You are invited to the 2017 DISES Roundtable in Sofia, offering a variety of professional activities focused on inclusive education in challenging contexts, including opportunities to:

- Meet and learn from Bulgarian educators working collaboratively to implement inclusive educational practices in schools in Sofia and outlying areas.
- Explore the challenges facing established Roma populations in Bulgaria.
- Learn about the educational issues associated with refugee migration from global conflict zones.
- Share effective teaching practices with Bulgarian teachers working to make their schools more inclusive and supportive.

Come and engage with our roundtable presenters from 12 different countries as they share their work related to our theme on the following topics:

- Innovative and collaborative pedagogical practices for educators working in challenging global environments.
- Advocacy and policy development in support of the human rights of special needs populations and their families.
- Research and scholarship in international special needs and inclusive education.

ROUNDTABLE CO-HOSTS

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SERVICES
Dr. Eileen Raymond (Roundtable Chair)
E-mail: raymoneb@potsdam.edu

Dr. Tom Gumpel (Executive Director)
E-mail: dises.cec@gmail.com

CENTRE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
Iva Boneva (Executive Director)
E-mail: i.boneva@cie-bg.eu

Dimitar Lazarov (Strategies, Policies and Programmes Director)
E-mail: d.lazarov@cie-bg.eu
Roundtable Venue
The 2017 DISES International Round Table will take place on 25-30 June 2017 in Arena di Serdica Residence Hotel, Sofia, Bulgaria. Centrally located in downtown Sofia, the five-star Arena di Serdica Residence Hotel is an elegant modern facility, which hosts one of Sofia’s most precious treasures – the remains of the roman Amphitheatre of Ancient Serdica, which date back to the III-IV century. Next to Sofia’s main cultural sights and institutions, the Arena di Serdica Hotel offers the perfect setting for both business and leisure.

Address: 2 Budapeshta St., Sofia
http://arenadiserdica.com/

Logistics Company
Congress Management and Events /CME/ Ltd.,
www.cmebg.com
8 Tzar Kaloyan St., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria
Contact person: Mrs. Mira Bonova
Tel.: (+359 2) 987 74 22, Fax: (+359 2) 988 80 35
E-mail: mira@cmebg.com
WHAT HAPPENS AT A ROUNDTABLE??

The Roundtable format is unique in that it is designed to promote conversation and networking around a topic rather than being simply a series of unrelated paper presentations as is typical for many conferences. For this reason, the number of participants in each roundtable is limited so that each participant can spend extended time over the week with a smaller group of 20-25 other educators discussing topics of mutual interest. Each roundtable group in Bulgaria will focus on a particular aspect of our theme:

INCLUDING ALL CHILDREN IN A CHANGING WORLD

Because this structure is designed to allow for extended conversation and to promote a sense of community among the participants, attendees also engage jointly in related cultural and professional activities and have their meals together, in addition to the time devoted to professional discussion of presented papers. Although a limited number of proposals can be selected, the voices of all participants are valued in the discussions and important to our collective understanding of the pertinent issues in international special needs education, so attendance by participants who are not presenting is also encouraged.

The 2017 Sofia Roundtable Programme

Presented jointly by DISES and the Centre for Inclusive Education (CIE), we have planned an exciting programme of professional activities focusing on inclusive education in challenging contexts.

- Participants will meet with Bulgarian educators working with CIE to implement collaborative inclusive educational practices in schools in Sofia and outlying areas.
- We will explore their accomplishments and challenges faced by Bulgarian educators since 1990 when their first democratic elections were held after the end of Russian control.
- We will also explore the impact and challenges currently associated with refugee migration from conflict zones, as well as the challenges presented by their established Roma populations when we meet with NGOs working in Bulgaria in support of the human rights needs of these special populations.
- We will present workshops on inclusive strategies to teachers in a rural Bulgarian school

We hope you will join us!
TENTATIVE ROUNDTABLE SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

Sunday, June 25
• Arrival and registration
• Opening Dinner, Arena di Serdica Hotel (6:00 pm)
• Programme: “Education in Bulgaria: Current issues and contexts”

Monday, June 26
• Panel Discussion: “Implementing inclusion: Experiences of the Centre for Inclusive Education”
• Roundtable Presentations/Discussion (morning and early afternoon)
• Walking tour of Sofia, ending up at small group dinners in city centre

Tuesday, June 27
• Roundtable Presentations/Discussion (morning)
• Site Visit: Group A: Roma Centre or Group B: Refugee Centre
• Vitosha Mountain tour followed by dinner and local entertainment on the mountain

Wednesday, June 28
• Roundtable Presentations/Discussion (morning)
• Site Visit: Group A: Refugee Centre or Group B: Roma Centre
• Dinner in local restaurant

Thursday, June 29
• A day-long bus road trip to rural Teteven to work with teachers at partner schools; delegates will be invited to share effective inclusive practices by offering short workshops for the Teteven teachers
• Dinner on the road back from Teteven: closing programme

Friday, June 30
• Breakfast and leave taking
REGISTRATION INFORMATION

All participants are kindly requested to pre-register by using the CME on-line system http://events.cmebg.com/dises-international-round-table/134/

Please bear in mind that each participant should create his/her own account with username and password before beginning the registration. The system will save your information and you can come back later to add additional information like travel arrangements.

Registration is valid only when full prepayment of participation package has been processed and must be completed no later than May 15.

Early registration is recommended as the Roundtable capacity is limited, and reservations will be made on first-come-first-served basis.

The participation package for participants includes:
- Accommodation on a half board basis (5 overnights in a single/double room with breakfast and lunch) in Arena di Serdica Hotel
- 5 dinners according to the programme
- Shuttle bus service Airport – Hotel - Airport
- Attendance and participation in the Round Table (rooms and equipment)
- Delegate’s kit
- Coffee-breaks
- Site visits and all other events included the programme

The participation package for accompanying guests includes:
- Accommodation on a half board basis (5 overnights in a double room with breakfast and lunch) in Arena di Serdica Hotel
- 5 dinners according to the programme
- Shuttle bus service Airport – Hotel - Airport
- Coffee-breaks
- Site visits and other events included the programme as desired

Full prepayment of the package by 15 May 2017 is required to confirm participation.

When making a booking of a bed in a double/twin room, it is compulsory that you provide the name of the person you are going to share the room with. Reservation of a twin/double room without arranging a sharer will not be possible. Payment of a single room will be applicable in such cases.

Invoicing
- Provision of VAT number (for EU citizens only) during the registration process is highly recommended.
- Invoices will be issued within 5 days of receiving the payment in the name of the person or affiliation that has ordered it. Invoicing information should be provided at the time of registration or payment by filling in the Field “Information for invoice” on the online registration form.
• **Note:** After the 5-day period CME Ltd. will not be able to make any modifications of the invoices already issued.

✓ If you need to make changes in your registration once you register, please visit your registration profile.
✓ If the changes require extra payment you will be able to make it when checking additional services.
✓ If changes will involve a request for a refund, please send an email to: Mrs. Mira Bonova at [mira@cmebg.com](mailto:mira@cmebg.com)

**Registration Cancellation Terms and Conditions**
Cancellations must be made in writing to CME ([mira@cmebg.com](mailto:mira@cmebg.com)).

⇒ **Before 15 May 2017** – full reimbursement less 20 % of the total amount
⇒ **From 15 May 2017 onward** - no refunds will be made
In case of no-show, participation package is non-refundable.

**Want to lower your costs? Check out becoming a DISES Member!!**
Basic CEC and DISES membership can be as low as $94 for individuals from the US and Canada, and even less for members from other countries ($65-80), plus you save on your roundtable fee.

For information on membership, see our website at:

[http://dises-cec.org/site/become-a-member/](http://dises-cec.org/site/become-a-member/)
### 2017 SOFIA ROUNDTABLE FEE STRUCTURE

The following fees are all-inclusive of participant costs with the exception of travel to/from Sofia, personal incidentals, and alcohol. The fee includes:

- 5 nights lodging
- All meals from Sunday dinner through Friday breakfast, excluding alcohol
- Conference services and meeting spaces
- Tea/coffee breaks
- Shuttle to/from Sofia airport
- Transport to site visits (i.e. Roma Centre, Refugee Centre, and Teteven partner schools)
- Cultural tours: Sofia Centre and Vitosha Mountain
- Administrative costs

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<th>Early Bird Rate Before 15 February 2017</th>
<th>Regular Registration February 16- April 25 2017</th>
<th>Late Registration April 25-May 15 2017</th>
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<td><strong>DISES Members</strong></td>
<td>Single room</td>
<td>€ 1250</td>
<td>€ 1438</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Double Room, pp/sharing</td>
<td>€ 1090</td>
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<td><strong>Guest</strong></td>
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**Notes:**

All prices are in Euro currency; to determine the equivalent cost in your currency, you should consult a currency website such as XE Currency Converter: [http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/)

Participants are strongly advised to secure travel insurance for the roundtable trip to cover any unexpected expenses related to medical needs and travel delays, disruptions or cancellations.

* To register for a double room sharing with another roundtable participant, it is required that you indicate on the registration form the name of the person you are sharing with so that we book rooms appropriately. The rate indicated is the fee for each participant sharing the room.

** A Guest is a family member or friend who is traveling with you but is not participating in the roundtable; the guest fee includes all meals and breaks, transportation in Sofia, site visits/tours, and sharing the room of the participant who has registered at the Single rate.
ACCOMMODATIONS AND AIRPORT TRANSFERS

All participants will be accommodated in the Arena di Serdica Hotel, the site of our roundtable activities. Arena di Serdica Residence Hotel combines a hotel with historical heritage, built over the remains of a Roman-era amphitheatre. The hotel’s uniqueness is complemented by its boutique character and individual approach – it has 63 spacious, stylish and cozy rooms and apartments, ready to satisfy the expectations of even the most demanding guests, who seek modern hotel comfort, elegance and luxury. The Arena di Serdica provides both single and double accommodation. It also offers its guests 2 restaurants, 4 conference rooms, a lobby bar and a wellness & SPA center and a complimentary use of Wi-Fi and wired unlimited high-speed internet access.

Centrally located in downtown Sofia, the five-star Arena di Serdica Residence Hotel is an elegant modern facility, which hosts one of Sofia’s most precious treasures – the remains of the Roman Amphitheatre of Ancient Serdica, which date back to the III-IV century. Close to Sofia’s main cultural sights and institutions, the Arena di Serdica Hotel offers the perfect setting for both business and leisure.
Address: 2 Budapeshta St., Sofia
http://arenadiserdica.com/

Shuttle Service from/to Airport
Your registration fee includes shuttle bus service from the airport to Arena di Serdica hotel on 25 June at 10:00, 14:30, 18:00 and 22:30.
Your fee also includes shuttle bus service from Arena di Serdica hotel to the airport on 30 June at the following hours: 04:00, 08:00, 11:00, 14:00 and 17:00.
Pick-up times may change slightly when we have all departure data gathered.
Please provide your flight details either at the time of registration process or later and we will make the booking.

Other transport options If your travel plans don’t work with the provided shuttles
For safe and comfortable trip to the hotel it is advisable to use organized transfer services.
Individual transfers
• If your travel plans don’t work with the provided shuttles, we can arrange individual transfer(s) upon arrival and/or departure upon request with a surcharge of 5 Euro per person in one direction.
• Precise travel details should be given to CME at least two weeks prior to arrival.
• In case of "last minute" changes in your travel arrangements, please inform CME by e-mail.

By Taxi
Please, avoid taking airport taxis other than “OK Supertrans” in order to avoid overcharge. “OK Supertans” office is located in the public zone of Arrival hall at the Airport.

By Subway
The hotel can also be reached by using the subway. The Metro Red Line travels from/ to Terminal 2. The trains run every day between 5:30 and 24:00 and take around 20-30 minutes to the city center. Then you have a short walk to the hotel. Make sure you check carefully the terminal that you are arriving at or departing from.

There is a white shuttle bus running every 30 minutes between the two terminals, you should ask at the information about it. It is free. There are a few kilometers between the two terminals and they are not in a walking distance.

OTHER PRACTICAL DETAILS

Passports & Visas
• Only valid passports are required from all the EC countries.
• US Citizens can also visit Bulgaria for up to 90 days with a only a valid US Passport.
• Other delegates from countries where visa is normally required for entry to Bulgaria are reminded that they will need to obtain one from the appropriate Bulgarian Embassy/Consul. Please check at the nearest Bulgarian Embassy all the documents required for your country or visit: http://www.mfa.bg/en/pages/109/index.html

Monetary system
The national currency is the Bulgarian Lev (BGN). Bank notes of the following denominations are in circulation: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 BGN and also coins of 1 and 2 BGN. 1 Euro = 1,95583 BGN.

Shopping
Items made of leather and fur are very popular on the local markets. Here you can find clothing by local manufacturers, and by famous Italian firms.

Items made of silver, as well as traditional clothes and handmade tableware are the most popular souvenirs that travelers get in the memory of trip. If various handicrafts and souvenirs are best to buy in a market, jewelry should be purchased in specialized shops only.

Most shops open at 9:00 and accept visitors till 19:00. Large shopping centers may work until 21:00, while supermarkets and food stores often work around the clock.
**Tipping**
When a gratuity is not included in your bill, which is usually the case, 10% is customary. If service is outstanding, you could go as high as 15%. With taxi drivers, you usually just round up the sum if you have been happy with the ride or for the sake of convenience.

**Climate**
Bulgaria has moderate climate with mild spring and autumn, hot summers and cold snowy winters. The weather at the end of June is generally warm and sunny. Daily temperatures range from 25 to 30°C. There are usually 9 hours of bright sunshine each day although you may expect some thunder-storms and showers in the afternoon. Umbrellas and raincoats are recommended.

**Time Zone**
Summer time: GMT + 3 hrs. (April through September)

**Electricity**
220 Volts, 50 Hz
Bulgaria uses CEE 7/4 (German "Schuko") power plugs and sockets.

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**SITE VISITS**

**Refugee Centre in Sofia**
Sharing a border with Turkey, Bulgaria became the main land route for refugees from the Middle East fleeing towards Europe. The vast majority of the refugees only spent several months in Bulgaria before continuing to Western Europe. During this time they are placed in Centres for temporary accommodation. With 35% of all asylum seekers in Bulgaria being children, the provision of social, psychological and educational help for them is a pressing matter. We will visit one of these centres in Sofia to meet the volunteers who teach English, Bulgarian, sport and arts to migrant children, victims of conflict, very few of whom have ever had access to normal educational facilities. Through this visit, we hope to engage in a mutually beneficial dialogue and practice sharing between the DISES group and the people at the centre.

**Roma Services Centre**
The Roma people account for about 5% of Bulgaria’s population. Despite being present on the Balkans for over 10 (ten) centuries, this very diverse ethnic group has constantly found itself on the margins of mainstream society. The two biggest challenges faced by this
community today are medical care and education. We will visit a Health and Social Development Centre run by the HESED Foundation, which is the first of its kind and is situated in the largest Roma neighbourhood of Sofia. We will meet with the trained community assistants who provide social, health and educational activities. We will be able to learn more about their work with young children education and the challenges of inclusion of people traditionally segregated along ethnic, cultural and linguistic lines. Through this visit, we hope to engage in a mutually beneficial dialogue and practice sharing between the DISES group and the people at the centre.

**A Day in Teteven with Bulgarian Teachers**

On Thursday, we will meet teachers from two Bulgarian schools in the small and typical Bulgarian town of Teteven. One of the schools hosts students from 1 to 4th grade (6-11 years old), and the other – from 5th till 12th grades. Both schools have a big diversity of children - from different ethnic minorities and with various cultural backgrounds as well as children with various academic abilities, as in every school in the world. The Centre for Inclusive Education has developed partnerships in support of inclusive education in these schools.

We will leave Sofia by bus at 8.00 and after traveling through the Bulgarian countryside, will arrive there about 10.00, where we will participate in a series of short workshops with Bulgarian teachers and experts. We cordially invite all guests of the Round table to consider preparing and holding a 30 min workshop – something that you would like to share with your colleagues from Bulgaria and other countries. It can be anything – about your experience abroad, a project of yours, lessons learned about working with a certain group of children, teachers training tips, etc. Make it simple and interesting. If materials are needed, we will provide them, as well as translation. Some Bulgarian teachers will also hold workshops – e.g. about interesting teaching practices they use. We encourage Roundtable participants to consider sharing an effective inclusive practice you have seen used with our Bulgarian colleagues as part of our professional collaboration (see [Volunteer Service Opportunities](#) for more information on signing up to present a short workshop.)

We will have a picnic lunch around the swimming pool and right in the mountain and will continue with a session where you can ask teachers about everything – but please be prepared to also answer any of their questions. In the late afternoon, we will depart for a country dinner on our way back to Sofia.
VOLUNTEER SERVICE OPPORTUNITY IN TETEVEN

One part of our DISES mission is to foster an environment of sharing and networking across national borders. Our roundtable events do this in two ways:

- Our presenters come from different countries and continents. During the roundtable they share deeply work they care about and engage in extended conversations about that work with others from other contexts. Frequently collaborative relationships develop that extend long after the roundtable ends.
- We also know that there is potential for us as a group to engage local educators in discussions of effective practices to better serve the needs of learners with disabilities or those facing other significant learning challenges.

This year we are planning a new way to make this happen. On Thursday we will take the Roundtable to Teteven, about an hour outside of Sofia, in a rural area of Bulgaria. The Centre for Inclusive Education has been partnering with the primary and secondary schools there, supporting the implementation of inclusive practices in their schools.

We propose to support that effort WITH YOUR HELP by plan to offering the opportunity for some of you to offer short workshops for Teteven teachers. We hope to offer a variety of short sessions on strategies useful in supporting inclusive education for these teachers.

The workshops need to be focused, practical, and concise (~ 20 minutes) since we will be delivering these workshops primarily through translation. We want to leave the teachers with some new strategies they can use in their classrooms when school resumes after the vacation.

Sound interesting? Then send us a short description of a strategy you would be willing to share in one of the following topical areas, to DISES.CEC@gmail.com:

✓ Literacy strategies
✓ Mathematics learning
✓ Content learning
✓ Second language learning
✓ Assessment of student learning
✓ Transition supports to world of work
✓ Universal design for learning
✓ Classroom management
✓ Positive behavioral supports
✓ Physical activities
✓ Creative activities (music, art, drama, etc.)
✓ Student support
✓ Family involvement
✓ Anything else??
OTHER PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Monday, late afternoon: Sofia City Tour
A walking tour of the city centre in the late afternoon on Monday will give you a quick journey in time. Sofia has the buzz of a capital city and the convenience of a compact centre where all the main sights can be visited on foot. The most remarkable historical and cultural monuments of the Bulgarian capital will be visited.

Monday dinner
Following our walking tour, small groups of participants will be having dinner in five different cozy restaurants for better and close communication and to sample local fare. Organization of groups will be completed upon registration.

Tuesday: Vitosha Mountain
We will travel by bus to Vitosha mountain after our afternoon site visits. Only 10-12 km away from the city centre, you will get a hint of the unspoiled beauty of the Bulgarian countryside. Cherni Vruh is the highest peak (2290 m) of the Vitosha Mountain, a huge granite mass with wooded lower slopes. The mountain is famous with its varied flora and fauna, two biosphere reserves and stone rivers (the moraine). They are unusual natural phenomena, apparently dry rivers made up of massive boulders.

Tuesday Dinner: Vodenitzata Restaurant
You will then be transported to a folk style restaurant at Vitosha Mountain with typical Bulgarian cuisine, authentic Bulgarian music and dances.

Wednesday Dinner
We will enjoy dinner together as a large group at another restaurant in Sofia, rounding out our experiences with Bulgarian cuisine.

Thursday: Site Visit to Teteven
On Thursday, we will travel out into the rural area by bus to Teteven. The town of Teteven (400 meters above sea level) is situated on the northwest slopes of the Balkan range, on the
two banks of the Beli Vit River, 115 km away from Sofia. Its population is about 12,000 people. While in Teteven, we will meet with primary and secondary educators who are partnering with the Centre for Inclusive Education to implement inclusive practices. We will be offering them short workshops on effective inclusive practices as part of our professional collaboration (see Volunteer Service Opportunities).

Thracian tribes with a rich culture inhabited the area as far back as the 7th-6th century BC. During the Bulgarian national revival, the village flourished and was called Altin (Golden) Teteven. In 1801, the city was totally destroyed and burnt down by the Ottoman invaders. For that reason, only 3 houses older than 180 years have been preserved to the present day. Teteven is a starting point for many tourist routes in the Balkan range. Among the attractions in the town is the City Historical Museum with a big exposition of transcripts, books, crafts, etc. We will share a picnic lunch on the trip to Teteven, and then enjoy a delicious dinner at a restaurant in the rural area on our way back to Sofia.

OPTIONAL TOURIST PROGRAMMES

**One-day excursion to Rila Monastery**

30 June 2017

Rila Monastery is the biggest operating monastery in the country and one of the most important cultural sights in Bulgaria. It has been founded in 10th century by Bulgarian monk Saint Yoan of Rila and rebuilt in 13-14 centuries. Nowadays, the monastery preserves valuable Bulgarian written records. Rila Monastery is inscribed into UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List since 1983.

**Price per person** 65 euro

*The price includes transport, professional guide, museum fee, lunch and soft drink and is valid for a group of minimum 6 participants. Bookings can be made through the online system for registration.*

**5 -7-day Holiday packages**

We can organize your holiday at the Bulgarian seaside before or after the Round Table upon request.

**Albena Resort**

The charming Bulgarian coastal resort of Albena is one of the pearls of Bulgaria’s North Black Sea coast. It is located in a picturesque bay 30 km away from Varna city.
Albena is a unique blend of breathtaking sceneries, great atmosphere, a peculiar charm and magnetism. It has been awarded with the prestigious prize “Blue Flag” for its clean and safe beaches which is a testimonial for the clear waters of Albena’s coasts.

Albena provides an assortment of first-rate hotels (3, 4 and 5 stars). Their sea climate is mild and pleasant with clean air, rich in ozone. The tourist season lasts from May till October. The resort features the biggest spa and wellness centre at the Bulgarian seaside.

The resort offers visitors numerous sport & recreation activities including football pitches, multiple tennis courts, indoor stadium, golf courses, bowling, jet-ski, an equestrian base and many more.

FACTS ABOUT BULGARIA AND SOFIA

Bulgaria

- With its roots dating back some 1,300 years, Bulgaria is a country both rich in tradition and ripe with opportunity.
- The country is one of the Eastern European states which has undergone continuous political changes during the last 20 years and since the beginning of 2007 is a full member of the European Union.
- The intensive process of privatisation and the influx of foreign investments in Bulgaria have made it one of the fast developing economies in Eastern Europe.
- Politically, Bulgaria is rated as a stable democracy. The Cabinet (Council of Ministers) are nominated by the Prime Minister and elected by the National Assembly.
- Bulgaria simply resembles a continent in miniature because of its very varied relief and miraculous working of nature where measure is paramount. Eye-catching mountain lakes, sunny beaches, gorgeous rose valleys, curative hot springs and deep chilly caves coexist in harmony.
- The natural charms of Bulgaria are becoming better known as increasing numbers of tourists visit and enjoy the great range of outstanding beauty to be found here. Bulgaria boasts a wealth of natural charms which provide a solid base for its expanding tourist industry.
Sofia
Sofia is a city that grows but never ages. Founded over 7000 years ago, Bulgaria's modern capital testifies to the country's eternal bond between past and present. Monuments to its rich Thracian, Roman, Bulgar and Ottoman history rub shoulders with modern-day edifices of cosmopolitan city life. Over 250 historic landmarks and architectural monuments blend in with the city's modern skyline.

We look forward to seeing you in Sofia!