



## Youth Wiki national description

# Youth policies in Bulgaria

2018

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>



**BULGARIA**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. Youth Policy Governance</b> .....  | <b>7</b>  |
| 1.1 Target Population of Youth Policy .....  | 8         |
| 1.2 National Youth Law .....   | 8         |
| 1.3 National Youth Strategy .....  | 8         |
| 1.4 Youth Policy Decision-Making .....   | 9         |
| 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries .....                                      | 10        |
| 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy .....  | 11        |
| 1.7 Funding youth policy .....   | 11        |
| 1.8 Cross-border cooperation .....   | 13        |
| 1.9 Current debates and reforms .....  | 14        |
| <b>2. Voluntary Activities</b> .....   | <b>15</b> |
| 2.1 General context .....  | 15        |
| 2.2 Administration and Governance of Youth Volunteering .....                                | 15        |
| 2.3 National Strategy on Youth Volunteering .....  | 16        |
| 2.4 Youth Volunteering at national level .....   | 16        |
| 2.5 Cross-Border Mobility Programmes .....   | 17        |
| 2.6 Raising Awareness about Youth Volunteering Opportunities .....                           | 17        |
| 2.7 Skills Recognition .....   | 18        |
| 2.8 Current Debates and Reforms .....  | 18        |
| <b>3. Employment &amp; Entrepreneurship</b> .....  | <b>19</b> |
| 3.1 General context .....  | 19        |
| 3.2 Administration and Governance .....  | 20        |
| 3.3 Skills Forecasting .....   | 22        |
| 3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling .....  | 22        |
| 3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships .....   | 23        |
| 3.6 Integration of Young People in the Labour Market .....                                   | 23        |
| 3.7 Cross-Border Mobility in Employment, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Opportunities ..... | 24        |
| 3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence .....   | 24        |
| 3.9 Start-up Funding for Young Entrepreneurs .....   | 29        |
| 3.10 Promotion of Entrepreneurship Culture .....   | 29        |
| 3.11 Current Debates and Reforms .....   | 29        |
| <b>4. Social Inclusion</b> .....   | <b>31</b> |
| 4.1 General Context .....  | 31        |
| 4.2 Administration and Governance .....  | 32        |
| 4.3 Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Young People .....                                  | 32        |
| 4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People .....  | 35        |
| 4.5 Initiatives Promoting Social Inclusion and Raising Awareness .....                       | 38        |
| 4.6 Access to Quality Services .....   | 40        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 4.7 Youth Work to Foster Social Inclusion .....   | 42        |
| 4.8 Current Debates and Reforms .....   | 45        |
| <b>5. Participation .....</b>   | <b>46</b> |
| 5.1 General context .....   | 46        |
| 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy .....                                   | 48        |
| 5.3 Youth representation bodies .....   | 48        |
| 5.4 Young People's Participation in Policy-Making .....                                     | 51        |
| 5.5 National Strategy to Increase Youth Participation .....                                 | 51        |
| 5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations .....  | 52        |
| 5.7 "Learning to participate" through formal, non-formal and informal learning .....        | 52        |
| 5.8 Raising political awareness among young people .....                                    | 53        |
| 5.9 E-participation .....   | 55        |
| 5.10 Current debates and reforms .....  | 55        |
| <b>6. Education and Training .....</b>  | <b>56</b> |
| 6.1 General context .....   | 56        |
| 6.2 Administration and governance .....   | 56        |
| 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET) .....                       | 56        |
| 6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning .....                                    | 56        |
| 6.5 Cross-border learning mobility .....  | 57        |
| 6.6 Social inclusion through education and training .....                                   | 57        |
| 6.7 Skills for innovation .....   | 57        |
| 6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media .....  | 57        |
| 6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work .....   | 57        |
| 6.10 Current debates and reforms .....  | 57        |
| <b>7. Health and Well-Being .....</b>   | <b>58</b> |
| 7.1 General context .....   | 58        |
| 7.2 Administration and governance .....   | 58        |
| 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity .....  | 58        |
| 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition .....  | 58        |
| 7.5 Mental health .....   | 58        |
| 7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks ..... | 58        |
| 7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly .....                                      | 59        |
| 7.8 Current debates and reforms .....   | 59        |
| <b>8. Creativity and Culture .....</b>  | <b>60</b> |
| 8.1 General context .....   | 60        |
| 8.2 Administration and governance .....   | 60        |
| 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people .....                      | 60        |
| 8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation .....                                      | 60        |
| 8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences .....                                      | 60        |

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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture .....                 | 60        |
| 8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies.....                     | 61        |
| 8.8 Synergies and partnerships .....  | 61        |
| 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture.....                         | 61        |
| 8.10 Current debates and reforms .....                                      | 61        |
| <b>9. Youth and the World.....</b>  | <b>62</b> |
| 9.1 General context.....  | 62        |
| 9.2 Administration and governance .....                                     | 62        |
| 9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues ..... | 62        |
| 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues .....                             | 62        |
| 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption .....                    | 62        |
| 9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation .....           | 62        |
| 9.7 Current debates and reforms .....                                       | 62        |
| <b>Glossary .....</b>   | <b>63</b> |
| <b>References .....</b>   | <b>64</b> |

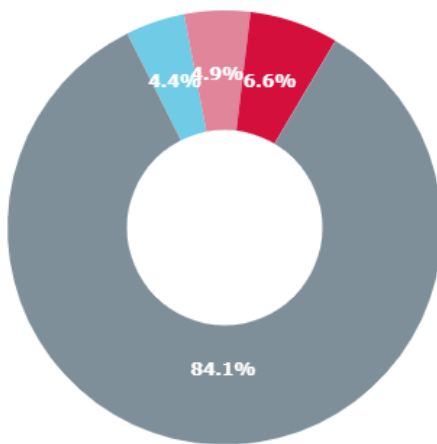




# Overview

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Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



- Age group 15-19
- Age group 20-24
- Age group 25-29
- Other age groups

## Total number of young people:

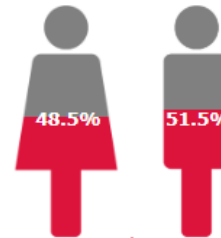
### References:

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_010 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

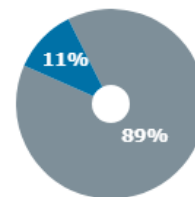
Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_070 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].



Ratio of men and women in the youth population

Ratio of young immigrants in all immigrants from non-EU countries



- Age group 15-29
- Other age groups

# 1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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In its Governing Program (2017-2021), the Bulgarian government has set as one of its main priorities "Providing a supportive and encouraging environment for the social, professional and personal realization of young people in the country".

## 1.1 Target Population of Youth Policy

- The Youth Act defines young people as people aged 15-29 according to the international and European standards for youth work. This is the corresponding age limit that affects youth policies.

## 1.2 National Youth Law

### Existence of a National Youth Law

The Youth Act defines the basic principles, management and financing of the activities carried out in pursuance of the state policy on youth. It contains topics such as youth organizations, youth volunteering, youth policies and information.

State policy on youth is a purposeful and consistent activity of the state, municipalities, youth organizations and society, which aims to create favorable conditions for the full personal development of young people and their participation in the social and economic life, as well as their involvement in the management on local, regional and national level through activities encouraging the development of young people in the country.

The main principles of state policy on youth are:

1. legitimacy, transparency, equal treatment, purposefulness, systemic and coherent policies of the state, municipalities and society for the development of youth;
2. coordination of youth policies in the fields of education, social policy, health, culture, sport, justice, home affairs and defense;
3. coordination of the state policy on youth with the policy for young people, implemented by and within the framework of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations;
4. integration of policies for children and youth;
5. ensuring dialogue and participation of young people in the development of youth policy;
6. freedom of youth association, freedom of youth initiatives, self-government of youth organizations;
7. decentralization of youth policies.

The adoption of the Youth Act sets out the basic principles for the planning and management of the national youth development policy through: management of the national youth policy, clear definition of the powers of the governmental authorities, representation and participation of young people in the social and public life of the country, promotion of youth volunteering; defining the concept of "youth" and defining the concept of "youth organization".

## 1.3 National Youth Strategy

### Existence of a National Youth Strategy

The National Youth Strategy sets out the long-term goals and priorities of the governmental youth policy of the Republic of Bulgaria for a period of 10 years. The



strategy that is active as to 2018 is for the period (2010-2020). The National Youth Strategy shall be adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria after it has been submitted by the Council of Ministers under the procedure established in the Youth Act.

The Strategy contains an analysis of the challenges for youth policy; the main and specific objectives and priorities of the governmental policy on youth; activities to achieve the objectives of the strategy and monitoring, evaluation and update of the Strategy.

The National Youth Strategy 2010-2020 outlines the situation for young people in Bulgaria and details nine strategic aims including:

- o Economic activity and career Development;
- o Improving the access to information and quality services;
- o Promoting healthy lifestyle;
- o Social exclusion;
- o Volunteering;
- o Participation;
- o Rural development;
- o Intercultural dialogue;
- o Crime prevention.

## 1.4 Youth Policy Decision-Making

### **YOUTH POLICIES DIRECTORATE WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS**

The [Youth Policies Directorate within the Ministry](#) of Youth and Sports is responsible for the implementation of the national youth policy and youth programmes. In addition, inter-ministerial working groups are established around different issues, including youth employment, professional qualifications, and the EU Structured Dialogue process.

### **PUBLIC COUNCIL ON YOUTH MATTERS**

The Public Council on Youth Matters with the Minister of Youth and Sports is headed by the relevant Deputy Minister and consists of representatives of organizations registered under the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act for the purpose of carrying out activities in the public interest and aiming at the implementation of youth activities. Currently, twenty-seven organizations are included in the Council. The Public Council operates under strictly defined rules

The Council with its current structure started operations in 2017. The Public Council is an advisory body to the Minister of Youth and Sports to form positions, opinions, problem-solving initiatives from the special competency of the Minister of Youth and Sports, as defined in the Youth Act, observing the principles of publicity and transparency.

### **COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND SPORTS MATTERS WITH THE PARLIAMENT**

A special committee consisting of nineteen MPs is responsible for the matters related to youth, children and sports with the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Committee is responsible for the draft laws that Parliament is considering in the Youth sector. It discusses, debates and gives an opinion on youth issues in the Parliament. The Committee also communicates with and cooperates with the other parliamentary committees when deciding on draft laws and other documents within the competence of the National Assembly in the field of youth. (more information in 1.5).

### **National Advisory Council on youth matters**

When implementing the governmental youth policy, the Minister of Youth and Sports is assisted by the National Advisory Council on youth matter.

(2) The National Advisory Council on youth matters shall: 1. issue opinions on drafts of legal acts and strategic documents relating to youth policy; propose measures to achieve the objectives of the governmental youth policy; discuss other issues related to the implementation of youth policy. The Council includes: Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Deputy Minister of Economy, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Deputy Minister of Health, Deputy Minister of Culture, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Deputy Minister of Justice, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works, Deputy Minister of Finance, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Deputy Chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection; representative of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria; Representative of the National Representation of the Student Councils; one representative from each nationally representative youth organization.

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

The multisectoral approach is being developed at national, regional, district and municipal level by including targeted activities to support young people's development, ensuring effective contribution from young people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of sectoral policies and coordination between them.

#### The role of the National Assembly

The National Assembly adopts the Annual Report on Youth, which reflects the results achieved by the National Youth Strategy 2010 - 2020. It also adopts the laws in the Republic of Bulgaria and is responsible for the adoption of the Youth Act. (More information in 1.2)

The adoption of the Youth Act sets out the basic principles for the planning and management of the national youth development policy through: management of the national youth policy with clear definition of the powers of the governmental authorities, representation and participation of young people in the social and public life of the country, promotion of youth volunteering; defining the concept of "youth" and defining the concept of "youth organization".

#### The role of the Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers through the adoption of the National Youth Strategy, sets out the national strategic objectives and priorities in the youth development policies of the Republic of Bulgaria for a period of ten years. In order to achieve the objectives of the National Youth Strategy, the Council of Ministers adopts the Annual Action Plan, which will program and provide resources for the governmental youth policy. The Council of Ministers submits to the National Assembly the respective annual reports in fulfillment of the national strategy. The Council of Ministers also adopts the report on the implementation of the National Youth Strategy.

#### The role of regional governors

The regional governors implement the governmental policy on youth at regional level. The regional governors, in accordance with the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in the Life of Municipalities and Regions and respectively with the National Youth Strategy 2010-2020 and the Annual Action Plan, submit information on the implementation of measures aimed at young people in the region to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. This helps to ensure coordination, coherence, accountability, publicity and transparency of youth policy planning and programming within the region. The regional governor may conclude cooperation agreements with other neighboring regions for more effective joint implementation of the Annual Action Plan.

## The role of municipalities

The activity of mayors and municipal councils in the implementation of the National Youth Strategy will provide a higher degree of responsiveness to the needs of young people and compliance with the principles of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in the Life of Municipalities and Regions. The mayors of municipalities ensure accountability, publicity and transparency of municipal policies on youth development.

Municipal councils and mayors of municipalities cooperate with the local structures of central governmental authorities and ensure the participation of young people in the formulation, implementation and reporting of municipal policies on youth development.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### National Youth Information System

The Youth Act obliges the Ministry of Youth and Sports to set up and maintain a National Youth Information System (NYIS) in order to provide up-to-date information on the needs of young people in the country as well as to plan, monitor, manage and evaluate youth policies at national, regional and municipal level. (2) The National Youth Information System contains: data on youth organizations in the country; a list of nationally representative youth organizations; youth status studies and researches, analyzes and evaluations of youth policies at national, regional and municipal level; national and European documents relating to the implementation of youth policy; up-to-date information on funding opportunities for youth activities. (3) (Amended, SG No. 68/2013, in force from 02 August 2013) The National Youth Information System is publicly available through the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The National Youth Information System contains a register of youth organizations and organizations working for the benefit of youth, with up-to-date information on young people, documents related to the implementation of the youth policy in the country and other useful information, according to the needs of the Bulgarian young people.

The portal maintains active communication with youth organizations in the country, providing up-to-date information on activities, initiatives, campaigns and competitions for the youth sector in the country. There are also active online surveys on young people's opinion on current youth topics at national and European level.

- **Annual Youth Report**

The Annual Youth Report is prepared on the basis of a specially designed sociological study on "Establishing the Effect of Youth Policies on Youth Aged 15-29", which shows the current state of youth in Bulgaria at present. The results are used in the work of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Youth sector.

The Annual Youth Report is prepared on the basis of the survey data and data submitted by all the departments in the country related to the development of youth within their competence. The Annual Youth Report is prepared by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Annual Youth Report is prepared pursuant to Art. 5, paragraph 2 of the Youth Act and is adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. The report also uses information provided by all other governmental institutions in the country according to their scope of activity.

## 1.7 Funding youth policy

### How Youth policy is funded

Youth policies in Bulgaria are financed by the state budget and by European funds.

## National funding

The Youth Policies Directorate within the Ministry of Youth and Sports organizes, coordinates, controls and implements the management of tools to finance youth activities from the state budget through the budget of the Ministry and from European and international financial sources. There are two major national programs that are administered and funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

### National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act

The National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act was prepared in relation to the reported negative trends regarding the risk behavior of young people related to different forms of addictions and aggressive behavior as well as the identified needs of the young people in the country by providing more opportunities for participation in activities leading to the formation of socially responsible behavior.

The Program is implemented in three directions and the funds provided for its implementation are BGN 2 000 000 (two million Bulgarian levs), where each direction having a certain estimated budget, which can be changed within the specified amount upon the necessity and according to the available financial resource.

A procedure for applying under the Program was opened in 2018, and after receiving project proposals and on the proposal of an expert commission at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, forty-one of them were funded on the territory and are in the process of implementation throughout the whole country. Through the project activities under the Program, which include discussions, campaigns and initiatives, training, broadcasting of information films and videos, sports initiatives, etc., more than 200 000 young people from all over the country have been reached, including young people with different disabilities.

### National Youth Program (2016-2020)

The Program is one of the tools to implement the priorities of the national policy for young people. It is based on the reported needs of young people in the country and is in line with the priorities of European youth policy. The target value for NYP for 2018 is BGN 800 400. The Program has two sub-programs.

Sub-program 2 focuses on funding the implementation of project proposals from non-governmental organizations working in the youth field as well as from informal youth groups in six thematic areas (described below) covering the main directions of promoting civic engagement and participation in campaigns and initiatives of young people and youth workers in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Under this Sub-program project proposals are funded throughout the whole country without restrictions, depending on the number of entries received and approved by the National Coordinator of the Program and within the annual budget.

Under Sub-program 2 will be financed and implemented project proposals in the following thematic areas:

- Thematic area 1. Youth volunteering and participation in volunteer initiatives;
- Thematic area 2. Development and recognition of youth work;
- Thematic area 3. Promoting young people's healthy lifestyle;
- Thematic area 4. Activation of young people in small settlements;
- Thematic area 5. Youth entrepreneurship;
- Thematic area 6. Европейски политики и председателство на България на
- The Council of the EU.

## 1.8 Cross-border cooperation

### Cooperation with European countries

During the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU (01 January 2018 – 30 June 2018) Bulgaria set "The Future of Europe and the Young People". Ten meetings of the Youth Working Group of the Council of the EU were held, in which were discussed and drew two Conclusions. One is on the role of young people in building a harmonious, united and peaceful society in Europe. The conclusions recall that key global and European priority documents have been adopted in the field of cooperation policies which have a direct impact on future youth development. In this regard, it is reminded the 2030 Program for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Objectives adopted by the Commission in 2015, the European Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, the European Consensus on Development and the Security Council Resolution of UN (2250) on "Young people, peace and security". The conclusions draw attention to the valuable role that young people have as a bearers of positive change and ambassadors of peace. Their active involvement in building a peaceful, secure and harmonious society in Europe, through respect for fundamental human rights. For the first time a review is made of one of the priorities set out in the Renewed Framework for Youth Cooperation between the EU Member States (European Youth Strategy) "Young People and the World" as well as a cross-sectoral partnership with the European External Action Service.

Other Conclusions of the Council are focused on the role of youth in overcoming the demographic challenges in the European Union. It also attaches the importance of the demographic challenges that young people face today, focusing on the positive and negative consequences of the mobility of young people in the EU. A major overview of the different effects of mobility is made, highlighting the important role of all stakeholders in helping young people, especially those from small settlements in the process of integration, whether they are in their home country or have opted to develop in another EU Member State. The Youth Sector has been allocated by legislative file "European Solidarity Corps". A program proposed by the European Commission with a budget of EUR 376 million. The Bulgarian Presidency has begun negotiations in triologue format with the EP on behalf of the EU Council. Two formal dialogues with the EP were held, as well as many technical meetings.

A European Youth Conference with 250 participants from the EU, the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership was also organized within the framework of the Presidency. The event also produced the first European Youth Goals, which were presented to the European Commission as a direct recommendation for the next Programming Period of the European Youth Strategy. A meeting of the Directors-General for Youth of the EU Member States was held to discuss the future of Erasmus+.

#### JOINT WORKING WITH THE UN

Bulgaria has good long-standing practices in working with the United Nations in the field of youth development.

UN Special Envoy for Youth Affairs Jayatma Wikenmaranyake, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmour, UNFPA Regional Director Alanna Armitage and Afshan Khan - Regional Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) were in Bulgaria for the European Youth Conference organized under the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and the European Commission (EC).

For the first time, UN representatives attend an EU Council presidency event, which is a huge recognition of Bulgaria's work in the field of youth policies. Bulgaria is recognized as one of the leading countries in the promotion of youth development by the United Nations.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has been successfully collaborating with the UN Population Fund. The Youth Sector is working hard each year with the youth delegates selected to the United Nations (UN).

### **BULGARIAN - KOREAN YOUTH EXCHANGE**

Since 2007, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (former State Agency for Youth and Sport) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of South Korea on understanding and cooperation in the field of youth policy. The Memorandum seeks to promote partnerships between the two countries on youth issues, focusing on youth policies, key mechanisms and good practice to address problems and meet the needs of young people in areas such as education, employment and participation in civil society.

## **1.9 Current debates and reforms**

A new draft of National Youth Development Strategy for the period after 2020 will be elaborated. The National Document will be harmonized with the priorities of the new European Youth Strategy.

For this purpose, a nationally representative sociological survey on the state of young people in the country shall be conducted by order of Ministry of Youth and Sports to serve as a starting point for defining priorities and objectives of youth policies in accordance with the current problems and needs of the youth community. Furthermore, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has also launched an online-based survey on the attitudes of the youth sector, their priorities, key areas of work, as well as recommendations and best practices. The analysis of the survey will be taken into account in the preparation of the new National Strategy. There is also a public discussion on this subject with young people and youth organizations by different locations, targeting young people with fewer opportunities. The future National Youth Strategy (working title) will be developed after discussions and public consultations with all stakeholders.

## 2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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Volunteering in Bulgaria is not officially managed by a public authority. There are no official regulatory and statutory documents to regulate it. Over the years, many attempts have been made to adopt such regulations. Draft laws are in place to regulate volunteering.

More and more young people in the country take part in volunteer initiatives and campaigns implemented on various youth projects. Volunteer activities as an active expression of civic participation, strengthen common values such as solidarity and social cohesion. Volunteer activities are carried out in various and diverse sectors such as education, youth, culture, sport, environment, healthcare, social care, consumer protection, humanitarian aid, development policy, scientific research, equal opportunities and external relations which contribute to the establishment of encouraging and favourable environment for young people.

### 2.1 General context

#### Historical developments

At the end of 2017, for the second consecutive year, the Ministry of Youth and Sport carried out the initiative "Volunteer Mission - (Not ImPossible)". The aim was to promote the good example of the young people in Bulgaria who have worked for the benefit of society, good works and volunteering in general. The initiative enjoys interest among young people and youth organizations.

#### Main concepts

More and more young people in the country take part in volunteer initiatives and campaigns implemented on various youth projects. Volunteer activities as an active expression of civic participation, strengthen common values such as solidarity and social cohesion. Volunteer activities are carried out in various and diverse sectors such as education, youth, culture, sport, environment, healthcare, social care, consumer protection, humanitarian aid, development policy, scientific research, equal opportunities and external relations which contribute to the establishment of encouraging and favourable environment for young people.

### 2.2 Administration and Governance of Youth Volunteering

#### Governance

There is no institution in Bulgaria dedicated to volunteering administration and management solely.

#### Cross-sectoral cooperation

We have the National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA) established on 29 June 2000 as a public benefit organization. The mission of NAVA is to promote volunteer traditions in Bulgaria and to change the attitudes of the community towards voluntary work by organizing various initiatives involving maximum number of community members and promoting the values of volunteering.



NAVA Foundation is a member of several large networks, bringing together organizations working in the field of child and youth participation and civic activity, including the European Volunteer Center (CEV) and Eurodesk.

As part of the National Youth Program (2016-2020), a NAVA project for the development of a Youth Information Consulting Center (YICC) is financed at the amount of BGN 38,898.67. This is an example of cooperation between the NGO sector and the national authorities.

## 2.3 National Strategy on Youth Volunteering

### Existence of a National Strategy

Presently, there is no National Volunteering Strategy in the country. Youth volunteering is regulated by the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) as YOUTH VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPMENT Item 5.1. Strategic goal: Developing youth volunteering as a driving force for personal development, mobility, learning, competitiveness, social cohesion, intergenerational solidarity and the formation of civic self-awareness. Item 5.2. Operational objectives IV. Strategic objectives 30 5.2.1 Operational objective: Creating more volunteering opportunities for young people, especially for cross-border mobility by making greater use of the EC Youth in Action Programme.

The strategy has created two tasks for the implementation of this strategic goal. The strategy is in place by 2020. The tasks related to volunteering are as follows:

Task 1. To join and ensure the implementation of the European Convention for the Promotion of Long-Term Voluntary Service for Youth of the Council of Europe. Task 2. To encourage and support the participation of Bulgarian youth in international youth volunteering.

The body responsible for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the local government departments and municipalities (see Chapter 1).

"Stimulating volunteering by introducing a system for certification and validation of acquired knowledge, skills and experiences from non-formal education and training" is a measure in the government's management program, but so far no such system has been introduced.

## 2.4 Youth Volunteering at national level

### National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is no youth program dedicated to volunteering only.

In 2017, the activities of 12 youth volunteering projects financed under Sub-program 2 "National Youth Initiatives and Campaign", subject "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteer Initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020), were finalized. The activities carried out are in the field of promoting volunteering among Bulgarian youth, training young volunteers, stimulating the activity of young people and forming the sensitivity to the needs of civil society, activating the local governance for work with volunteers, etc.

In 2011, seven projects of non-government organizations in the field of volunteering financed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports under the National Youth Program (2016-2020), Sub-program 2, subject "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteer Initiatives", were implemented. Under these programmes were organized 25 trainings with the participation of 229 young people. There were organized 91 volunteer



campaigns and initiatives where 609 young people were actively involved and 2 094 were involved in initiatives to promote volunteering among young people in the country.

## Funding

No public financing is provided in Bulgaria for the implementation of volunteer activities. Through the state budget is financed "National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns", subject "Youth volunteering and participation in volunteer initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020).

## 2.5 Cross-Border Mobility Programmes

### EU programmes

The Erasmus + Fund is the most popular one to fund volunteering activities. The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), which was adopted as a legislative dossier during the Bulgarian EU Council Presidency, is based on the existing structures, mainly the European Voluntary Service, in order to attract 100 000 young European citizens to participate in activities under European Union Solidarity Fund by 2020. European Union Solidarity Fund is set up to offer young people (aged between 17-30) in Europe the chance to be hired by a non-governmental organization, local government or a private company by working or making volunteer work during social and/or natural challenges in the EU for example: natural disasters; tackling social challenges such as social exclusion, poverty, health and demographic challenges; or working on the integration of refugees.

### Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

No legislative framework for foreign volunteers has been adopted.

## 2.6 Raising Awareness about Youth Volunteering Opportunities

### Information providers

One of the main objectives of NAVA is to create and support a network of Centers for Volunteer Work. As of September 2017, NAVA included a network of fifty-two Centers for Volunteer Work (CVW) in the territory of over twenty districts in the country. Profile of the organizations hosting the Centers for Volunteer Work, part of NAVA network: NGOs, Healthcare Establishments, Centers for Public Support, Schools, Universities, Community Centers, Libraries, Municipalities, Business enterprises.

### Key initiatives

Main national initiatives for improving the awareness of opportunities for youth volunteering are included in Subprogram 2 "National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns", subject "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteer Initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020). The activities carried out are in the field of promoting volunteering among Bulgarian youth, training young volunteers, stimulating the activity of young people and forming the sensitivity to the needs of civil society, activating the local authority for work with volunteers, etc.

Information on how to apply for the program can be obtained by organizing open information days organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and through the Youth Information System website.

## 2.7 Skills Recognition

### Policy Framework

Legally, the manner to prove the knowledge and skills acquired through volunteering is not yet regulated. Presently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is developing jointly with NAVA a national platform for validation of the skills acquired through volunteering.

### Existing arrangements

There is still no system in Bulgaria for recognition of skills acquired as a result of volunteering activities.

## 2.8 Current Debates and Reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

We are expecting a discussion with the National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA), which has developed an online system for validating the volunteer skills, with the aim of possible future partnership and popularization of the platform.

## 3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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The aim of the working plan of the Bulgarian government is to ensure that every citizen is able to provide for themselves. The possibilities for entrepreneurship in the country is changing. A key point in creating opportunities for young people to find their place in society, to achieve economic independence and to develop is to find a suitable job. Society should offer opportunities for young people to work on the labour market, prevent long-term unemployment, marginalization and social exclusion. By implementing different opportunities for young people to enter the labour market, it contributes to the achievement of social cohesion. This in turn is a prerequisite for achieving economic growth.

### 3.1 General context

The position of young people on the labour market is specific. After completing their education, they are entering the labour market, and in most cases they have no work experience in the acquired specialty. They often lack the necessary information and contacts for job placement. In a number of cases, employers refuse to hire them because they lack work experience and respectively appropriate professional competencies and necessary work habits. At the same time, they have mastered the newest skills in the field of their profession, but they cannot apply these. These two characteristics clearly stand out in the position of the graduating students.

A key point in creating opportunities for young people to find their place in society, to achieve economic independence and to develop is to find a suitable job. Society should offer opportunities for young people to work on the labour market, prevent long-term unemployment, marginalization and social exclusion. By implementing different opportunities for young people to enter the labour market, it contributes to the achievement of social cohesion. This in turn is a prerequisite for achieving economic growth.

The economic crisis and the resulting slow economic recovery led to a significant increase in youth unemployment in the country. The unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group grew more than the unemployment rate for other age groups, but the number of unemployed aged 25-34 and 35-44 grew much more significantly. Young people aged 15-29 are a target group for employment promotion policy under national law. Half of the unemployed youths registered in the labour offices are women. In the age group up to 24 years of age the share of women is 49.6%, and in the age group up to 29 years of age - the share of women is 52.9%. One of the key factors determining youth unemployment is the degree of education. Data show that unemployment among young people with higher education is lower. Low or inadequate education and lack of qualifications are among the main reasons for youth unemployment in Bulgaria. Apart from the listed structural factors, the reasons for youth unemployment and inactivity are also the lack of professional and/or work experience, the lack of key skills and work habits, early school leaving, and the loss of work motivation due to long-term absence. The rise in youth unemployment is also a result of the fact that, in conditions of uncertain economic situation, employers lay off mainly the most inexperienced workers and employees.

[The national youth guarantee](#) of Bulgaria provides that every young person aged 15 to 24 years inclusive will receive a good job offer, continuation of education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of being out of work or leaving the formal education system. The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria will be implemented step by step. For young people registered with the Labour Offices, a proposal will be submitted by the end of the 4th month of their registration. Young people who do not work and do not study and are not registered with the labour offices will be informed about the possible services they can use after registering with the labour offices within one month of receiving their

individual data and address correspondence in the institution or organization that will activate these. Any individual unemployed youth registered with the labour offices will be given an individual action plan, which will also define his/her profile. According to this profile, the young person will receive a job offer (subsidized either on the primary labour market) or for training (vocational training, key competences, continuing education). Further professional guidance, career counselling and motivational training will be provided.

By 2020, the activities will be financed from the state budget and with European funds, according to the National Employment Action Plans for the respective year. The implementation of the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2014-2020) in the South-West Region is generally not funded by the Youth Employment Initiative, 10 but mostly by the state budget. It is envisaged that 10% of the Youth Guarantee funding under the Youth Employment Initiative will be used to finance lower-level NUTS 2 regions (planning region) within the unacceptable Southwest region.

A successful and effective implementation of the National Plan will work in partnership between institutions and organizations. The National Plan will be implemented by the responsible state institutions, social partners, local authorities, youth organizations.

## 3.2 Administration and Governance

### Governance

[Ministry of Labour and Social Policy](#) (MLSP) conducts state labour market policy, protecting the national labour market, training the labour force and integrating disadvantaged groups into the labour market. This includes analyses of the information on the labour market and the results of the active labour market policy, organizes the study of the needs of the employers from the labour force with specific qualifications.

It has a leading role in the development of labour market regulations, the Employment Strategy, the National Reform Program and the National Employment Action Plans. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy updates and maintains the National Classification of Occupations and Positions. Among the key commitments are the following: - to carry out an information campaign on the objectives and essence of the National Youth Guarantee in the context of the European Youth Guarantee; distribution of materials, brochures, information through the media, Internet pages, social networks, etc. - providing information from the Ministry of Education and Science to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on young people who have left early and dropped out of the educational system; - support from the National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB), through local authorities, to identify young people who have dropped out of the education system and those who have never attended school; - with the active participation of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, active non-profit organizations in the country (Youth Information Consultation Centre - YICCs) have been identified that realize youth activities and services to identify young people who are neither in employment nor in education and training. The organizations take action to make these take steps for their registration in the labour offices, including through placement services by youth workers by place of residence (active dialogue with each young person through information and individual consultation, group seminars on attitudes change and social inclusion). Together with the partners, a specific methodology has been developed for working within the partnership network to identify and activate young people, taking into account the specificities of working with the different groups of young people with fewer opportunities who are neither in employment nor in education in compliance with the Council of Europe standards for working with these target groups. Based on the developed methodology, youth workers (mediators) will be trained; - contacting identified young people, providing information on possible services provided at the labour offices.

Coordination and control of the implementation of the programs, measures and projects in the field of the labour market are carried out, both by the YICCs (within the framework of Subprogram 1 of the National Youth Program), by the local organizations of the nationally representative organizations of the employers, workers and employees, as well as youth organizations. A specific aspect of this activity is the personal contact with young people as well as the approach of representatives of the institutions/organizations to go to the young persons; - Youth activation actions aim at including them in employment, apprenticeship, internship or training. The labour mediators provide information on the employment mediation services organized and provided by the labour offices of the young people identified as unemployed and not in education (according to Art. 21a of the Regulations for Employment Protection Law). For young people aged 15-17 inclusive, efforts are directed, according to their individual profile, to their return to the education system, including achievement of literacy. In addition to the Agreement, a methodology has been developed for the work within the partner network to identify and activate young people. The actions for labour market integration targeted at the unemployed youth registered with the labour offices are carried out by the MLSP through the Employment Agency (EA). EA collects and summarizes data on the work with registered unemployed youths up to 24 years and up to 29 years of age. The data will provide information on all actions (services, programs and measures) implemented by the EA as well as those implemented by the social partners in the context of the annual National Employment Action Plans (NEAPs). The EA also collects and summarizes data on registered unemployed youths at the labour offices, depending on the duration of their registration, their educational and professional structure, up to 24 years of age inclusive and up to 29 years of age inclusive. The Employment Agency is the institution that cooperates with the partner organizations on activation actions and independently connects with young people for their registration in the labour offices and the use of the opportunities for training and work. In this process, the active work of the labour mediators is crucial, the Roma mediators, psychologists and case-managers with the youth, and the contact with employers for the provision of jobs and constant exchange of information between them and the young people is also crucial. In implementing the labour market integration measures, the Employment Agency works in a targeted manner to implement the National Guarantee, namely to finance the training and employment of young people up to 24 years of age, inclusive, with primary and lower education (early school leavers), whose registration in the Labour Offices lasts up to and including 4 months. For youths with a university degree and a secondary education, with duration of registration in the Labour Offices up to 4 months, the start of the first job (internship) will be funded. The Minister of Labour and Social Policy, in coordination with the Steering Committee, issued instructions for the performance of the specific tasks of the guarantee within the relevant deadlines by the Employment Agency, based on the data on the number of youths covered by the National Guarantee. In working with youths, labour mediators, psychologists, case managers and other employees in the Labour Offices working with clients, comply with the Methodological Guidelines "Providing specialized individual counselling aimed at solving specific problems of youths up to 29 years of age registered in the Labour Office Directorates, including such for working with disabled young people. The Executive Director of the Employment Agency provides instructions for the implementation of the National Guarantee by the Territorial Units.

The implementation of this plan is funded by the state budget (within the EA maintenance funds and under the NEAPs for the respective year), the ESF, including through the Youth Employment Initiative within the framework of OP HRD implementation, by employers.

The effectiveness and efficiency of active labour market policy are monitored.

### 3.3 Skills Forecasting

#### Forecasting system(s)

#### Skills development

### 3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling

#### Career guidance and counselling services

[The National Portal for Career Guidance](#) was created under Project BG051RO001-4.3.02-0001 "Career Guidance System in School Education" of the Ministry of Education and Science with the aim of: creating an integrated system for realization and employment on the acquired qualification of secondary school graduates in line with labour market requirements. The project was created under the Operational Program "Science and Education for Smart Growth" by the Ministry of Education and Science. (MoES)

#### Specific objectives:

- Creating and implementing a model of career guidance at school level;
- Establishment and implementation of the "School - labour market" model at the National Portal for Career Guidance (<http://orientirane.mon.bg>) to support of the employment and professional realization of graduates of secondary education;
- Ensuring early career guidance for drop-outs and pupils with special educational needs;
- Establishment of career guidance centres as effective advisory, methodological and coordinating units for the implementation of the policy of career guidance of the students in the secondary education system. 1. Development of the career guidance system at school level
- Developing and approving a model for career guidance for pupils at school level by developing a working version of a Career Guidance Program at school level;
- designation of 42 pilot schools in which the Career Club will be opened, where lectures, trainings, discussions, group consultations, seminars, etc., related to career guidance will be held;

#### 4. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy [MLSP](#) - through the [Employment Agency](#)

It offers the service for Professional information, consulting and guidance , which aims to assist in: choosing the right profession/specialty according to the psychophysical features and personal interests of the clients; choice of career path; choice of appropriate training, including training institutions.

The possible services you can take depending on your individual profile are as follows:

- Professional guidance - providing information on the choice of profession, qualification, further qualification or re-qualification;
- Motivational training that will be provided both in employment offices and by external licensed organizations;
- Training for acquiring professional qualification and/or key competencies demanded on the labour market;
- Measures for job creation through financial subsidies for employers;
- Internship programs and measures aimed at young people with secondary or higher education and vocational qualifications;
- Subsidising of temporary employment;



- Promoting territorial mobility in the country when looking for and starting work;
- Providing services from the European Employment Services network (EURES);
- Support for starting your own business by young people with high education and qualifications who have motivation and business ideas.

### 3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships

[The Program for summer student internships in the state administration](#) is organized by the Council of Ministers.

All students who study at a university in the country or abroad with continuous student rights regardless of the degree, the form of the training or the course can take part in the program for summer student internships in the state administration this year.

The program focuses on acquiring professional experience, new knowledge and skills in a real work environment, and professional orientation of students.

There are internships in 42 professional fields as the most demanded of the administration with the most internships positions are Economics (486), Administration and Management (188), Law (185), Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (153) and Social Activities (68).

### 3.6 Integration of Young People in the Labour Market

During the period 2013-2017, unemployment among young people aged up to 25 years fell from 28.4% to 13.5% or by almost 15 percentage points. Thanks to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria, nearly 100 000 young people under 25 years of age have started work during the last 4 years. Supporting measures for labour market integration. Bulgaria has legislatively regulated and has gained experience in implementing various measures and actions to increase the chances of employment and future labour market integration, applying these with better quality and wider scope in order to achieve the desired effect of the Guarantee. For the target group of the programs, measures and schemes there is applied set quota for young people up to 25 years of age. In order to implement the Youth Guarantee from the beginning of 2014, programs and measures targeting young people who have proven their effectiveness and for which the interest of the employers and young people is high are implemented. At the same time, work has been launched to develop new youth programs and schemes in close cooperation with the social partners and all key institutions. Measures and actions for interventions are varied and will be determined according to the youth profile: - Training for literacy. For young people with low levels of basic knowledge of reading, writing, mathematics, etc. (illiterate persons) due to early leaving of the formal education system will be given the opportunity to acquire knowledge corresponding to the initial level of primary education for the purposes of literacy and access to vocational training. These young people will be given the opportunity to go back and integrate into the education system or to include them in shortened educational programs (literacy courses). - Training to acquire professional qualifications and/or key competencies demanded on the labour market. Any young person without a qualification or with identified needs for completing and developing his or her professional qualification or re-qualification will be given the opportunity to be included in vocational training to acquire knowledge and skills in occupations demanded on the labour market. For the acquiring of additional skills and competences there will also be provided the opportunity to learn key competencies. Training vouchers will be widely used, thus allowing young people to choose training institutions with the help of employment mediators. - Support for finding employment in the primary labour market. Young people will receive information and reference to jobs matching their profile. Young people will be able to get involved in short training sessions to get acquainted with employment and social security rights and the

obligations they will have when starting work. - Support for job creation for the recruitment of unemployed young people registered in the Labour Offices. The support consists in providing employers with various financial subsidies. Payments may include the payment of salary to the hired young person; social and health payments that are payable at the expense of the employer, transportation to the workplace, etc. Encouraging employers to hire unemployed youths is an important tool in ensuring of (first) employment for young people, acquiring first professional experience, building work habits and labour discipline. Subsidized employment is an effective tool to provide jobs for young people who would find it difficult to get into the primary labour market due to lack of professional qualifications, skills, long-term unemployed or being inactive.

### **3.7 Cross-Border Mobility in Employment, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Opportunities**

#### **Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility**

Cross-border mobility in the area of employment, entrepreneurship and professional opportunities is mainly supported by cross-border programs and projects between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, and Bulgaria and Greece. Such programs are:

1. The program for cross-border [cooperation Interreg-IPA Bulgaria Serbia](#) finances projects related to the development of sustainable tourism, youth and the environment and is implemented with the financial support of the EU. From the Bulgarian side, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria is determined to perform the functions of the Managing Authority under the Program.

An example of a cross-border project between the two countries is: Enhancing the entrepreneurial potential and employment prospects of young people through capacity building and networking (Start-up Academy Bulgaria-Macedonia). The project focuses on the development of young entrepreneurship and the promotion of start-ups that can help improve the competitiveness of the regional economy. The implementation of the project activities motivates young people to start their own business ventures.

#### **Legal framework**

### **3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence**

[The Ministry of Economy](#) in 2016, implements the „stARTs“ 3 Project - entrepreneurship education for students from art schools and sports schools. The aim is to promote the entrepreneurial abilities of students in arts schools and gradually to teach entrepreneurship training as an integral part of the curricula of these schools as they are under the guidance of the Ministry of Culture and in their curricula there is no entrepreneurship education. Students in these schools have a future for entrepreneurs and participation in the creative industries, whose potential is growing more and their share in the gross added value is increasing. The sum of the stARTs 3 project amounts to BGN 24 988, excluding VAT.

A Brandiko competition was organized to encourage learning companies to understand the nature and importance of enhancing and protecting intellectual property. Brandiko is a competition for the protection of intellectual property between training enterprises. Through this project, students from the training companies are trained on the essence and importance of creating and protecting the Community trademark and promoting its capabilities both in Bulgaria and in the single market. The idea of the competition is for students to create their own brand - a name and logo design that reflects the company's



activities, its goals, philosophy and strategy. Participants apply through the filled-in Application form for Community trademark registration and defend their ideas at regional competitions before a jury according to predefined criteria.

The implementation of the activities and the results achieved in 2016 are:

- 5 training companies (4 schools of arts and 1 sports school) were created;
- Training and mentoring in entrepreneurship and protection of intellectual property;
- Participation of training enterprises in the Youth Business Forum "Rising Stars" 2016;
- Trained students under "StARTs" 3 - 35;
- Trained students under Brandiko - 200 students (training companies under the program "Training Company" of JA Bulgaria).

During the same year, the Ministry of Economy also implemented the project "Technostart 2 - Encouraging the Innovation Activity of Young People in Bulgaria" to set up student companies. The project is in the implementation of Priority Areas No.1 "Entrepreneurship" and No. 9 "Skills and Innovations" of the National SME Promotion Strategy 2014-2020. This is the only program in Bulgaria currently funded entirely by public funds to support entrepreneurship at university level. Eligible applicants for the project are students, postgraduates and graduates during the current year who apply for the status of individuals who did not have their own company until the time of applying. Candidates must submit a business plan (as per a template) to describe and develop their business idea.

Within the framework of the Technostart project, grants are provided at a rate of 90% of the total amount of funding or up to BGN 19 800 for each approved business plan. To qualify for the project, each approved applicant must register his/her company (EOOD) and provide a mandatory own contribution of 10% of the total financing or up to 2 200 BGN for each approved business plan. The agreed amount under the Technostart 2 project is BGN 257 369.90. Start-up companies with a business idea are funded only in the sphere of industry and R&D. The results of the implementation of the 2016 project are as follows:

- An operational guide for the implementation of the project has been developed;
- Information campaigns conducted to promote objectives;
- Conducting a national competition "Technostart" 2;
- Provision of grants to 14 approved candidates.

[The policies and measures set out in the 2016 Plan for the implementation of Strategy](#) for the implementation of the Strategy for reducing the share of early school leavers (2013-2020) for the school year 2016-2017 are implemented in a context of coherence and commitment of stakeholder actions.

An early warning system for early school leaving in 2 statistical regions of NUTS 2 (Northwest and South-East) is approved in 2016. The process was introduced from the academic year 2016/2017 on the territory of 9 districts of the two regions; in 19 municipalities and 50 institutions in these municipalities.

In order to support disadvantaged vulnerable groups to educate their children in kindergartens starting at the age of 3 with a view to their early socialization, the MES implements the project "Support for pre-school education and preparation of disadvantaged children" under Operational Program "Science and Education for Smart Growth". The budget of the grant procedure is BGN 10 000 000 for the period 2015-2018.

All activities in terms of promoting youth employment in the country in 2016 are being implemented in the context of the European Youth Guarantee (EYG) initiative and the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (NYGIP). The following results have been achieved:

- 92 189 individual action plans for newly registered young people up to 29 years of age (40 306 young people up to 24 years of age) were prepared by labour mediators;

- 40 570 young people up to 29 years of age (15 174 young people up to 24 years of age) started working on the primary labour market;
- 23 108 young people up to 29 years of age (10 856 young people under 24 years of age) are included in programs and measures for employment, apprenticeship and internship funded from the state budget as well as from the European Social Fund / Youth Initiative employment under the Operational Program Human Resources Development;
- 4 199 young people up to 29 years of age (1 890 up to 24 years of age) are included in different forms of training;
- 27 344 young people up to 29 years of age (11 666 young people up to 24 years of age) participated in a Job Search Workshop to motivate active labour market behaviour. A job search workshop was held in all the country's labour offices;
- 1 545 young people up to 29 years of age (733 young people up to 24 years of age) received individual counselling from case managers and liaison support with other institutions to overcome barriers to starting work;
- 1 572 young people up to 29 years of age (698 up to 24 years if age) have sought individual psychological support from the psychologists appointed under the National Program "Activation of inactive persons";
- 4 668 young people up to 29 years of age (1 964 up to 24 years of age) participated in group consultations for psychological support.

In 2016, joint activities related to the signed agreements with the local partners for realization of the NYGIP 2014-2020 were carried out. In all the [Labour Office Directorates](#) (LODs) in the country there are initiated and held meetings with the participatory agreements - mayors of municipalities, non-governmental organizations and other institutions and organizations, in order to communicate effectively and work for the implementation of policies for young people who are not working, are not studying or registered with the Labour Office.

The highlights of joint activities in 2016 include:

- organizing and holding information meetings with young people, including students, to promote the services offered by employment offices, employment opportunities, including professional mobility through the EURES network and increased motivation for active labour market behaviour;
- meetings and consultations with the partners on the announced procedures for employment incentives under the EPL, including such for young people;
- exchange and publication of vacancies announced by employers and joint initiatives through partners' information sites;
- provision of employment services to young people through outsourced jobs;
- meetings with employers on youth employment issues;
- meetings with the mayors of municipalities/representatives of the municipal administrations to discuss and implement the policy for promoting youth employment;
- informing about the opportunities within OP HRD projects and procedures, as well as training of unemployed youths in the branches of the Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre (BGVTC);
- Coordination and support of the activities of the employees of the National Program "Activation of inactive persons" with the municipal administrations of youth mediators;
- Out-of-office meetings with inactive young persons. The field work teams include Roma mediators, case managers and youth mediators employed under the National Program "Inactivation of inactive persons", health mediators, experts on ethnic and integration issues, mayors of small settlements, etc.;
- implementing joint projects with the social partners to provide opportunities for acquiring professional qualification, key competences and inclusion in employment;
- realization of information campaigns "Come and register in LODs", "Open Doors Day", etc.;
- initiatives to involve young people in tripartite meetings with employers to fill vacancies announced in the LODs;

- information exchange and joint activities under the National Youth Program (2016-2020), Ministry of Youth And Sports.

In 2016, the activities of the Joint Employment Agreements between the [Employment Agency](#) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) continue to be implemented. The main purpose of the joint initiatives is to provide students with access to information on appropriate employment and their activation in the search for employment services through LODs. Highlights of 2016 activities include:

- Participation of representatives of the Labour Office, Regional Employment Service Directorates (RESD) in information events organized by the HEIs - "Career Day", "Open Doors Day", etc.;
- Participation of students in events organized by the labour offices;
- Meetings organized and held between representatives of the Labour Offices Directorate/Regional Directorate of Employment Agency and the HEIs in relation to the planning of joint activities;
- Providing up-to-date information through the Career Centres to the HEIs for: the local labour market - demand and supply of labour, short-term trends; mediation services; job vacancies for internships and how to apply; the vacancies in the primary labour market, and those announced in the European Employment Services network and under the OP HRD;
- Providing information materials on the opportunities for training in the HEIs, in the self-information areas in the LODs and in the Work Centres;
- Organization of joint discussions and information days.
- A well-established tool for activating inactive young persons is the organization of specialized youth labour exchanges. In 2016, 36 exchanges were held with the participation of employers and young people. There were 5 257 young people up to 29 years of age, with 3 443 starting work.

During the period January-December 2016, the services for activation, improvement of the employability and quick employment of the youth in implementation of the National Employment Action Plan continued.

Supporting measures for labour market integration include specific measures and programs to enable young people to start work, train, become apprentices, train at work or participate in other forms of training. Programs / projects and support measures are funded from both the state budget and the European Social Fund/Youth Employment Initiative.

Young people are a priority target group in implementing the EPL promotion schemes set out in the National Employment Action Plan in 2016. They are targeted and included in all appropriate employment and / or training programs and measures.

In total, 3 672 young people up to 29 years of age (out of which 1 197 up to 24 years of age) participated in programs and projects for employment and training.

- Contributions to youth employment have the following:
- National Program "Activation of inactive persons"
- Program for training and employment of long-term unemployed persons.

The program aims to increase the knowledge and qualification of long-term unemployed persons registered at the Labour Offices by including them in vocational training upon request by an employer. The program is implemented on the territory of the whole country, with priority for regions with unemployment above the national average for the previous year. The program subsidizes the employment of full-time or part-time workers for a period of up to 12 months in the private sector.

National Programme „[Activating inactive persons](#)”

Since 2008, the Employment Agency has implemented the National Program "Activation of inactive persons", whose main objective is to activate and integrate inactive persons to the labour market, including discouraged and unemployed ones, by means of individual

and group application of tools and services to attract and motivate them to register at the Labour Offices and to encourage them to engage in training and/or employment. The unemployed, including the disadvantaged groups on the labour market, are supported by case managers, psychologists, labour and career counsellors during the period. This support is aimed at motivating active labour market behaviour to accelerate their access thereto and improve employability. The experience so far shows that this is how quick transitions from unemployment to employment are made for those who want dynamic career development.

#### „Support a dream”

The Employment Agency is an active party in support of young people completing secondary education or vocational training and leaving specialized institutions (family-type placement centres (FTCs)), homes for children deprived of parental care (HCDPC), social educational and vocational centres (SEVCs), protected, transitional and monitored dwellings). The cooperation agreement under the initiative of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria "Support a Dream" is being developed. The objective is a faster professional realization after the completion of the training of these young people.

#### „Ready to Work”

In order to stimulate the activity and improve the job opportunities and employment of young people up to 29 years of age, who are neither in education nor training, nor in employment and not registered as unemployed, the project "Ready to Work" of the [Employment Agency](#) was started.

#### **National Agency for Vocational Education and Training:**

Issuing and revoking licenses for vocational training and career guidance;

Controls the activity and assesses the quality of training in licensed institutions in the vocational training system;

Develops and offers to the Minister of Education and Science:

- the list of professions for vocational education and training;
- state educational standards for acquiring qualification in professions;

Participation in the development of state educational standards for public education system documents and for the assessment system for vocational education and training;

Making suggestions for improving the vocational education and training system on the basis of an analysis of the activities of Vocational Training Centres and Centres for Information and Vocational Guidance;

Assigning the implementation and introduction of research in the field of vocational education, training and guidance;

Coordination of the activities to develop strategies for the development and improvement of vocational education and training;

Support for the international recognition of Vocational Education Documents and Vocational Training;

Establishment and maintaining of a register of vocational training centres and centres for information and career guidance and licenses issued and revoked;

Establishment and maintaining of a register of vocational qualification certificates, vocational training certificates, certificates for the validation of professional qualifications and certificates for the validation of professional qualification for part of a profession issued by the vocational training centres;

Determination of indicators for providing the annual information from the licensed centres for the performed activity during the previous calendar year under Art. 22, paragraph 8 of the Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA);

Development and validation of forms and templates of licensing documents;

Methodological support for vocational training centres that validate professional knowledge, skills and competences in the vocational education and training system.

## 3.9 Start-up Funding for Young Entrepreneurs

### Access to information

It is noticeable that 10% of people between the ages of 25-29 have started a business venture and then have given up. Far fewer are the numbers for people under 25 years of age. It is necessary, in the light of these data, to formulate incentives for young people who have started their own businesses to reduce the proportion of people giving up for reasons that are more objective, and not subjective. Given the low levels of entrepreneurial activity among young people and the low levels of self-made business, it is no surprise that 90% of young people have not looked for funding opportunities for young people starting their own businesses. The profile of young people who respond positively to this type of question is in a larger proportion of people aged 25-29 with higher education and high personal income. It is necessary to take into account that the socio-demographic characteristics of the young people provide substantial answers and explanations about the levels of entrepreneurial initiative. It should be borne in mind that in Bulgaria there is not a high level of entrepreneurial culture to be passed on through the generations, and there is to a great degree the feeling that business is done through the back door. These cultural specifics give clarity in terms of the above results. In recent years, there have been more and more examples of young people with their own business initiatives, which over time would have influenced the formation of a stronger entrepreneurial culture in Bulgaria. The development of a start-up culture, which is not only concentrated within the capital, is also an opportunity to give a positive example. High levels of computer and internet usage among young people is another opportunity to search for and get specific business start-up information and, above all, the ability to connect people with the same business interests.

MEASURE 6.1. [START-UP SUPPORT FOR YOUNG AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS](#) is funded under the Rural Development Program (2014-2020) and is managed by the [State Agricultural Fund](#) and the [Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry](#). The program aims to increase the number and share of young farmers; promoting employment. Support under this measure is provided to young farmers aged under 40 at the time of application, who possess relevant professional skills and competences. A young farmer is considered as such when he/she first establishes a farm as a farm manager.

### Access to capital

## 3.10 Promotion of Entrepreneurship Culture

### Special events and activities

### Networks and partnerships

## 3.11 Current Debates and Reforms

The Ministry of Youth and Sports will work on the project "INCLUDE - Building Capacity for Inclusion in Bulgaria." The project will aim to develop policy instruments in the field of social inclusion of children and young people at risk, and in particular Roma people, through a series of targeted measures.

The pre-defined project will include developing a national quality standard for youth education and pilot training in four youth centres (international experts, at least two expert group meetings) and capacity building at four youth centres. This will help career guidance and entrepreneurial skills development among young people visiting the centres.

Debates are also being held on changes to the Youth Act and the creation of a new National Youth Strategy after the active one is completed in 2020, focusing on new measures to address the challenges of youth employment.



## 4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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As a member state of the European Union, Bulgaria is part of the common European efforts to create a working and modern vision for a social Europe, taking into account the challenges in the area of poverty and social exclusion. In the context of the European Semester and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the field of social inclusion and social protection, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) participates in different formats of meetings at European level as well as in the development and presentation of National Social Reports, questionnaires, positions and opinions on social inclusion. An essential aspect of social inclusion policy is to participate in the development and reporting of the National Reform Program and in the development of a national opinion on Specific Recommendations to Member States on Poverty Reduction and Promoting Social Inclusion within the European Semester.

### 4.1 General Context

#### Main challenges to social inclusion

By Resolution No. 466 of 21 August 2017 the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted an Action Plan for the period 2017-2018 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020. An Action Plan was subsequently adopted for the period 2017-2018 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) is also developing Strategic Plan by 2021, which states that within the period up to 2021 the vision for the development of the policy on social inclusion as a multisectoral policy will be directed towards taking focused and purposeful actions to achieve long-term priorities and goals for guaranteeing the rights of all children, ensuring equal access to quality social services and deinstitutionalization. An important element in this area remains the promotion of social inclusion and the reduction of poverty among vulnerable groups of population. The main strategic tasks will be to improve policy formulation, implementation and coordination in order to achieve national targets to improve the system of guaranteeing the rights of all children with a view to effectively supporting children and families; continuing the process of deinstitutionalization of childcare and implementation of the National Long-Term Care Strategy, as well as promoting social inclusion.

#### Definitions and concept

By Resolution No. 466 of 21 August 2017 the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted an Action Plan for the period 2017-2018 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020. An Action Plan was subsequently adopted for the period 2017-2018 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020.

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process of deinstitutionalization of childcare and implementation of the National Long-Term Care Strategy, as well as promoting social inclusion.

## 4.2 Administration and Governance

### Governance

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is a state institution which, based on the principles of the European social model with a focus on social solidarity, is called upon to create conditions for decent work, social realization and development, as well as adequate social protection for all Bulgarian citizens and for all citizens of another country located on the territory of Bulgaria.

The Minister of Labor and Social Policy manages, coordinates and controls the implementation of state policies on income and living standards, social security, unemployment protection and employment promotion, the labor market, labor migration and free movement of workers, safety and health at work, social investment, social protection, social inclusion, child and family support, demographic development, integration of people with disabilities, equal opportunities and antidiscrimination in accordance with the laws of the country and the Governing Program for the country adopted by the Government.

The activities are carried out independently or jointly with other state bodies and/or public organizations.

A National Council on Social Inclusion Issues was established at the Council of Ministers to carry out coordination, cooperation and consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the state policy in the field of social inclusion. Its main functions are to formulate proposals for drafting strategies, programs, action plans and other strategic documents, as well as delivering opinions on drafts of strategic documents in the field of social inclusion. The Chairman of the Council is the Minister of Labor and Social Policy, who manages its activity and represents the Council.

### Cross-sectoral cooperation

In the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020, which is a key strategic document defining directions for development of the the policy of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/> in the field of social inclusion for reduction of poverty and promotion of social inclusion, with the main focus being the integration of different sectoral policies.

## 4.3 Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Young People

### Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

It was adopted a National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020, which is oriented towards building and implementing a unified, consistent and sustainable policy in the field of social inclusion, based on the integrated approach and cross-sectoral cooperation at national, regional, municipal level. It identifies the vision, priority directions and activities for the development of the policy on poverty and social exclusion in Bulgaria by 2020.

The Action Plan for 2017-2018 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2020 and the Report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2015-2016 for the implementation of the Strategy were adopted by Decision No. 466 of the Council of Ministers of 21 August 2017.



## Scope and contents

A key document containing the vision, priority directions and activities for development of poverty and social exclusion policy in Bulgaria by 2020 is the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Policy adopted by the Council of Ministers on 06 February 2013.

The strategy is based on the National Goal of Reducing People at Risk of Poverty (by 260,000 people till 2020) and its four sub-targets focused on children, including young people under the age of 29, the unemployed persons, working poor and the elderly people.

On the basis of the outlined challenges that Bulgaria is facing in the area of poverty and social exclusion and in fulfilling the commitments made to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the key priorities of the Policy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion by 2020 are:

1. Ensuring employment opportunities and increasing labor income through active labor market inclusion;
2. Ensuring equal access to quality pre-school and school education;
3. Ensuring equal and effective access to quality healthcare;
4. Eliminating the institutional model of care and developing cross-sectoral services for social inclusion;
5. Ensuring sustainability and adequacy of social benefits;
6. Improving capacity and interaction in the fields of education, healthcare, employment and social services in the implementation of common objectives for social inclusion;
7. Providing an accessible environment - physical, institutional and informational and accessible transport;
8. Providing an accessible environment - physical, institutional and informational and accessible transport;
9. Working in partnership to overcome poverty and social exclusion and their consequences.

Social inclusion is also included in the National Youth Strategy 2010-2020 aimed at achieving the objectives and implementation of the measures for development of young people within the European Union, whose full member is the Republic of Bulgaria since 1 January 2007. It outlines nine key and important priorities for youth development. Social inclusion and measures are being developed under the fourth priority "Prevention of social exclusion of disadvantaged young people" as follows:

*Strategic objective:* Prevention of social exclusion of disadvantaged young people - young people in specialized institutions; young people with disabilities; young people leaving specialized institutions; young people suffering from different addictions; former prisoners and other groups at risk.

### Operational objectives:

- Operational objective: Integrating Youth Policy with the measures to protect children.
- Operational objective: Providing social services to young people with fewer opportunities.
- Operational objective: Limiting the transmission of social exclusion between generations.

### Expected results:

- Increasing the programs for targeted measures for social assistance and social services for young people aged 18 to 25 years of age in social risk under the Social Assistance Act.
- Developed community-based social services (including support, accompaniment, mentoring) suitable for young people aged 18-25 years of age at risk, especially for their integration with child protection measures.
- Orientation of social services for young people in specialized institutions towards preparation for their bringing out of institutions and integration into the community.
- Increasing the number of young people brought out from the specialized institutions and effectively integrated into the community.

As a first operational objective in the National Strategy for Children 2008 - 2018 is "Reducing child poverty and creating conditions for social inclusion of children". The Strategy is a policy document that defines the priority directions and actions for improving the well-being of the children in Bulgaria. The Strategy is adopted in implementation of Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Child Protection Act and is based on the basic principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations). The Strategy aims to provide conditions for the effective exercise of rights and improvement of the quality of life of children as a condition for their free and full personal development.

### **Responsible authority**

In the implementation of the current National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2020 are included all institutions and agencies involved. It is implemented through the development and implementation of biannual Action Plans, which will be adopted by the Council of Ministers and which will set out specific measures and activities, indicators for their implementation, responsible institutions, amount and sources of funding, deadlines, etc. For the reporting of the plans at the end of each two-year period, a report on their implementation is prepared, which is presented for discussion and adoption by the Council of Ministers.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy carries out overall coordination on the implementation of the Strategy as well as of the biannual Action Plans. At the same time, the implementation of the Policy on social inclusion is monitored by the National Council on Social Inclusion Issues at the Council of Ministers as a body for coordination, cooperation and consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the state policy in the field of social inclusion.

The Council of Ministers, through the adoption of the National Youth Strategy, sets out the national strategic objectives and priorities in the youth development policies of the Republic of Bulgaria for a period of ten years. In order to achieve the objectives of the National Youth Strategy, the Council of Ministers adopts the Annual Action Plan, through which the state youth policy is programmed and provided. The Council of Ministers shall submit to the National Assembly the respective annual reports in implementation of the national strategy.

### **Revisions/Updates**

The Ministry of Youth and Sports coordinates the development and implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2010-2020 and the corresponding Annual Action Plan; coordinates the preparation of the Annual Youth Report; develops draft legal acts related to youth policy; interacts with youth organizations in the implementation of National Youth Policy; interacts with other state and local authorities in the implementation of National Youth Policy; develops programs for youth activities; performs the functions of a

National Coordinating Body on the European Convention for the Promotion of the Transnational Long-Term Voluntary Service for Youth of the Council of Europe after the entry into force of the Convention for the Republic of Bulgaria.

At national level, the monitoring of child policies and the implementation of the National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018 is managed by the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection. The monitoring is carried out in relation to the objectives, measures and expected results of the Strategy, as well as on the rights of the child. The monitoring is carried out by the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection and through periodic (on every three years) reports from the line ministries and institutions, and reports of sociological surveys for evaluation of the Strategy. The mechanism also includes an analysis of integrated child rights inspections at local level.

## 4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People

### Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

- [National Program "With Care for Every Student"](#)

General objective: Improving the quality of the education process by providing additional training for pupils who have difficulty in achieving the expected learning outcomes and need a differentiated and/or individual approach.

- [National Program "Together for Every Child"](#)

General objective: Increasing the effectiveness in work of institutions for enrolling and retaining children and pupils in compulsory education at pre-school and school age and improving the access to pre-school and school education and its quality by creating and maintaining a favorable educational environment for stimulating sustainable educational development.

- [National Program "Creating an Affordable Architectural Environment and Security in School"](#)

General objective 2 Providing free access for disabled people and people with special educational needs to public service buildings designed for education by building an accessible architectural environment in accordance with the requirements of the Integration of People with Disabilities Act and Ordinance No. 4 of 01 July 2009 on the design, execution and maintenance of the constructions in accordance with the requirements for an accessible environment for the population, including for people with disabilities (Ordinance No. 4). Ensuring the lives, health and safety of students, teachers and staff in school buildings and adjacent areas and terrains.

- [National Program "Activation of Inactive Persons"](#)

Its main objective is to activate and include on the labor market inactive, including discouraged persons and young people up to 29 years of age (inclusive), who do not work, do not study and are not registered with the Labor Office Directorates and to the unemployed persons by means of individual and group application of attraction tools and services and motivating them to register with the Labor Office Directorates and encourage their inclusion in training, returning to the education system and/or employment. Motivation of unemployed persons of working age, subject to monthly social assistance, for work employment, by organizing their work under municipal programs for socially useful work.

- [Program "Career Start"](#) The main objective of the Program is to provide opportunities for acquiring length of employment service for unemployed young people up to 29 years of age who have completed secondary or university education in order to facilitate the transition between education and employment.
- [National Program "Assistants for People with Disabilities";](#)

- [Program for training and long-term employment of unemployed persons.](#)
- [National program for employment and training of people with permanent disabilities.](#)
- [Program for employment and training of refugees.](#)
- [Regulation on the Implementation of the Social Assistance Act.](#)

Social assistance aims to help citizens who, without the help of others, can not meet their basic life needs; strengthening and developing social solidarity in difficult life situations; support for the social inclusion of persons receiving social assistance and those who benefit from social services; support the employment of unemployed persons who meet the requirements for receiving monthly social benefits; promoting entrepreneurship in the social sphere by providing social services to individuals and legal entities.

- [Integration of People with Disabilities Act](#)
- [National Program for Child Protection 2017](#) - reducing child poverty and creating conditions for social inclusion of children; improving children's health; ensuring the child's right to life and development in a safe and secure environment; ensuring equal access to quality pre-school and school education, etc.
- [The National Program for the Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children](#) is in line with and fulfills the objectives of the National Strategy for the Child (2008-2018), adopted by a decision of the National Assembly of 31 January 2008. The Program sets the national policy framework in the field of violence against children through a mechanism for coordination and communication between state authorities, representatives of civil society and the non-governmental sector on the necessary measures to prevent violence in all its forms.
- [National Youth Program \(2016-2020\)](#)

The National Youth Program (2016-2020) is one of the tools to implement the priorities of national policy for young people. It is based on the reported needs of young people in the country and is in line with the priorities of European youth policy. The Program is in line with and fulfils the objectives of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) adopted by the Council of Ministers in October 2010. The National Coordinator of the Program is the Minister of Youth and Sports.

The strategic objectives of the Program are to support the following strategic objectives of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020):

- Facilitating the access to quality services for special support of the full personal and social development of young people in accordance with their needs and interests.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles among young people.
- Developing youth volunteering as a driving force for personal development, mobility, learning, competitiveness, social cohesion, intergenerational solidarity and the formation of civic self-awareness.
- Creating an attractive environment for the development of young people in small settlements and rural areas.
- Creating a favorable, encouraging and supportive environment for quality professional realization of young people in Bulgaria.
- [National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities](#) under Article 10a of the Gambling Act 2018.

In pursuance of these policies, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has developed a National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act 2018 as a tool for building socially responsible behavior in line with the principles of the Youth Act, the priorities of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) and the European Youth Policy.

The program was developed in response to observed negative trends in various forms of aggression, addictions and risk behavior among young people.

The main priority of the Program is to provide a supportive and encouraging environment for the personal, professional and social realization of the young people in the country by building socially responsible behavior and prevention of various forms of dependence

and/or aggression, thus improving the quality of life and the environment in which young people live and communicate.

The aim of the program is to create conditions for socially responsible behavior by promoting healthy lifestyles, preventing aggression and various forms of addiction among young people.

- [Program “Sport for Children at Risk 2018”](#)

The program was developed in accordance with the Physical Education and Sports Act, with the priorities, objectives and measures set out in section 19 "Youth and Sport" in the Governing Program of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2017 - 2021, and in particular with Objective 218, Measure 829 "Expanding the reach of children from kindergartens, pupils, students and children at risk participating in sports activities through the implementation of targeted programs". It is also in line with the goal and the main tasks of the National Strategy for Development of Physical Education and Sport in the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2022.

The main objective of the Program is to support the social integration, adaptation and full realization in the public life of children at risk by creating conditions and opportunities for their inclusion in free sports activities in order to improve their quality of life, their physical and mental fitness.

- [National Plan on the Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020](#)

The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria provides that every young person aged 15 to 24, years of age, included, will receive a decent job offer, continuing of education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of being out of work or leaving the formal education system. National Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020.

The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria provides that every young person aged 15 to 24, years of age, included, will receive a decent job offer, continuing of education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of being out of work or leaving the formal education system.

The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria will be implemented at stages. For young people registered with the Labor Offices, a job offer will be submitted by the end of the 4th month of their registration. Young people who do not work and do not study, and are not registered with the Labor Offices will be informed about the possible services they can use after registering with the Labor Offices within one month of receiving their individual data and address correspondence in the institution or organization that will activate them.

The National Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020 is updated by Council of Ministers' Decision No. 267 of 28 April 2014.

- [Program for the development of sport for people with disabilities for 2018](#)

The Program was developed in pursuance of the Concept for Encouraging the Development of Sport for All - a basic document for realization of one of the priorities in the activity of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and according to the requirements of the Law on Physical Education and Sport to Promote Sport for People with Disabilities. The aim of the Program is to create conditions and opportunities for supporting sports organizations and their activities for people with disabilities in order to overcome social exclusion, integration and their faster adaptation in society, with a focus on children and young people.

- [National Program for Prevention and Control of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2017-2020](#)

- [National Program for Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2017-2020](#)

- [National Program for the Prevention of Oral Diseases in Children from 0 to 18 years of age in the Republic of Bulgaria 2015-2020](#)
- [National Program for the Improvement of Maternal and Child Health 2014-2020](#)

## Funding

National programs are funded by the state budget.

## Quality assurance

The ministries responsible for the respective program carry out inspections, analyzes, prepare reports and statements based on direct relations and feedback between the persons and organizations concerned with the implementation of the programs, monitor and control the implementation of the financial, content and organizational part of the beneficiaries' projects with regard to the lawful and expedient use of the funds.

## 4.5 Initiatives Promoting Social Inclusion and Raising Awareness

### Intercultural awareness

The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria invests in raising intercultural awareness among the population. The Ministry of Youth and Sports, which implements the state policy on youth, implements various initiatives:

1. Celebrating the International Youth Day – 12 August;
2. Celebrating the International Volunteer Day - 5 December;
3. Involvement with various initiatives in the European Youth Week in conjunction with the Center for Human Resource Development;
4. Organizing the European Week of Sport #BeActive, which is part of a pan-European policy for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. National coordinator of the initiative for Bulgaria is the Ministry of Youth and Sports.
5. The "Support a Dream" initiative encourages the professional and personal realization of young people who leave specialized institutions for children. Support is in the form of specific activities and programs such as: counselling and informing about opportunities for personal and professional realization; training and qualification according to the interests of young people and the needs of the labor market; providing employment; cash donations and financial support for the annual prom of young people. Upon the availability of financial resources and with the consent of donors, one-off financial support is provided to young people admitted to students in the respective year.
6. "Bulgarian Christmas" is a charity initiative of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria. The mission and objectives of "Bulgarian Christmas" are to promote donation in the country, to help solve socially significant problems affecting the health of children and to help specific children for costly medical treatment and rehabilitation.
7. "Healthy and Safe Summer" is an event that takes place annually in June on the idea of the Council of Children at the State Agency for Child Protection.
8. National campaign on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child organized by the State Agency for Child Protection.
9. National campaign entitled "Life without violence for all children" of the State Agency for Child Protection.



## Young people's rights

The Youth Act states that the governmental policy on youth is a purposeful and consistent activity carried out by the state, municipalities, youth organizations and society, which aims to create favorable conditions for the full personal development of the youth and their participation in the social and economic life, as well as their inclusion in local, regional and national governance through activities encouraging young people's development in the country.

The main principles of governmental youth policy are:

1. legitimacy, transparency, equal treatment, purposefulness, systemic and coherent policies of the state, municipalities and society for the development of youth;
2. coordination of youth policies in the fields of education, social policy, healthcare, culture, sport, justice, home affairs and defense;
3. coordination of the governmental policy on youth with the policy for young people, implemented by and within the framework of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations;
4. integration of policies for children and youth;
5. ensuring dialogue and participation of young people in the development of youth policy;
6. freedom of youth association, freedom of youth initiatives, self-government of youth organizations;
7. decentralization of youth policies.

Governmental policy on youth is conducted by the Council of Ministers through the Minister of Youth and Sports in accordance with the National Youth Strategy.

When implementing the governmental youth policy, the Minister of Youth and Sports is assisted by the National Youth Advisory Council.

A Public Council on Youth is established at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, where after conducting a procedure representatives of youth organizations are selected.

Pursuant to Article 44, paragraph (1) of the Youth Act the Ministry of Youth and Sports establishes and maintains a National Youth Information System (NYIS) in order to provide up-to-date information on the needs of youth in the country as well as for the planning, monitoring, management and evaluation of policies for youth at national, regional and municipal level.

[National Youth Information System](#) contains:

1. data about the youth organizations in the country;
2. a list of nationally represented youth organizations;
3. surveys on the condition of youth, analyzes and assessments on the implementation of youth policies at national, regional and municipal level;
4. national and European documents related to the implementation of youth policy;
5. up-to-date information on funding opportunities for youth activities.

The National Youth Information System is publicly accessible through the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The adoption of the Child Protection Act and the establishment of the State Agency for Child Protection aims to guarantee and protect the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and states the commitment of the state to provide appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the implementation of their responsibility for raising children and ensure the establishment of institutions and services in the field of

childcare. A National Council for Child Protection is established at the State Agency for Child Protection, which has consultative and coordination functions.

A National Council for Child Protection has been set up, which carries out its activities in accordance with the provisions of the Child Protection Act and the Rules on the Structure, Organization and Activities of the National Council for Child Protection. It is, by its nature, a mechanism for coordinating the governmental policy on children. It enables state institutions and non-governmental organizations providing social services for children to engage in dialogue and to coordinate their efforts to increase the well-being of children in Bulgaria.

### **Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation which lead to violent extremism**

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is actively involved in initiatives to promote the messages "No to violence, no to hate, no to aggression" and initiatives to prevent the radicalization of young people.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has developed a National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act 2018, which aims to create conditions for socially responsible behavior by promoting healthy lifestyle, preventing aggression and various forms of addiction among young people. The direct target group of the Program is young people between 15 and 29 years of age. Indirect participants in the activities may be representatives of local and national structures and institutions, the civil sector and other stakeholders.

A number of non-governmental organizations are developing projects on national and European youth programs that address the issue for aggression and radicalization of young people.

## **4.6 Access to Quality Services**

### **Housing**

Within the framework of the policy on social inclusion, a number of programs and measures are being implemented which are aimed at improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable groups in society, children and young people. Young people in vulnerable situations are much more in need of support linked both to their transition to independent living and to the opportunities for realization and full participation in society. Young people who, due to health, age, social, and other reasons beyond their control, can not satisfy their basic vital needs, can also benefit from the provision of social benefits.

Community social services aimed at supporting young people in vulnerable situations are: Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration, Center for Public Support, Day Care Center for Children and Seniors with Disabilities, Social Education and Professional Center, Family-Type Housing Center, Observed Home, Transitional Home, Protected Home and Temporary Housing Center.

In some of the services, such as the Observed Home, support and counseling is provided to persons aged 18 and over who leave the care system and are about to lead an independent way of life, as well as to prevent their placement in a specialized institution.



## Social services

### Social Assistance Act

Objectives of social assistance:

- helping citizens, including young people, who, without the help of others, can not meet their basic life needs;
- strengthening and developing social solidarity in difficult life situations;
- support for the social inclusion of persons receiving social assistance and those who benefit from social services;
- supporting the employment of unemployed persons who meet the requirements for receiving monthly social benefits;
- promoting entrepreneurship in the social sphere by providing social services to individuals and legal entities.

Implementation of social assistance:

1. Providing cash and/or in kind benefits to satisfy citizens' basic vital needs when this is impossible for them through their labor and their possessions:
  - under the procedure of the Regulations for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act - monthly, targeted and one-off benefits;
  - under the procedure of Ordinance No. РД 07-5/2008 - targeted benefits for heating according to heating type;
  - through the [Social Protection Fund](#) – one-off benefits.
2. Provision of social services.

Characteristics of assisted persons:

The right to social assistance shall be granted to Bulgarian citizens, families and cohabitants who, due to their health, age, social and other reasons beyond their control, can not themselves or through their own income or the income received from property owned or with the help of the persons under Art. 140 of the Family Code, support them and guarantee meeting their basic vital needs.

The right to social assistance shall be also granted to foreign nationals possessing a long-term or permanent residence permit in the Republic of Bulgaria, foreign nationals who have been granted a refugee, refugee status or humanitarian status, and foreign nationals enjoying temporary protection, and the persons for whom this protection is granted is provided for in an international treaty to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party.

The system of social assistance is built on the principle of the subjective will, i.e. the explicit statement of the person in critical condition for search of assistance, on the basis of which the whole procedure for verification, evaluation and decision-making for each particular case is commenced.

Social services are activities in support of persons for social inclusion and independent living, which are based on social work and are provided in the community and in specialized institutions.

The types of social services in the community and specialized institutions are defined in the [Regulations for the Implementation of the Social Assistance Act](#)

If necessary and in accordance with the needs of the population of each municipality, other types of social services may be initiated. Social assistance is adaptable to the changes occurring in the economic environment and provides a quick response in terms of adequate social protection, depending on the country's financial capabilities at that time.

## Health care

Young people up to 29 years of age, if they attend a school or a higher educational institution and are registered as full-time students, can benefit from state health insurance.

The vision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for the development of the policy on integration of people with disabilities in recent years is closely related to the implementation of an integrated approach to policy management. The policy on integration of people with disabilities is related to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the need that people with disabilities are ensured with full enjoyment of the rights without any discrimination. This policy applies a personally oriented approach based on human rights, aimed at ensuring the integration and full participation of people with disabilities in public life.

## Financial services

Funding of social assistance shall be financed by:

1. the state budget;
2. municipal budgets;
3. national and international programs;
4. donations from local and foreign natural persons and legal entities;
5. funds from the Social Protection Fund;
6. other sources.

## Quality assurance

Quality is ensured through support, monitoring and control of funds and activities.

## 4.7 Youth Work to Foster Social Inclusion

### Policy/legal framework

- THE YOUTH ACT, Article 18, paragraph (1) states that the state and the municipalities encourage and support the implementation of youth activities and services, which are expressed in:

1. information and advisory services in support of the personal, public and career development of young people;
2. activities aimed at supporting young people for their successful work and life realization;
3. activities for the organization of leisure time;
4. Encouraging non-formal learning to broaden the knowledge, experience and skills of young people for their inclusion to the values of civil society, science, culture, arts, entrepreneurship, healthy lifestyles, sports, road safety and the prevention of anti-social manifestations of young people;
5. activities to support youth volunteering.

In youth activities are applied an individual approach and an assessment of the specific needs of young people and the characteristics of young people.

- **NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY 2010 – 2020**

The strategy aims at creating favorable conditions for school and university education, non-formal learning, professional, social and personal realization of young people, their participation in social and economic life, their inclusion in local, regional and national management, as well as the return to Bulgaria of young people studying abroad will contribute to improving the demographic situation and is a significant factor not only in overcoming the crisis but also in raising the quality of life and at achieving the goals of the European Union. In an open and frank dialogue with young people, the state must take care of the development of competent and enterprising young people and direct them towards active public life.

The National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) is oriented to young people aged 15-29 years of age, in line with international and European standards for youth work.

- **CHILD PROTECTION ACT**
- **National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018**

### **Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups**

- [National Program for Child Protection 2017](#)
  - [National Program for the Prevention of Violence and Child Abuse](#)
1. [National Youth Program \(2016-2020\) for 2018](#)
  2. [Program for Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act 2018](#)
  3. [National Program "Activation of Inactive Persons"](#)
  4. [Program "Career Start"](#)
  5. [National Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020](#)
  6. ["Program for the Development of Sport for All" for 2018](#)
  7. [Program "Development of the Students' Sport"](#)
  8. [Program of Measures for Protection of Children with Proven Gifts from State and Municipal Schools in 2018](#)
  9. [National programs in 2018 of the Ministry of Education and Science](#)

### **Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people**

The main representatives of youth work in the field of social inclusion of young people are associations and foundations having youth activities as their scope of business.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in compliance with the Youth Act, has set up a National Youth Information System in which were registered as youth organizations these organizations that meet the requirements of the Youth Act. In order to expand the non-governmental sector database in the country, non-youth organizations have been additionally registered, but with their main subject of activities covering the work with and for young people. But the Ministry does not have accurate information on how many of them work primarily on the social inclusion of young people. Most of them work on projects targeting young people at risk and disadvantaged young people.

Under the National Program for Activation of Inactive Persons, which has as main objective the activation and inclusion of the inactive persons on the labor market, including discouraged persons and young people up to 29 years of age who do not work, do not study and are not registered with the Labor Office Directorates, and unemployed persons by means of individual and group application of attraction tools and services, and motivating them to register with the Labor Office Directorates and encouraging their inclusion in training, return to the educational system and/or employment.

In fulfilling the commitments under the National Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee for identifying young people who do not work, do not study and are not

registered with the Labor Office Directorates, for reaching and activating them to work or to study/to educate themselves, young people with higher education are appointed in municipal administrations. Young people are appointed in municipal administrations at the position of Junior Specialist, Youth Mediator.

Youth mediators act as intermediaries between inactive youths, subject to the Program and the institutions that provide appropriate social, health, educational and other services that effectively complement the mediation services provided by the Labour Offices Directorates.

In order to promote the active behavior on the labor market of the inactive persons, including discouraged persons, Roma mediators are also appointed, whose task is to shorten/terminate the period of unemployment of people without work and to direct them towards realization in the labor market by motivating them to look for work and to work, to study, including to be educated, to register with the Labor Offices. To achieve these goals, the Roma mediator works in neighborhoods with population of a predominantly Roma ethnic background.

### **Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes**

In the Master program "Youth Activities and Sports" at the National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski" are studied modules addressing the socio-pedagogical and psychological aspects of the youth groups, the management of youth activities, European policies and programs in the field of youth and sport, and project development and management, cooperation between public administration and non-governmental organizations, etc.

Internships are being organized in various state and educational institutions for youth activities and sport, where students share experience and learn skills in a real work environment.

Program graduates can work as civil servants, to hold different management and expert positions in public administration, public service organizations, non-governmental business and non-profit organizations, national and international organizations, and others, to be heads, experts, consultants and trainers under projects in youth management, physical education and sports.

As of 2008/2009 academic year, at the Faculty of Pedagogy with the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" a new specialty was opened in the Bachelor's degree program called Non-formal education. It aims to prepare staff with university degree for the needs of the intensely developing field of complementary and alternative educational services for children and adults provided by specialized state, private and non-governmental organizations outside the official (formal) educational system (schools, colleges, universities, etc.) providing educational degree.

### **Financial support**

Funding under the national programs is provided from the state budget of the Republic of Bulgaria. European projects are respectively funded under EU programs.

### **Quality assurance**

For the Master's Degree program in YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SPORT and for the new specialty in the Bachelor's degree program - Non-formal education, the quality assurance is implemented according to the special regulations and control bodies in the field of higher education.

In order to ensure the quality of implementation of national programs and European projects, enhanced monitoring is applied for rigorous observance of the implementation of the planned activities and the spending of the allocated financial resources.

## **4.8 Current Debates and Reforms**

1. Adoption of 4 new acts by the end of 2018:

- Social Services Act;
- People with Disabilities Act;
- Personal Assistance Act;
- Enterprises of Social and Solidarity Economy Act.

2. In 2019:

- Developing a new Youth Strategy in 2019;
- Establishing National Standards for Youth Work and Youth Workers in 2019.

## 5. PARTICIPATION

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The participation of the Bulgarian young people in democratic life at a local and regional level is a priority of the Government Program 2021 and takes place with the active collaboration with local and national authorities. Municipal youth councils and Children's Parliaments have been established in many of the Municipalities on the territory of the country as subsidiary and consultative bodies to the local authorities in the field of youth policy. Thus the opinions of the young people are considered with encouragement of the general climate of public dialogue, critical thinking and active contribution by using the instruments, means and capacities provided by the representative democracy and the democracy of the participation at all public levels.

### 5.1 General context

#### Main concepts

The youth representation in the country is determined by the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020). In Bulgaria the implementation and monitoring of the interests of young people in the formation, fulfilment and evaluation of the public policies may be structured via youth councils. Youth organizations support the development and interests of young people in different fields: education, culture, sports, ecology, healthcare, labour and social policy, informal training, leisure time and development of the local communities, through: ¾ participation in the formation, implementation and evaluation of youth policy, intercession campaigns; the international youth communication; collaboration with municipal and government bodies and administration. Upon ensuring representation, publicity and reporting as regards the activity of youth councils.

#### Institutions of representative democracy

Bulgaria is a uniform parliamentary republic with local self-government and with distinct distribution of powers: legislative, executive, and judicial. The country is ruled by virtue of the supreme law – the Constitution adopted in 1991, and the laws of the country, and political life is based on the principle of political pluralism.

Government institutions representing democracy

- [President of the Republic](#)
- [National](#) Assembly
- [Council](#) of Ministers

#### Judicial power:

- [Supreme Administrative Court](#)
- [Supreme Court of Cassation](#)
- [Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria](#)
- [Constitutional Court](#)

#### President

The President is the head of the State who embodies the unity of the nation and represents the Republic of Bulgaria in the international relations. The presidential activity is supported by the Vice President. The President is elected directly by the nation for a term of 5 years with the right to one reelection.

The President is the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Chairman of the Consultative Council on National Security. Even though not having legislative power or initiative, the President has the right to refer a Bill back to the Parliament for reconsideration by exercising the presidential right to veto. The President has the power

to address the nation, to promulgate laws in the State Gazette, to award and revoke Bulgarian citizenship, to exercise the prerogative of pardon, etc.

### **Constitutional Court**

The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria (CC) was established in 1991 by the Constitution of Bulgaria. The Court gives interpretations of the Constitution, rules anticonstitutional cases, resolves disputes connected with the competence of authorities, etc.

### **Executive Power**

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the main body of the executive power of the Republic of Bulgaria. It is composed of a Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and members – resource ministers.

The Council of Ministers heads and implements the domestic and foreign policy of the country, ensures the public order and national security, manages the state administration via the ministries, agencies and commissions established by it.

### **Legislative Power**

National Assembly of Bulgaria

The Bulgarian single-chamber Parliament called National Assembly implements the legislative power in the country and exercises parliamentary control. The National Assembly consists of 240 Members of Parliament elected for a term of 4 years. The vote is for lists of candidates from parties or coalitions for each of the 31<sup>st</sup> multi-mandate election regions. In order to a political party or coalition to be represented in the National Assembly, it should win at least 4% of the votes. The National Assembly is responsible for the passing of laws, approval of the government budget, the establishment of taxes and their amount, the setting of presidential elections, the election and recall of the Prime Minister and the other members of the Council of Ministers, declaration of war, disposition of troops outside Bulgaria, and the ratification of international treaties and agreements.[5]

### **Judicial System**

The judicial power protects the rights and legal interests of citizens and of the State. The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) of Bulgaria consists of 25 members elected for a term of 5 years and forming a plenum, through which they exercise their powers. Their sessions are chaired by the Minister of Justice.

The justice in Bulgaria is put into practice by the following:

- Supreme Court of Cassation
- Supreme Administrative Court
- Regional courts
- District courts
- Appellate courts
- Military courts – military-district and military-appellate courts
- specialized courts

According to the Constitution the judicial power also includes the Prosecutor's Office and the National Investigation Office.

### **Local self-government and administration**

Main article: Administrative division of Bulgaria

In order to have efficient management of the country, the State makes administrative and territorial division by determining the borders of the so-called administrative and



territorial units. From a historical point of view, this division has undergone multiple changes.

Bulgaria has a two-level administrative division – municipalities and regions.

Since 1999 the Republic of Bulgaria has been divided into 28 regions from an administrative point of view, namely: Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Vratsa, Gabrovo, Dobrich, Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Lovech, Montana, Pazardzhik, Pernik, Pleven, Plovdiv, Razgrad, Russe, Silistra, Sliven, Smolyan, Sofia-City Region, Sofia Region, Stara Zagora, Targovishte, Haskovo, Shumen, and Yambol. All of the above are named after their regional center, as the capital itself forms a separate region. Before this - from 1987 until 1999, the country was divided into 9 regions. As at 2018 Bulgaria has 265 municipalities.

A municipal council is a body of the local self-government within the Municipality, as it is elected by the population of the respective municipality for a term of 4 years. The regional government is implemented by a regional governor supported by regional administration.

## 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

### Young people as voters

The Bulgarian legislation gives the right to vote at elections upon attaining one's majority (18 years). Citizen activity is one of the set indicators and is connected with the positions of young people as regards positivism/pessimism, political activity of young people, the extent, to which young people inform themselves about topical political events, as well as the attitude of young people towards topical political events.

Despite the increased levels of lack of interest as regards political life, the research shows that nearly 46% of young Bulgarians vote always or frequently. The fact that makes an impression are the higher declarative levels of participation of girls in the process of voting in contrast to boys. Data show that young people possessing a higher level of education show higher levels of engagement in the process of exercising one's right to vote.

### Young people as political representatives

The study on the youth activity in the country reports a low level of engagement of the young Bulgarians in such a type of activity – 1% is members of a political party; 2% are members of an association, a non-governmental organization (NGO) or another type of organization; 2% are members of a professional association; 4% have taken part in international exchanges, meetings and initiatives; 5% have taken part in projects under international programs; 4% have taken part in a debate club; 2% have been a part of a youth council at the Municipality/region; 8% have taken part in school or university councils; 1% - in a youth/children's parliament.

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

### Youth parliament

Bulgarian young people take part in the democratic life at a local and regional level through active collaboration with the local and national authorities. In some municipalities on the territory of the country there are municipal youth councils and Children's Parliaments established, as these are subsidiary and consultative bodies to the local authorities in the field of youth policy. Thus opinions are considered as expressed by young people, the general climate of public dialogue is encouraged, the critical thinking



and the active contribution, by using the tools, means and opportunities provided by the representative democracy and the democracy of the participation at all public levels.

A great part of the municipalities in Bulgaria exert efforts for engaging more and more young people in the Public life of the respective town or village. The young people themselves need to take an active part in the process of decision making when connected with their problems, to take a direct part in the determination of the youth policies by places. The fact that most of the work takes places among school students is a good precondition for the formation of active civil conduct, but is not a sufficient condition for attracting young people to the process of decision making. Obviously, it is necessary to work towards the joining of young people after finishing school in order to them to be able to find their place in the process of local self-government, and to actively take part in the process of formation of youth policies.

The information campaign implemented by Human Resources Development Centers (HRDC) has resulted to an increase of more than 12% of the number of submitted project proposals under Key activity 2 “Strategic Partnerships”, Sector “Youth” of the “Erasmus +” Programme. There has been a significant increase – about 60%, of the number of youth workers included in the implementation of projects.

The end of 2017 was marked with the completion of the activities under the Program BG06 “Children and Young People at Risk” of the Ministry of Education and Science. The four youth centers built under the Program in the towns of Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, Dobrich, and Vratsa develop an active participation in the field of services for young people, informal trainings, leisure activities, clubs by interests and international activities – exchange of experience and good practices. The National Network of Youth Centers established under the Program BG06 “Children and Young People at Risk” continues to realize synchronized activities of youth centers, trainings and exchange of experience, youth academies, etc. The project activities of all four centers have attracted 9000 young people and included them into different initiatives, of whom over 2000 young people have passed various informal thematic trainings. (“Youth Academy”, “My Rights”, “Leadership”, etc.).

## **Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards**

**National Public Council for youth issues to the Minister of Youth and Sports, as its functions include as follows:**

To discuss and make proposals under draft enactments of the Minister of Youth and Sports upon determination of policies and the policies implemented by him/her;

2. To discuss and make proposals under projects of strategic and program documents, as well as plans, statements and reports regarding the implementation of the youth policy in the country;

3. To propose specific initiatives in the field of the policy for young people in the country;

4. To consult the execution of the actions undertaken by the Minister of Youth and Sports, as well as to discuss the achieved results and to propose measures for the optimization of the realized actions.

5. To make recommendations to the Minister of Youth and Sports upon settlement of issues connected with specific problems in the field of the youth;

6. To coordinate the interaction between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and representatives of the non-government sector upon the development and application of youth policies.

The Council consists of representatives of organizations registered under the Non-profit Legal Entities Act for the execution of a public benefit activity and aimed at the execution of youth activities. In order for organizations to become members of the Council, it is necessary that they correspond to at least three of the following conditions:

1. Experience in the realization of initiatives and projects in the field of youth activities, which should be proven by them by providing information, treaties or other documents for realized activities, initiatives and projects in the respective field;
2. Expertise in the development of normative, strategic and other documents in the field of children's and youth policies, which should be proven by presenting orders or other documents for participation in working groups of bodies at a national and local level;
3. Expertise in the field of preparation of studies, analyses, prognoses and evaluations in the field of young people. It should be proven by presenting materials from studies performed by them, materials from analyses, scientific articles, etc.;
4. Experience in the field of informal education and youth work. It should be proven by presenting diplomas and certificates of members of the organization's team, materials from held trainings, photo material, etc.;
5. Experience in the field of the youth voluntary work. It should be proven by presenting information about held campaigns, actions, initiatives in the field of voluntary work.

Each organization that corresponds to the conditions and wishes to become a member of the Public Council should send its nomination letter to the Minister of Youth and Sports. Nomination letters should contain information about one nominated representative of the organization and one deputy (three names, position in the organization and contact information – e-mail, telephone number) and should be accompanied by the following:

1. Evidence of the presence of experience and expertise of the nominating organization in compliance with the requirements above;
2. Current Articles of Association of the organization;
3. Decision by the management body of the organization for the nomination of the given representative and his/her deputy.
4. CVs of the nominated representative and his/her deputy.

The Public Council shall also include youth organizations represented at a national level, by virtue of the Youth Act, as well as the National Representation of Student Councils (NRSC) as a national student organization established pursuant to the Higher Education Act.

The Youth Act stipulates a youth organization represented at a national level as a youth organization, which has members of not less than 900 natural persons and carries out its activity on the territory of not less than 30 percent of the Municipalities in the country.

The youth organizations, which conform to these requirements, should be entered into a list of the youth organizations represented at a national level. The list of the nationally represented youth organizations is published on the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS). The entry of youth organizations into the List of the organizations represented at a national level shall be at their request.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports holds a procedure for entry of youth organization represented at a national level. The youth organizations wishing to be entered into the List of nationally represented youth organizations should submit a written application form to the MoYS approved by an order of the Minister of Youth and Sports. ) The respective youth organization shall be entered into the List of the organizations represented at a national level for a term of three years.

The MoYS is a partner of the [National Youth Forum](#), which organizes a number of youth organizations and is a member of the [European Youth Forum](#).

## Higher education student union(s)

[National Representation of Student Councils \(NRSC\)](#) is the biggest union of student youth with a purpose to be a representative functionality of all over 235 thousand students

studying in the country. The main priorities of the founders upon the formation of this large-scale forum are the common grounds for common ideologies upon the formation of national student and youth policies. Union/s of school education

## 5.4 Young People's Participation in Policy-Making

### Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

#### PUBLIC COUNCIL OF YOUTH MATTERS

The Public Council on Youth Matters with the Minister of Youth and Sports is headed by the relevant Deputy Minister and consists of representatives of organizations registered under the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act for the purpose of carrying out activities in the public interest and aiming at the implementation of youth activities. Currently, twenty-seven organizations are included in the Council. The Public Council operates under strictly defined rules.

#### Actors

The Council with its current structure started operations in 2017. The Public Council is an advisory body to the Minister of Youth and Sports to form positions, opinions, problem-solving initiatives from the special competency of the Minister of Youth and Sports, as defined in the Youth Act, observing the principles of publicity and transparency.

## 5.5 National Strategy to Increase Youth Participation

### Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

There is no National strategy in Bulgarian to increase youth participation in the political and social life in the public. A great part of the Bulgarian municipalities exert efforts to engage more and more young people in the public life of the respective town. Young people themselves need to take an active part in the decision-making process when it comes to decisions connected with their problems, to take a direct part in the definition of youth policies by places. The fact that most of the work is among school-age children is a good precondition for the formation of active civic engagement, but is yet insufficient for the attraction of young people in the decision-making process. Obviously, it is necessary to work towards the engagement of young people after school age in order to them to find their place in the process of local self-government and to take an active part in the process of formation of youth policies.

Despite the fact that there is NO National strategy to increase youth participation in the political and social public life, as the respective mechanisms have been set in the National Youth Strategy.

#### Contents and scope

The contents and scope of the [National Youth Strategy](#) are given in Chapter 1.

#### Bodies responsible for the application of the Strategy

The body responsible for the application of the Youth Strategy is the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

#### Revisions and novelties

There is forthcoming preparation of a new Youth Strategy after the expiry of the period of validity of the current one (2010-2020).

## 5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations

### Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

The role of youth organizations in the Youth Strategy states as follows:

Youth organizations ensure youth participation and representation upon formulation and implementation of youth policies. Youth organizations work in close collaboration with the central, regional and local bodies. Chapter Four of the [Youth Act](#) determines the organizations that may be entered into the Register of National Youth [Information System](#) of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The budget for these national programs is EUR 1,5 million.

### Public financial support

The development of the youth organizations is encouraged and supported through national, regional, municipal, European and international programs and projects. The financing by the Ministry of Youth and Sports is mostly through the two national programs of the Ministry via project proposals under the National program for implementation of youth activities and the National Youth Program (NPIYA and NYP).

## 5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

### Policy Framework

In Bulgaria formal training is subject to the Education and Science Act and the Ministry of Education and Science is the body responsible for the application of this law. Training takes place at three main stages – elementary, primary, and secondary, as the primary stage is mandatory. Education is free, as there are options to receive formal education at private educational institutions.

### Formal learning

The net coefficient of enrolment for primary education is 90.8%, primary education and secondary education – 82.6%. Vocational education after secondary education – 0,1%, colleges – 1.7%, and universities and specialized institutions of higher education – 40,4%. Net coefficients of enrolment of the population in the educational system by age groups: 15-18 years – 82.8%, and after 19-23 years – 44%.

As compared to preceding years, less and less children in villages complete secondary education. The difference in the access to education in towns and villages is more and more distinct. After the last population count in 2011 for the first time the National Statistical Institute reported an indicator of “have never gone to school”, the level of which was 1.2% of the population over 7 years old – or approximately 81 thousand people who have been to school.

The different conditions for education among children are a precondition for problems connected with their subsequent realization.

The students with completed secondary education in 2017 at high schools of general education and vocational high schools were respectively 26.6 thousand and 21.7 thousand students.

The students enrolled at the different stages of higher education in the academic year of 2017/2018 are 236.3 thousand. As at 31.12.2017 there are 6 564 persons, of whom 529

foreign citizens undergoing training in Bulgaria for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of “doctor”.

Vocational education and training in the academic year of 2017/2018 takes place at 22 art schools, 24 sports schools, 359 vocational high schools and 29 vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education. The total number of their students is 142.0 thousand students. Vocational education is predominated by boys, who are 60.2% of the total number of students from this educational degree. In 2017 secondary education at the art schools, sports schools and vocational high schools was completed by 21.7 thousand people.

A level of professional qualification under the respective programs has been acquired by the following number of students:

413 students from vocational classes have acquired the first level of professional qualification.

- In 2017 the second and third levels of professional qualification were acquired by 2.9 thousand students and 13.2 thousand students, respectively.
- 691 students acquired the four level of professional qualification at vocational colleges with admission after completed secondary education. 1 011 students acquired the first level of professional qualification at vocational schools and classes with admission after the VI, VII, and VIII classes;
- In 2017 the second and third levels of professional qualification were acquired by 2.9 thousand students and 13.1 thousand students, respectively.

## **5.8 Raising political awareness among young people**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

In October 2017 the Regional Bureau at the International Organisation of La Francophonie's (IOF's) in Bucharest, together with the MoYS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized in Bulgaria the Second Youth Forum for South-East Europe for preventing radicalisation of youth on the topic of “Issues from the Public Youth Policies and preventing radicalisation and violent extremism of youth”. The forum took place in the context of the initiative by the Secretary General of La Francophonie entitled “Free Together” and in connection with the Resolution for prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of Government Heads of the IOF's States and calling the States towards certain actions and educational initiatives directed towards youth. It was attended by young people from Albania, Armenia, the Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, etc., chosen based on the topics for reports and round tables proposed by them. A document was drawn up with a set of proposals for counteraction to radicalisation (Livret de résolutions) intended for the Secretary General of La Francophonie. In 2017 a Bulgarian delegate also took part in the European meeting in Ljubljana for the preparation of delegates for UNESCO Youth Forum, which took place in October 2017 just before the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNESCO General Conference. Decisions were taken at this meeting for the building of UNESCO European Youth Network for the purpose of implementation of direct communication with UNESCO and the existing regional youth organizations operating in its field, as well as with the National Commissions for UNESCO at the European member states, as well as for the inclusion of representatives of young people in the national delegations for general conferences of the organization.

### **Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people**

In 2017 the institutions in the country implemented activities in support of the encouragement and support for the familiarization with the separate ethnic communities and their cultures. The Ministry of Culture provides financial support to artistic projects of

organizations of ethnic communities, as well as of other cultural institutions working in the field of international dialogue. In 2017 the following events were subject to support: the “Shofar” Annual Tolerance Awards of the “Shalom” Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria (OJB), organization and holding of an official concert and activities on the occasion of celebration of the Roma New Year “Vasilica”, the celebration of April 8 – the International Roma Day, at “Sredets” Gallery of the Ministry of Culture, the National Ethnic Festival with international participation in the town of Vidin, the Regional Carnival “Zlatnoto Magare” – Municipality of Dulovo, the National Festival of Ethnic Groups “Bulgaria For All” – Varna, and many others.

The Ministry of Culture has supported the printing of the “EtnoDialog” Magazine, which is an issue of the Association “Public Council of Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria”. The total financial support for the year of 2018 is to the amount of BGN 29 960, as a part of the funds is for the development of amateur art.

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The information campaign of the Center for development of human resources among young people aged 15-29 years resulted in an increase by over 6% of the number of submitted draft proposals under Key activity 1 “Educational Mobility” for the mobility of young people and youth workers. In 2017 the activities under the Program were more accessible: 142 young people more as compared to the preceding year took part in the projects approved and financed under the “Erasmus+” Program.

## **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

In Bulgaria many departments work towards transparent and youth public communication. An example of this is the [Ministry of Environment and Water \(MoEW\)](#). The campaigns and educational initiatives held by the MoEW and its divisions in 2017 covered more than 30 000 students and students of over 20 universities and 650 schools in the country. There is an expressed tendency towards an increase of the number of participants. There is an increased interest by local communities and groups, which initiate their own events and seek for partnership for their implementation in the person of the regional divisions of the MoEW. There is also innovation seen in the initiatives themselves, as the search here is for actual effect and sustainability. These initiatives help to a great extent for the establishment of more attractive and favorable environment at school, for the increase of students' interest in the collective school life



and development of teamwork, thus contributing to the purpose, to increasing the number of people falling out of the educational system.

## 5.9 E-participation

In 2016 the reported data showed that 87% of young people in Bulgaria could work with a computer, 86% of young people used the Internet on a daily basis, and 41% used it for access to social networks.

Under the title of “I Will Not Be Hacked” the [State e-Government Agency](#) organizes a number of online and event initiatives, both local and author’s, with the support of other government institutions and NGOs. In 2018, within the 6-month period of the campaign and the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, lessons took place for primary and secondary schools, educational materials and business workshops.

Friends of the Campaign – the [Ministry of Education and Science](#); the Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications, the Ministry for the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU; [the General Directorate Combating Organized Crime](#); [CoderDojo Bulgaria](#), [Digital National Coalition](#); the State Agency for National Security.

## 5.10 Current debates and reforms

There is a forthcoming public discussion of the new National Youth Strategy. This is necessary because the National Youth Strategy is active till 2020 (2010-2020) . These forthcoming discussions stipulate taking into consideration the needs and desires of the interested parties upon building the new National Youth Strategy.



## **6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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### **6.1 General context**

**Main trends in young people's participation in education and training**

**Organisation of the education and training system**

**Main concepts**

### **6.2 Administration and governance**

**Cross-sectoral cooperation**

**Governance**

### **6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)**

**National strategy**

**Formal education: main policy measures on ELET**

**Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

**Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

### **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

**Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

**Information and guidance**

**Quality assurance**

## **6.5 Cross-border learning mobility**

### **Policy framework**

#### **Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education**

#### **Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work**

#### **Quality assurance**

## **6.6 Social inclusion through education and training**

### **Educational support**

### **Social cohesion and equal opportunities**

## **6.7 Skills for innovation**

### **Innovation in formal education**

### **Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

## **6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media**

### **National strategy**

### **Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

### **Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal**

### **Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media**

## **6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

### **Awareness raising initiatives**

## **6.10 Current debates and reforms**

## **7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

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### **7.1 General context**

#### **Main trends in the health conditions of young people**

Main concepts

### **7.2 Administration and governance**

Governance

Cross-sectoral cooperation

### **7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

#### **National strategy(ies)**

**Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

**Physical education in schools**

**Collaboration and partnerships**

### **7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition**

#### **National strategy(ies)**

**Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people**

**Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

**Peer-to-peer education approaches**

**Collaboration and partnerships**

**Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people**

### **7.5 Mental health**

National strategy(ies)

Improving the mental health of young people

### **7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks**

## **Policy framework**

### **Stakeholders**

### **Guidance to stakeholders**

### **Target groups**

### **Funding**

## **7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly**

## **7.8 Current debates and reforms**

## **8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE**

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### **8.1 General context**

**Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation**

**Main concepts**

### **8.2 Administration and governance**

**Governance**

**Cross-sectoral cooperation**

### **8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people**

**Existence of a national strategy**

**Scope and contents**

**Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

**Revisions/updates**

### **8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation**

**Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture**

**Disseminating information on cultural opportunities**

**Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people**

### **8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences**

**Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training**

**Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields**

**Providing quality access to creative environments**

### **8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture**

**Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities**

**Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors**

## **8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies**

**New technologies in support of creativity and innovation**

**Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

## **8.8 Synergies and partnerships**

**Synergies between public policies and programmes**

**Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers**

## **8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture**

**Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities**

**Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities**

## **8.10 Current debates and reforms**

## **9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD**

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### **9.1 General context**

Main concepts

Youth interest in global issues

### **9.2 Administration and governance**

Governance

Cross-sectoral cooperation

### **9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues**

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

### **9.4 Raising awareness about global issues**

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

Information providers

Key initiatives

### **9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption**

Green volunteering

Green production and consumption

### **9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation**

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

Development cooperation activities

### **9.7 Current debates and reforms**



## GLOSSARY

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The Employment Agency (EA)

Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Youth Policies Directorate within the Ministry of Youth and Sports

Council of Ministers (CoM)

National Assembly (NA)

National Youth Information System (NYIS)

National Alliance for Volunteer Action /NAWA/

National Association of the Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB)

European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

National Statistical Institute (NSI)

National Revenue Agency (NRA)

National Social Security Institute (NSSI)

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)

Ministry of Economy (MoE)

Labor Office Directorates (LOD)

State Agricultural Fund (SAF)

National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MoAFF)

National Representation of Student Councils (NRSC)

Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW)

Youth and Sport Act

National Youth Strategy

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