasks in the field of home care. The question of whether the offer for the Roma population and other minority groups in Bulgaria needs to be adapted will also be clarified, to enable care methods for these groups to be implemented in a targeted and efficient way.

Finally, on the basis of experience and results, proposals and recommendations for the national level of the health service are made in order to drive forward health service reforms that have been initiated. The home nursing system will be established at a national level. In future it could also be offered throughout the country, so that demographic and socio-economic challenges in the health system can be tackled in an effective and modern manner.

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

OBJECTIVE
Improving social security

THEME
Social services for certain target groups

COUNTRY
Bulgaria

PARTNERS
Swiss Red Cross
Experts in the Spitex area

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION
As in many other European countries, the average age of the population in Bulgaria is increasing. More people therefore require regular care in their old age. In some regions of Bulgaria where there are high levels of migration to towns or abroad, old people no longer have anyone to look after them medically or socially.

PURPOSE
The project improves the quality of life of chronically ill or disabled older people and of members of minorities, particularly Roma. Home nursing reduces the pressure on hospitals and on the persons receiving care.

ACTIVITIES
The project establishes four contact points for care in four districts in the region of Vratsa. Trained care personnel, together with home helps, visit elderly persons in need of care in their homes and provide the necessary care and assistance.

TARGET GROUPS
Bulgarians, including members of the Roma community, aged over 65 with chronic illnesses or disabilities and living in the region of Vratsa.

COSTS
Total project costs: CHF 2.8 million
Swiss contribution: CHF 2.4 million

RESPONSIBLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
Bulgarian Red Cross
Swiss Red Cross

DURATION
2012–2016

Thanks to the home nursing service, I feel safe and secure in my home.

Gena Nikolova (89) pensioner, Bulgaria