



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Bulgaria

2019

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>

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Bulgaria

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

Bulgaria is a democratic republic and the country is part of the Europe Union since January 1st 2007. The youth policy in the democratic state of Bulgaria is a horizontal policy. The special feature about how the policy is dealt in the country is the Ministry of youth and sports in Bulgaria. The youth policy is featured in different strategic documents. 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".

- THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS

The main responsible institution for the implementation and development of youth policies is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which is responsible for the following:

- coordinates the establishment and implementation of the National Youth Strategy and the corresponding План за изпълнение на националната стратегия за младежта (2010-2020) за 2018-2019 г. (Annual Action Plan);
- coordinates the preparation of the Годишен доклад за младежта Annual Youth Report;
- develops draft legislation regulations related to youth policy;
- interacts with youth organizations in the implementation of the national youth policy;
- interacts with other governmental and local authorities in the implementation of the national youth policy;
- develops programs for youth activities;
- performs the functions of a National Coordinating Body under the European Convention for the Promotion of the Council of Europe's Long-Term Transnational Voluntary Service for Youth, after the entry into force of the Convention for Republic of Bulgaria;
- assists the Minister in planning and implementing the national youth policy;
- coordinates with other departments in the development of strategic, program, regulatory and other related documents in the field of the national youth policy;
- participates in the harmonization of the national legislation with the acts of the European Union related to its functional competence;
- prepares assignments for sociological and statistical surveys;
- collects, processes and analyzes information on the activities of young people in the country, provides and coordinates information exchange with youth organizations and other non-profit organizations working with and for the young people in the country as well as with the regional administrations and municipalities in the implementation of youth policies;
- organizes and coordinates activities in pursuit of youth policies of the European Union, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission;
- maintains contacts and cooperates with the government authorities and non-governmental organizations in other countries, as well as with international organizations and institutions, whose activity is related to the implementation of policies for youth activities;

- proposes and participates in the elaboration and updating and is responsible for the application of the regulatory acts and of the individual and general administrative acts related to its functional competence;
- organizes, coordinates, controls, and implements the management of youth activities financing tools from the state budget through the Ministry and from European and international financial sources;
- develops projects of national programs for youth activities, carries out and coordinates their implementation;
- performs contracts with the European Commission and other international organizations;
- participates in the development of the program budget format and of the medium-term budget estimate of the Ministry and the budget report under the programs in the field of its functional competence;
- organizes seminars, trainings, forums and other events related to management of youth activities, organizes and performs the celebration of international youth events and holidays;
- participates in the process of developing national and operational programs and other European and international programs in the youth area;
exercises control on the targeted spending of funds designated for youth activities in national and international youth programs through the monitoring on the implementation of youth activities projects;
- organizes and ensures the activity of advisory and public authorities for youth to the Minister of Youth and Sports;
- organizes and is responsible for the promotion of up-to-date youth information through the National Youth Information System.

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.

Anti-social events

Definition is provided for only in the Youth Act. The term is not defined elsewhere. Anti-social events are dealt with in another act, and namely the Combating Anti-Social Acts of Minors and Juveniles Act is an act of the Ministry of Interior and regulates the activity of preventing and combating anti-social acts of minors and juveniles and ensuring the proper development and education of their perpetrators.

Juveniles in Bulgaria are persons under 18 years of age and minors are aged 8 to 14 years and are subject to this act when they have committed anti-social offenses.

1.2 National Youth Law

Existence of a National Youth Law

In Bulgaria, there are national laws that are part of different ministries. One of the laws that are under the responsibility of the Ministry of youth and sport is the national youth act. [Закон за младежта](#) [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.

The youth act which is relevant now was lastly adopted on 2.08.2013. There is not a specific time frame for the national law.

Scope and contents

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 target group of the strategy is the population between the age of 15 and the age 29 with no specific group within the youth population. The designed and active Youth strategy was developed in 2010 with the consultation of young people and their representatives by the public authorities. The top-level authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the national Youth Strategy is the Ministry of youth and sports. (MYS) The ministry primarily responsible for youth in regard to the National youth strategy is also MYS and has major role in the implementation of the strategy. The national Youth Strategy is integrated in the overall national development policy.

Scope and contents

The National Youth Strategy (Национална стратегия за младежта)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 is for the period (2010-2020). The National Youth Strategy was 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 active version expires in the end of 2020. As in the end of 2019 is too early for concrete major changes that will be indicated in the renewed period.

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

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

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

The Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sports is the responsible authority for implementing the National Youth Strategy. The main goal is to implement an effective national youth policy that stimulates the sense of initiative in young people and youth organisations for their own development and fulfilment in social life.

Revisions/updates

A key working method in the Ministry is to involve young people and their representatives in the processes of youth policy development and implementation. To implement youth policies in Bulgaria the Ministry works on the basis of the 2012 Youth Act and the 2010-2020 National Youth Strategy. With the current strategy coming to an end, the Ministry is currently drawing up a new Strategy for the period 2020-2030. It uses innovative methods focused on the direct involvement of young people in the process, engaging them in a dialogue in order to identify together the most relevant priorities and objectives of the draft document.

1.4 Youth Policy Decision-Making

Structure of Decision-making

In the implementation of the youth development policies in Bulgaria a multisector approach is applied. Youth policy cannot make progress without the successful cooperation with other sectors. In turn, youth policies can contribute to delivering results in areas such as education, employment, overcoming social exclusion, providing equal opportunities for professional and personal fulfillment, and enhancing the health status of the population.

Municipal councils and mayors of municipalities cooperate with the local structures of central governmental authorities according to the Youth Law, as there is not a legal framework such as working group on the matter.

Main Themes

The main themes of the youth policy are described by the nine aspects of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020). They are: Economic activity and career Development; Improving the access to information and quality services; Promoting healthy lifestyle; Social exclusion; Volunteering; Participation; Rural development; Intercultural dialogue;

Crime prevention. Every policy theme is worked on accordingly to the responsible authorities.

The National Agency for Youth

There is no National Agency for youth, The Ministry of Youth and sports has a whole department dedicated to Youth Policies. The Youth Policies Directorate within the Ministry ([дирекция "Младежки политики" в Министерство на младежта и спорта](#)) of Youth and Sports is responsible for the implementation of the national youth policy and youth programs.

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. In 2019 new 12 organizations were added to the Council members to the previous 27. Their involvement in the decision making process is consultative. They are able to discuss topics of importance to them and to actively participate in debates regarding the process of policy making.

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.

Policy monitoring and evaluation

According to its [Governing Program \(2017-2021\)](#), the Bulgarian government requires report in the end of every year. The report should state the tasks that were accomplished in the previous year by the Ministry in charge for every topic. In the case of youth policies the evaluation and the monitoring of the Youth Policy priorities is declared to the Council of Ministers by the Ministry of youth and sports. The Council of Ministers collects the reports and do the evaluation and the monitoring of the implementation of every policy, including youth policies.

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

There is not an inter-ministerial working group but the youth policy is developed and implemented according to a cross-sectoral approach between ministries through top high level body. The formalized role of coordinating the development of the national youth strategy and of ensuring a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy there is the [National Youth Advisory Council](#).

When implementing the governmental youth policy, the Minister of Youth and Sports is assisted by the [National Youth Advisory Council](#). The National Youth Advisory Council 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 National Youth Advisory 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.

1.6 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.

[Дирекция „Младежки политики“ 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.

There is a specific budget for youth policy, at the top-level of policy-making in the youth field. It is part of the public budget of the Ministry of youth and sports. The recipients of public funding are responsible for the use of the public fund to the MYS after implementing their projects and after submitting final report of the projects which were funded.

What is funded?

[National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act](#) (Национална програма за изпълнение на младежки дейности по чл. 10а от Закона за хазарта

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) per year, 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 \(2016-2020\) Национална програма за младежта \(2016-2020\)](#)

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 is for 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. European policies and the presidency of Bulgaria of the Council of the EU

Financial accountability

[The National Audit Office](#) continues the budgetary control traditions of the Supreme Chamber of Control, which was established by law in 1880 and was operating until 1947.

Art. 91 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria says as follows:

- (1) The National Assembly shall establish a National Audit Office to supervise the implementation of the budget.
- (2) The organization, authority and procedures by which the National Audit Office shall act shall be established by law. It is the public body to control the spending of public funds. In this number the funds for youth programs.

Use of EU Funds

The main resource of EU funds dedicated to youth policy is the program is Erasmus+. For 20 years, the [Human Resource Development Centre \(HRDC\)](#) has been recognized as a successful national structure for managing European educational programmes. Since 1999, the HRDC is actively involved in the management and implementation of European educational programmes and initiatives.

Other EU funds used for youth policy is the [Operational Programme "Human Resources Development"](#) managed by the the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), In 2019 the project " Developing and implementing quality standards for youth work have been started by the Ministry of youth and sports. In the end of 2019 only the first phase of implementation is completed. In it a special research on the needs of the youth in Bulgaria have been developed together with a research of good practices in the field of countries in the EU and beyond.

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 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 trilogue format with the EP on behalf of the EU Council. Two formal trilogues 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

The acting National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) expires in 2020. The consultations for the New National Youth strategy post 2021 has begun in late 2018. At present (the end of

2019) the management of the Ministry holds meetings with young people and NGOs in various cities and regions of the country. These meetings are aimed at discussing challenges as identified by young people themselves and at seeking possible solutions. So far 12 field consultations with young people and youth organisations have been held in the following cities: Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Sandanski, Stara Zagora, Sliven, and Kardzhali. About 2200 young people at the age of 15-29 years have taken part in the consultations.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports plans a closing conference to be held in Sofia when the first official draft document will be presented. The closing conference will be an opportunity for the participants in the meetings across the country to meet and discuss with young people from the rest of the country, representatives of all national institutions responsible for the creation and implementation of policies targeted at young people in Bulgaria, the business and NGOs.

Good practices at European and international level serve as an inspiration for the new National Youth Strategy. The EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) is the actual starting point for the work of the dedicated team at the Ministry. Observations show that many of the priorities suggested by young people in Bulgaria coincide with the priorities set out in the EU Youth Strategy.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Volunteering in Bulgaria is not officially managed by a public authority. There are no official regulatory and statutory documents to regulate it.

2.1 General context

Historical developments

The history of volunteering is based on the traditional feeling of community (19th 20th Century). After 1944 (heavy state and ideological regulation under the communist regime), volunteering was associated with physical and strenuous work and political propaganda.¹ Despite the long tradition of solidarity and help, the somewhat negative image of volunteering in Bulgaria still prevailed at the beginning of the democratic reforms in the 1990s. The state of volunteering was additionally aggravated by the sharp political changes and difficult socio-economic conditions in the country. The transition to democracy simultaneously brought about the dynamic development of Bulgarian civil society and the third sector. Despite the existing prejudices, volunteering is a strong feature of the third sector. Volunteering has become popular among young people who are willing to contribute to the social and economic development of the country. Significant efforts by various stakeholders have been made to enhance the third sector and to promote volunteering in Bulgaria. In 2000 non-profit organisations initiated a variety of activities, particularly for children and young people, thus raising public awareness about the voluntary sector and positioning a better image of it in the minds of the Bulgarian people. The connection between democratic participation, active citizenship and volunteering is slowly strengthening. Nowadays, voluntary activities are growing in the fields of environment and culture. In addition, non-profit organisations have increasingly become providers of social services. ([EU Report on EU volunteering in Bulgaria](#))

Main concepts

Traditionally, the term volunteering in Bulgaria refers to any provision of work and services without concern of financial gain. Accordingly, a volunteer is any person who provides such free and gratuitous labour. In the country's legal system, however, there is no legal definition of either volunteering, or provision of work and services without concern of financial gain. Consequently, the status of volunteers as well as their rights and duties is not set in law or formally recognised.

2.2 Administration and Governance of Youth Volunteering

Governance

There is no institution in Bulgaria dedicated to volunteering administration and management only. As part of the [National Youth Program \(2016-2020\)](#) (Национална програма за младежта (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.

[Проект на Закон за доброволчеството](#) (Draft Lawson Volunteering) was developed years ago but as in the end of 2019 it is not adopted and acting.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

There is no official mechanism for cross-sectoral cooperation dedicated to youth volunteering. In Bulgaria there is 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 .

2.3 National Strategy on Youth Volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

There is no separate law regulating volunteering only. Draft laws have been made over the years, some of them reaching the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Scope and contents

Presently, there is no National Volunteering Strategy in the country. Youth volunteering is regulated by the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) (Национална стратегия за младежта (2010-2020) as YOUTH VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPMENT and it aims to:

- 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 more volunteering opportunities for young people, especially for cross-border mobility by making greater use of the EC Youth in Action Program.

The strategy has created two tasks for the implementation of this strategic goal. The strategy is in active for the period 2010-2020. 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.

Responsible authority

The body responsible for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy is the [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#), the local government departments and municipalities

Revisions/updates

(see Chapter 1.9 Current Debates and reforms)

2.4 Youth Volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is no youth program dedicated to volunteering only. There are no clearly identified target groups to address youth volunteering. "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 National management program, but so far no such system has been introduced.

Although there is no standalone program, there are projects within the National Youth Program (2016-2020), In 2018 the activities of "[National Youth Initiatives and Campaign](#)" (Национални младежки инициативи и кампании), subject "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteer Initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020), were finalized and the number shows that 8 projects were developed under the Sub program "Youth Volunteering and participation in volunteer initiatives. Allover 112 activities were

held with the participation of 6 901 young people in the age group 15-29. As in the end of 2019 the programs are still on their reporting phase there is still no data available for that period in December 2019. As the government has not commissioned any systematic research, there is an observed lack of data on volunteering in Bulgaria.

Funding

No public financing is provided in Bulgaria for the implementation only of volunteer activities. Through the state budget already mentioned is financed [a Sub-program "National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns"](#), subject "Youth volunteering and participation in volunteer initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020). In 2019 the amount dedicated to the whole program is 800,400 BGN. EU funds are not used to finance the national program.

General characteristics of young volunteers

The official statistic on level of participation of young people in volunteering is part of the According to the [Национален доклад за младежта 2018 г.](#) (стр.69-70), National youth report 2018 (p.69-70). According to this report, the trends are showing that 62% of young people have positive attitude towards volunteering.

In the study, 44% of the respondents have been involved in voluntary activities as 13% have been involved in voluntary work. According to the study made for the report, women are more likely to be active in volunteer services. From the group of young people who have been part of volunteer activities people with higher level of education are more. Most of the volunteer actions have been in Bulgaria.

The information on youth participation in volunteering does not reflect the objectives for specific target groups' participation as set in legislation yet as in early 2020. The main fields where volunteer interest is are social activities 38%; volunteering during natural disasters -38% and 38% are part in projects for environmental protection.

Available support to young volunteers

There is not official top-level policy measures to support young volunteers are established in the reporting country, to mitigate the indirect expenses participants might incur in such as transportation, material, meals. However on occasions of volunteer activities with the participation of public authorities the expenses are covered by the organizers. But there is not an act or other official policy document to define the support for volunteers.

Mechanisms of quality assurance

Although there is no standalone program, there are projects within the National Youth Program (2016-2020), In 2018 the activities of "National Youth Initiatives and Campaign" ([Национални младежки инициативи и кампании](#)), subject "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteer Initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020). The projects aim to establish good knowledge of volunteering, exchanges of good practices and popularizing volunteering opportunities. The main mechanisms in place to monitor and ensure the quality of these projects are part of the work of the Ministry of youth and sports responsible for this national programme and are according to the rules of the [programme](#).

There are not criteria/indicators/standards used to assess the quality of programmes and schemes of youth volunteering as the national programmes is not for volunteering itself but for good practices in volunteering and popularizing it. There is not a quality assurance mechanism established on top authority level to ensure high quality youth volunteering.

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

There are no other top-level public authorities and bodies responsible for disseminating information on volunteering opportunities for young people and information providers rather than the Programs funded by the Ministry of youth and sports dedicated to volunteering (see 2.4 Funding).

There are not State-funded national and regional volunteer centres or agencies that support networks of volunteering organizations, assist with young volunteers' placement and promote volunteering opportunities on public level.

One of the main objectives of National Association for Volunteering Activities (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

Key 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 during the year 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. There is no specific target group in the youth population that is addressed. In 2018 the concrete results are 39 volunteering campaigns with the participation of 5 502 young people, 56 educations in the field of volunteering with 1063 young people involved in them; 17 campaigns and initiatives towards popularisation of youth volunteering with 336 participants; 14 efficient methods developed towards the work with young volunteers with the involvement of 336 participants in this process.

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](#). This is mainly on the National Youth Day (12 August) when there is annual festival organized by the Ministry of youth and sports during which NGOs and The National Agency for Erasmus+ are promoting volunteering and are presenting different volunteer opportunities.

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

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 is expected to be held together with the Ministry of youth and sports. In addition to that the overall youth policies are under development in 2019.

A key working method in the Ministry is to involve young people and their representatives in the processes of youth policy development and implementation. To implement youth policies in Bulgaria the Ministry works on the basis of the 2012 Youth Act and the 2010-2020 National Youth Strategy. With the current strategy coming to an end, the Ministry is currently drawing up a new Strategy for the period 2020-2030. It uses innovative methods focused on the direct involvement of young people in the process, engaging them in a dialogue in order to identify together the most relevant priorities and objectives of the draft document.

At present the management of the Ministry holds meetings with young people and NGOs in various cities and regions of the country. These meetings are aimed at discussing challenges as identified by young people themselves and at seeking possible solutions. So far 12 field consultations with young people and youth organisations have been held in the following cities: Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Sandanski, Stara Zagora, Sliven, and Kardzhali. About 2200 young people at the age of 15-29 years have taken part in the consultations.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports plans a closing conference to be held in Sofia when the first official draft document will be presented. The closing conference will be an opportunity for the participants in the meetings across the country to meet and discuss with young people from the rest of the country, representatives of all national institutions responsible

for the creation and implementation of policies targeted at young people in Bulgaria, the business and NGOs.

Good practices at European and international level serve as an inspiration for the new National Youth Strategy. The EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) is the actual starting point for the work of the dedicated team at the Ministry. Observations show that many of the priorities suggested by young people in Bulgaria coincide with the priorities set out in the EU Youth Strategy.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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

Labour market situation in the country

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](#) in the National report on youth shows that the 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.

Main concepts

[The national youth guarantee](#) [Национална гаранция за младежта](#) 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. 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.

It is noticeable that 10% of people between the ages of 25-29 have started a business venture and then have given up. 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. 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.

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 (Национална класификация на професиите и длъжностите). Among the key commitments are the following: - to carry out an information campaign on the objectives and essence of the National Youth Guarantee (Младежка гаранция) in the context of the European Youth Guarantee; distribution of materials, brochures, information through the media, Internet pages, social networks.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

[Employment Agency \(EA\)](#) (Агенция по заетостта). 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.

3.3 Skills Forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

[The model for forecasting the supply and demand for labour in Bulgaria](#) -- technical details, is implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The forecasting model has been developed on a modular basis.

The forecast horizon is medium-term (2014-2018) and long-term (2019-2028).

Forecast scope:

Medium-term employment forecasts by: 4 levels of education, 35 economic activities, 120 groups of professions.

Long-term forecasts by: 4 levels of education, 18 economic activities, 9 classes of professions.

Sources of information - [NSI](#) (Национален статистически институт), [NRA](#) (Национална агенция за приходите), [NSSI](#) (Национален социално-осигурителен институт), [EA](#) (Агенция по заетостта) and [Eurostat](#).

3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

[The National Portal for Career Guidance](#) was created under [the](#) 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](#))

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria, nearly 100 000 young people under 25 years of age have started work during the 2015-2019. 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 [Youth 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.

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy MLSP - through the Employment Agency (Агенцията по заетостта)

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 and can be:

- Professional guidance;
- 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

There is not a regulatory framework whereby the responsibilities of each party involved (providers and participants) are clearly formulated and enforceable and official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships are not available in the country. On top level the Council of Ministers organises traineeships in the public sector.

The Program for summer student internships in the state administration (Портал за студентски стажове в държавната администрация) 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

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria, nearly 100 000 young people under 25 years of age have started work during the 2015-2019. 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 [Youth 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.

- Contributions to youth employment have the following:
- [National Program "Activation of inactive persons"](#)
- [Program for training and employment of long-term unemployed persons](#) (Програма за обучение и заетост на продължително безработни лица).
- 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 Program Активизиране на неактивните лица ([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 disadvantages 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 employment to employment are made for those who want dynamic career development.

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.

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 of 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 disadvantages 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 employment 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

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) manages the Operational Program for Human Resources Development in Bulgaria and, as an executive agency, assigns projects on the topic [„Encouragement of Entrepreneurship“](#) (Насърчаване на предприемачеството).

Access to capital

This project is funding new enterprises. The whole amount of the grant is 67 227 768.06 BGN. The minimum amount of funding is 50 000 BGN. The maximum amount for funding is 200 000 BGN. The maximum amount of the money dedicated only from this grant to the new projects is 80% of the whole investment.

3.10 Promotion of Entrepreneurship Culture

Special events and activities

Networks and partnerships

Investors, educational programs and entrepreneurship-supporting organizations – [Fund of Funds](#), [Endeavour](#), [Eleven](#), [Start It Smart](#), [EDIT.BG](#) – offer different opportunities for beginners and advanced entrepreneurs.

- Endeavor offers a best-in-class seal of approval, **an unrivaled personal and professional network**, frictionless co-investment capital, and peer-to-peer idea exchange in a truly global setting.
- EDIT stands for Economic Development via Innovation and Technology and was initiated in 2016 by the MOVE.BG Foundation in partnership with a broad coalition of startup ecosystem stakeholders in Bulgaria. EDIT was created to address the needs of the micro, small and startup businesses in the information technology industry forming the fastest growing and most innovative economic sector of Bulgaria. EDIT conducts the annual national survey measuring economic data of Bulgaria’s top digital and innovative businesses. EDITs program includes variety of activities such as online trainings, topical researches, reports, policy recommendation papers, conferences, and field work across the country in support of the innovative economy in Bulgaria.
- Start it smart has four main steps that young entrepreneurs can take to start a business:
 1. The business trainings The program includes over 40 business trainings on topics like business development, technologies, innovations, entrepreneurship, fundraising and much more;
 2. The mentorship sessions - The program gives the unique opportunity to meet our mentors’ network consisting of very experienced entrepreneurs, business people and specialists in their industries;
 3. The co-working space - free access to a unique working environment for you and your team for the whole program. And the additional benefits & perks from the partners of the program - The huge network of partners, mentors and friend organizations we give added value to the teams in the form of different products and services on the value of over € 50 000.

3.11 Current Debates and Reforms

A key working method in the Ministry is to involve young people and their representatives in the processes of youth policy development and implementation. To implement youth policies in Bulgaria the Ministry works on the basis of the 2012 Youth Act and the 2010-2020 National Youth Strategy. With the current strategy coming to an end, the Ministry is currently drawing up a new Strategy for the period 2020-2030. It uses innovative methods focused on the direct involvement of young people in the process, engaging them in a dialogue in order to identify together the most relevant priorities and objectives of the draft document.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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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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

The Council of Ministers on 06 February 2013 adopted the [Национална стратегия за намаляване на бедността и насърчаване на социалното включване 2020 г.](#) (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.

Scope and contents

The strategy is based on the [National Goal of Reducing People at Risk of Poverty](#) (by 260 000 people till 2020) as mentioned on page 15 of the strategic document 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 Strategy 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;

Social inclusion is also included in the [Национална стратегия за младежта 2010-2020](#) (National Youth Strategy 2010-2020). It outlines nine key priorities for youth development. Social inclusion and measures are being developed under the fourth priority of the same strategy "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.

The youth age group in Bulgaria is 15-29. The young people under 18 are under the scope of the Национална стратегия за детето (National Strategy for Children) [Закон за защита на детето](#) (Child Protection Act). 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.

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.

4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People

Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

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 "Creating an Affordable Architectural Environment and Security in School"
- 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.

- [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.
- [National Youth Program \(2016-2020\)](#)

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.

Creating a favorable, encouraging and supportive environment for quality professional realization of young people in Bulgaria.

- [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. 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.

- [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.

Funding

National programs are funded by the state budget.

Quality assurance

The main mechanisms in place to monitor and ensure the quality of the programmes implemented is an obligation of the [The National Audit Office](#). It is the public body to control the spending of public funds. In this number the funds for vulnerable young people described above.

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

A campaign entitled "[Sofia – City of Tolerance and Wisdom](#)" was launched in the Bulgarian capital on September 11 2018 with the signing of a manifesto committing the signatories to combat intolerance and hate speech. The campaign was initiated by Sofia municipality and the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" in partnership with the Sofia Development Association and NGOs, and is intended as a long-term project to unite institutions and civic organisations in opposition to hate speech and negative discrimination.

Young people's rights

UNICEF Bulgaria works on the issues of adolescences and young people. Adolescence is defined as the period of life spanning between the ages 10-19. Which undercover with the youth age in Bulgaria 15-29 in the age group 15-19. In September 2017, Unicef Bulgaria have organized [Национална конференция за юношеството - възрастта на възможностите](#) (National Conference for the adolescent- the age of the possibilities). It included specialists in different areas and representatives of top level authorities such as The Ministry of youth and sports and The Ministry of education and science. UNICEF also organizes Human Rights campaign and initiatives for the young people in this age group.

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

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

Закона за младежта [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:

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;

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. [Национален план за изпълнение на Европейската гаранция за младежта 2014-2020](#) (National Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020)
4. [Програма за развитие на спорта за всички](#) (Program for the Development of Sport for All" for 2018)
5. [Програма „Развитие на студения спорт](#) (Program "Development of the Students' Sport")
6. [Програма на мерките за закрила на деца с изявени дарби от държавни и общински училища през 2018 г.](#) (Program of Measures for Protection of Children with Proven Gifts from State and Municipal Schools in 2018)
7. [Национални програма през 2018 г. на Министерство на образованието и науката](#) (National programs in 2018 of the Ministry of Education and Science)

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

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in compliance with the Youth Act, has set up a [Национална информационна система за младежта](#) (National Youth Information System) in which were registered as youth organizations these organizations that meet the requirements of the Youth Act. 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.

[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 Labour 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

There are not legal possibilities offered to youth workers to validate professional qualifications at universities, higher education institutions and training institutions. There is not established Youth-work foundation or Institute of Youth work funded by the country's public authorities.

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.

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 [Неформално образование](#) 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

The main mechanisms in place to monitor and ensure the quality of the implementation of these programmes are done by the high level authorities implementing them and the National authorities for National audit for the financial part.

4.8 Current Debates and Reforms

In the end of 2019 the [Национална стратегия за намаляване на бедността и насърчаване на социалното включване 2020 г.](#) (National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2020), is still active. However the last year of its functioning is close enough for the new one to be on the way.

The drafting of the renew National Youth Strategy post 2021 has already begun. At present (the end of 2019) the management of the Ministry holds meetings with young people and NGOs in various cities and regions of the country. These meetings are aimed at discussing challenges as identified by young people themselves and at seeking possible solutions. So far 12 field consultations with young people and youth organisations have been held in the following cities: Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Sandanski, Stara Zagora, Sliven, and Kardzhali. About 2200 young people at the age of 15-29 years have taken part in the consultations.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports plans a closing conference to be held in Sofia when the first official draft document will be presented. The closing conference will be an opportunity for the participants in the meetings across the country to meet and discuss with young people from the rest of the country, representatives of all national institutions responsible for the creation and implementation of policies targeted at young people in Bulgaria, the business and NGOs.

5. PARTICIPATION

The participation of the Bulgarian young people in democratic life at national, local and regional level is a priority of the [Governing Program \(2017-2021\)](#), 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 of [the National Youth Strategy](#). In Bulgaria the implementation and monitoring of the interests of young people in the formation, fulfillment 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. The voting is not compulsory.

Government institutions representing democracy

- Президент на Република България [President of the Republic](#)
- Народно събрание [National Assembly](#)
- Министерски съвет [Council of Ministers](#)

Judicial power:

- Върховен Административен съд [Supreme Administrative Court](#)
- Върховен Касационен съд [Supreme Court of Cassation](#)
- Прокуратура на Република България [Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria](#)
- Конституционен съд [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.

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 unconstitutional 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, minister for different sectors.

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 31st multi-mandate election regions. Only political parties with at least 4% of the votes can be presented in the National Assembly.. 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.

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

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. As at 2019 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 ([The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria](#)) gives the right to vote at elections upon attaining one's majority (18 years) in all elections and referendums. There are not imminent plans to lower the voting age limit, or if the age limit has been lowered recently or any special provisions for young people in the electoral law or rules. Despite the increased levels of lack of interest as regards political life, the research used in the [Годишен доклад за младежта за 2017](#) (Annual Report on youth 2017) shows that nearly 46% of young Bulgarians vote always or frequently. As their no specific devotion in the type of elections they participate in. 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 age limit for standing as a candidate, for the assembly is 18 years old. For president of the republic is 40 years of age. There is not any quota of seats reserved for young people and there is not an existing provisions aiming at facilitating young people standing as political candidates; the average age of the members of the representative assembly in the current term is 47 years old.

The assembly has 240 representative, 5 of them are in the age group 25-29 years old. They represent different political parties. There are not any functions within the representative assembly reserved for young people.

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% are 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

Youth parliament does exist in the country but every structure is responsible for its own developing. There is nothing universal on national level.-There is no legal framework

establishing the youth parliament and no national legally synchronized national rules for the composition, their role or their funding. The existing Youth Parliaments in the country differ in their structure, rules and funding on local level.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

[National Public Council for youth issues to the Minister of Youth and Sports](#), [Обществен Съвет по въпросите на младежта](#) 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;

- 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;
- To propose specific initiatives in the field of the policy for young people in the country;
- 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.
- To make recommendations to the Minister of Youth and Sports upon settlement of issues connected with specific problems in the field of the youth;
- 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 [ЗАКОН ЗА ЮРИДИЧЕСКИТЕ ЛИЦА С НЕСТОПАНСКА ЦЕЛ](#) the Non-profit Legal Entities Act for the execution of a public benefit activity and aimed at the execution of youth activities.

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.

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.

5.4 Young People's Participation in Policy-Making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

Actors

The [National Public Council for youth issues to the Minister of Youth and Sports](#), [Обществен Съвет по въпросите на младежта](#) 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. In 2019 12 more were included. This is the full list of participants:

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 [National Youth Strategy](#) 2010-2020 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 Закон за младежта [Youth Act](#) determines the organizations that may be entered into the Register of National Youth (Национална информационна система за младежта) [Information System](#) of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The budget for these national programs is EUR 1,5 million.

Public financial support

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

There is no specific national strategy to be implemented in the field of learning how to participate. The legal framework is Regulation of the Ministry of education and science. НАРЕДБА № 13 от 21 септември 2016 г. за гражданското, здравното, екологичното и интеркултурното образование (Ordinance 13 from 21 September 2016 for civil, health, ecological and intercultural education. It determines educational standards for these topics.

Formal learning

As in the school year 2019/2020 there is no mandatory school subject for Democracy or Civil rights in the public schools. There is existing [Проект на учебна програма по Гражданско образование](#) project of a curriculum for Civil rights class for the students from 12th and 12th grade of the public school system.

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

1. [National Youth Report, 2017](#)) **Годишен доклад за младежта 2017.**

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

- ["Шофар" от еврейската организация "Шалом"](#) "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

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

In Bulgaria many departments work towards transparent and youth public communication. An example of this is the Министерство на околната среда и водите ([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.

5.9 E-participation

There are no national legal frameworks, programmes, projects or initiatives aiming to promote young people's e-participation. There are not available National data or studies treating the relationship between e-participation and youth political engagement.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

The new National Youth Strategy post 2021 will be active after 2020. This is necessary because of the no longer effective National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) which won't be affective after 2020. The discussions are ongoing trough 2019 in different cities in the country. The interested parties involved are youth representatives, youth NGOs, unorganized youth, and representatives of public administration. In the end of 2019 official proposal of the new strategy is still not available.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 General context

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

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria sets forth the right of each Bulgarian citizen to education; it secures the compulsory education until the age of 16 and the gratuitous primary and lower secondary education in the municipal and state schools. Bulgaria was one of the first countries in the EU which, apart from recognizing the existence of the problem with early school leaving, has developed special policies for reducing the share of the early school leavers and plans to achieve reduction of this share to 11% as of the year 2020.

The modernisation of the education and training system continues while quality, labour market relevance and inclusiveness remain challenging. Demographic trends and rising skill shortages suggest that Bulgaria needs to invest better in the skills of its current and future workforce. The need to upskill and reskill the adult population is high while participation in adult learning is low. The status of the teaching profession is low, and the teacher workforce is ageing. Salaries are being increased as a means to boost the attractiveness of the profession. Steps have been taken to increase the labour market relevance of vocational education and training (VET).

Organisation of the education and training system

Pre-school education

Pre-school (pre-primary) education in Bulgaria comprises children from the age of 3 to age of 6 or 7. Two years of pre-primary education are compulsory.

The main objective of pre-school education in Bulgaria is to prepare children for the school environment at a later stage and provide them with the skills and values needed for that environment. Compulsory preparation of children for school two years before they enroll in first grade of primary school is organized in preparatory groups at kindergartens or classes at school, free of charge.

School education

School education in Bulgaria begins at the age of 7. Six year olds may also enter school, if their physical and mental development allows for it and after their parents'/guardians' explicit consent.

School education is divided into primary and secondary, general or vocational.

Upper secondary general education

Upper secondary general education is provided at non-specialized schools (3 or 4 courses of study) and at profiled (specialized) schools (4 or 5 years of study). Pupils may enter profiled (specialized) schools and vocational upper secondary schools upon completion of VII or VIII grade and taking entrance examinations, which correspond to the specialization of the respective school (Bulgarian language and Literature, Mathematics, Humanities, etc.) or be admitted on the basis of submitted documents according to the requirements of Ordinance No. 11 of March 28, 2005 on Admission of Pupils in Public and Municipal Schools. Restrictions based on race, nationality, gender, ethnic and social origin, religion and social status are unlawful.

Higher education

The Bulgarian system of higher education is autonomous. According to the Higher Education Act, higher schools enjoy academic autonomy which includes academic freedoms, academic self-government and inviolability of the territory of the higher schools.

Higher schools perform their overall activities in adherence to the principle of academic autonomy and in compliance with Bulgarian laws. The system of higher education offers academic training after completion of secondary level. Higher education comprises the following levels:

Bachelor's degree which requires:

- at least 180 credits with a minimum length of studies of three years - "professional bachelor in...";
- at least 240 credits with a minimum length of studies of four years - "bachelor".

The training for the bachelor's degree in accordance with the curriculum shall provide comprehensive training or specialised professional training in professional areas and specialties.

Master's degree which requires:

- at least 300 credits in accordance with the curriculum with a minimum length of studies of five years;
- at least 120 credits after the acquisition of a "professional bachelor in..." educational and qualification degree;
- at least 60 credits after the acquisition of a "bachelor" educational and qualification degree;

The training at the second level, up to the master's degree, provides profound fundamental training in combination with specialisation in a particular specialty.

Doctorate degree - the training is organized in doctoral programs after having obtained the master's degree. The duration of training and independent research for regular and independent training is up to 3 years, and for part-time and distance learning - up to 4 years. By way of exception, governed by the regulations of the relevant higher education institution or scientific organization, the period may be extended, but not more than one year.

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) is being recognized as an instrument for human resource development in several strategy papers and national plans in Bulgaria. The main goal at which ALE is aiming is to improve the qualification level of the unemployed and employed persons and enable them to adapt to the rapidly changing working and living environment.

Main concepts

Dropping out of school "Отпадане от училище" is signing off a school of a student under 18 before enrolling the last course of the higher education course if the same student is not enrolled in another school.

Bulgaria defines early school leavers „Прждевременно напуснали училище“, as persons between 18 and 24 years old with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training.

Специални нужди обучение (приобщаващо образование) **children with special educational needs**. There are seven categories outlined for children with special educational needs:

- intellectual disabilities;
- hearing impaired;

- visually impaired;
- language-speech disorders;
- physical disabilities;
- learning difficulties;
- multiple disabilities.

Non Formal Education (Неформално образование) is the form of education not obtained in the official educational system but rather through the method of non formal education such as role model games; volunteering and other activities.

6.2 Administration and governance

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Cross-sectoral cooperation between Ministries, Departments, Agencies involved in defining policies and measures on education and training for young people is happening through interministerial working groups.

Governance

[The Ministry of education and science](#) (MES) is the specialised body of the Council of Ministers for the administration of education. It determines and implements state policy in the field of education; forecasts and plans the activities pertaining to the development of education by drafting long-term programmes and operational plans; organizes and coordinates the work of the administrative units and education establishments; monitors the activity of all types and levels of schools (including nursery schools) in the country; approves school documentation and planning of school places; ensures the implementation of innovations, the supply of textbooks, curricula and teaching staff; and carries out international activities in the field of education.

The central administration of the MES approves the obligatory school documentation – guidelines, compulsory curricula, programmes, state education requirements, textbooks, handbooks, etc., with the assistance of a large circle of experts from research institutes and higher education institutions, experts from regional and community administrations, head teachers, teachers, etc.

At regional level Bulgaria has 28 [Регионално управление на образованието \(РУО\)](#) (Regional education governance bodies) responsible for the overall educational policy, set out by the Ministry of Education and Science, within the territory of the respective district. Regional education governance bodies are territorial administration of the Ministry of Education and Science for management and control of the public education system. They create conditions for the state education policy in the region and are funded by the budget of the Ministry of education and science

There is the existing [Синдикат на българските учители](#) (Teachers Trade Union).

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

There is existing national strategy called [Стратегия за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система \(2013 – 2020\)](#) (Strategy for reducing the share of early school leavers (2013 – 2020)). The main ways of achieving, the policy goals of the strategy are Prevention, intervention and Compensation. An important milestone in the Strategy is the establishment of a Coordination mechanism (related as [the Mechanisms](#)) to tackle early school-leaving, involving the educational, social, health

and administrative services as well as municipalities. 206,387 children and pupils aged 5 to 18 who have dropped out of the education system or have never been enrolled were identified (Ministry of Education and Science 2018). In March 2018, the Education Minister announced that, as a result of the massive tracking campaigns, including visits to 207,000 addresses, 189,000 children were visited. Over 80% of school-age children not enrolled in Bulgarian schools were actually found to be living abroad. 1,134 teams, including more than 11,600 participants carried out home visits.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

One of the Policy measures for formal learning for ELET implemented by the Ministry of education and science, as a top-level authority was the project called "Involving in education and training". In all of the 28 regions of the country there were 84 pilot schools opened. They had the resources and the technical equipment needed for quality education. The employees were 84 psychologists, 140 resource teachers. As in 30.09.2013, all 3928 students with special needs were involved in the educational system.

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

Early school leaving in Bulgaria is related to various complex reasons, which are mainly of socio-economical nature. In the period of elementary education school truancy or its leaving to a great degree are related to family and community reasons. In the higher levels of education, apart from the abovementioned factors, the environment, in which the young people find themselves, the lack of well trained pedagogues to work with them, the absence of additional qualification for the teachers for coping with youngsters demotivated from participating in the educational process, also have an impact. Along with these factors serious influence exercise the poor marks at school as consequence of the not too proficient knowledge of the official language and the outdated educational programs that do not take into consideration to the necessary degree the abilities of the students to cope with the learning matter. The latter is valid not only for the Roma and Turkish minorities, but also for the children from families with low-income level and lower degree of education.

The work in the Mechanism is addressing the issue of ELET through different ways. Public institutions and NGOs involved are using different projects and measures to work on tackling the issue. Good practices can be found [here](#).

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

For implementing the Mechanism there is a Coordination body that includes the ministers of: Education and science, labor and social policy, the minister of interior, the minister of healthcare, the minister of regional development, the minister of finances, the director of the National agency for children, the director for the agency for social development and the president of the Commission for anti law crime of youngsters, three mayors and representatives of the regional authorities, who are invited by the National committee of the Municipalities. The official start of the Mechanism was 98.06.2018.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

Young people can have the knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning can not officially validate and obtain a qualification on the basis of those learning experiences. In Bulgaria. The system of Youth Pass is used in Bulgaria but the National authorities does not offer a validation scheme on competences reached by non-formal learning and qualifications cannot be legally obtained.

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Personalised services providing counselling, guidance and information, with established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation on cross-border learning mobility are provided by different schools and universities. However they are not centralized or funded by public top-level authority. There are not policy measures or initiatives by top-level public authorities to support cross-border learning mobility in the context of non-formal learning and youth work;

Policy framework

The bilateral agreements in the field of education, science and culture constitute the policy framework of different scholarship schemes development, students' admission facilities improvement, co-operation between educational institutions, mutual recognition of qualifications and study periods undertaken abroad. The existing bilateral cooperation is often complemented by multilateral initiatives, thus reaching both European dimension and context. An emphasis is put on project and research development.

Bulgaria has bilateral agreements for cooperation in the field of education with: USA, Republic of Vietnam, Kingdom of Morocco, Republic of India, Republic of Armenia, the United Mexican States, Republic of Argentina, Republic of Cuba, Hashemites Kingdom of Jordan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kingdom of Thailand, Organization for Liberation of Palestina, 'Republic of Belarus, Mongolia, Peoples Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Ukraine, Japan, Russian Federation, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Turkey, Republic of Albania.

The most common cooperation is exchange of students and academic staff.

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The Erasmus sectoral programme is the main source of funding for student mobility in the country. Mobility is also carried out through short-term or long-term programmes for bilateral and multilateral cooperation at either national or institutional level.

There are two types of international mobility:

- training - it focuses on academic training for a period of 1 to 2 semesters in a higher education institution in a EU-member country;
- internships - it focuses on practical training at a European company for a period of 3 to 12 months.

Responsibility for the proper execution of a mobility program is shared between the sending organization (higher education institutions) and the hosting organization (higher education institution or a company).

Programmes for learning mobility are recognized in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Internship mobility is a relatively new activity and the process of recognition depends on the hosting organization and whether it is allowed to issue certificates that are recognized on the labor market.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Programmes/projects/initiatives organised by public authority and funded by the EU Fund Процедури и проекти в процес на изпълнение по Оперативна програма „Наука и образование за интелигентен растеж“ (Project and procedures part of the Operatinal Program Education and science for intelligence growth) are operated by the Ministry of education and science. One of them is "Educational integration of ethnic minority students and / or seeking or receiving international protection." Nearly 3,000 children and students from ethnic minorities, including Roma, participate in educational integration activities.

They work with teachers and representatives of non-profit legal entities in partnership with municipalities to ensure sustainability of the results.

Educational support

Assessment and guidance of children with special educational needs towards integrated education or towards training in special kindergartens and special schools are carried out after initial assessment by the complex pedagogical assessment teams at the regional inspectorates on education. These teams include various experts:

- special pedagogues;
- resource teachers;
- psychologists;
- speech therapists;
- teachers from general education kindergartens and schools;
- representatives of the Child Protection departments;
- other specialists if required, as well as parents of children.

Assessment is carried out at the request of parents or guardians. The head of the regional inspectorate on education approves by an order in writing the children and pupils who will be trained within the environment of general education with the appropriate resource support.

In addition to educational support for the children and pupils with special education needs, the legislation provides measures for gifted children although they are not determined as a separate category of children with special education needs.

The next group of people which is not legally included in the standard group of children with special educational needs, however, for which special measures are provided, are the children of migrants, the children of citizens of member-countries in the European Union, the European economic space and Switzerland.

Children with special education needs

Kindergartens, schools of general education and vocational schools are obliged to enroll children and students with special education needs ensuring required for their integrated education environment support. That includes:

- architectural access;
- provision of resource teachers and specialist;
- individual educational programs;
- textbooks;
- teaching aids;
- technical means;
- facilities;
- didactic materials, etc.

Education and training of children and students with special education needs is implemented under:

- programs for pre-school education and training; school syllabuses and curriculums;
- individual educational programs for early impact and early rehabilitation of children with visual impairment and children with hearing impairment;
- curriculum on special subjects for children and pupils with hearing impairment and for children and pupils with visual impairment.

At all kindergarten and schools where children with special educational need to undergo integrated education, as well as at special schools, a team is established by an order of the headmaster, which consists of chairperson-class teacher and members:

- psychologist, and/or pedagogical consultant;
- resource teacher;
- specialized pedagogue;
- speech therapist;
- teachers on different subjects.

If necessary, parents or guardians and other experts also take part in the work of the team. The team assesses education needs, monitors the dynamics of development of the pupils with special education needs and prepares individual educational programs for their education, training and development. The programs are approved by the headmaster of relevant school.

Integrated education of children and pupils with special education needs is assisted by **resource teachers** and other specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, rehabilitators of hearing and speech etc.) appointed at the established in 2006 twenty eight (28) state resource centers for support of integrated education and training of children and pupils with special education needs (one center for each administrative region). Resource centers through the teams of experts conduct different activities for implementation of state policies for integrating education and training of children and pupils with special education needs and have several core functions related to the education of children and pupils with special education needs into an environment of general education jointly with the teachers of the relevant group at the kindergarten and at the school class. They also consult parents and children with special education needs and provide methodical help for teachers and teams of the schools of general education and kindergartens.

Individual educational program includes special assignments within the framework of the curriculum on one or more subjects of the syllabus and is designed to help the child and the pupil with special education needs:

- learn and acquire knowledge and skills for implementation of state educational requirements for preschool education and training or about the educational content in compliance with their individual necessities and potential opportunities;
- promote the overall development of the children;
- acquire specific knowledge and skills depending on the impairment or malpractice;
- develop social skills for independent life in view of successful social integration and professional realization.

Children and students with special education needs who are trained on individual educational programs but meet state educational requirements for preschool education and training and for learning content continue their training on the programs of the relevant kindergarten or school syllabus and school curriculums of the relevant school and receive certificates for completed preparatory group/preparatory grade or document for completed grade, stage, or degree of education according to state educational requirement for the documents of the National education system.

Children and students with special education needs who have completed their education for a stage or a level of education on individual educational programs but have failed to meet state educational requirement for learning content receive certificates for completed class and those who have finished XII class – a certificate of completed high school stage according to state educational requirement for the documents of the National education system.

Individual educational programs for children and students contain a grading scale for the level of achieved knowledge, skill and competencies, cognitive development, language

speaking development and communicative skills, emotional, characteristic and behavioral specifics with regard to the type and degree of impairment, violation or difficulty. It reports achieved results in each of defined fields and prepares suggestions for changes in the program on the basis of achieved results in education and training and in child's and pupil's development.

For participation in external evaluation of the pupils of IV, VII and VIII classes as well as for conducting state matriculation examinations the legislation provides a number of particular measures aimed at supporting the children with special education needs – exam materials on Braille or enlarged print for children with visual impairment, computer with synthetic synthesized speech, quaestors and consulting teachers who are aware of Braille or Jest-mimics, oral exam for students who are no able to sit for exam in writing, extended duration of exam on relevant subject or cycle of subjects, etc.

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Programmes/projects/initiatives organised by public authority and funded by the EU Fund Процедури и проекти в процес на изпълнение по Оперативна програма „Наука и образование за интелигентен растеж“ (Project and procedures part of the Operatinal Program Education and science for intelligence growth) are operated by the Ministry of education and science. **Increasing the capacity of pedagogical specialists to work in multicultural environment** under Priority Axis 3 for the period 2017-2019 with main activities: updating the curricula in higher schools, preparing pedagogical specialists for training for effective work in multicultural educational environment (higher education only); conducting short-term trainings for teachers, pedagogical specialists and school principals and kindergartens to work in a multicultural educational environment.

6.7 Skills for innovation

Available data shows that Bulgaria continues to have one of the highest percentages of graduates in social sciences, business and law, while the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) remains low. According to the Education and Training Monitor 2019 of the European Commission.

Innovation in formal education

According to Ministry of Education and Science rules teachers must present their own innovative model of teaching to be applied throughout the school year, and make lessons more interesting, easier to remember and more fun. The programme also envisages cooperation between different schools as well as an exchange of new working methods, a new way of organizing the school environment, as well as innovative methods of management of the schooling process as such. 395 schools in 28 regions of the country have already joined the programme of innovative pedagogical practices.

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

There is no policy, programme, project and initiative – either directly organised or funded – by top level authorities fostering the capacity for innovation of young people, through non-formal and informal learning, and youth work

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

There is no National Strategy on Media literacy and safe use of new media or other public normative act. However, there is the [Coalition](#) for Development of Media Literacy of Bulgarian children.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

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).

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

Under the title of "I Will Not Be Hacked" the State e-Government Agency organizes a number of online and event initiatives, 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 "I Will Not Be Hacked" – 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.

Media Literacy Days is a campaign that promotes the need to introduce media literacy into education. Media Literacy Days are organized by The Media Literacy Coalition, started for the first time in 2018. It is organised by the NGO's coalition for Development of Media Literacy of Bulgarian children.

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

Awareness raising initiatives

Awareness-raising about non-formal learning can be funded by public top-level authorities can be NGOs working with young people who can apply for the thematic area 2 – Development and recognition of youth work of the Sub-programme 2 of the National Program for Youth 2016-2020 called National youth initiatives and campaigns. It focuses on funding the implementation of project proposals by non-governmental organisations working in the youth field as well as by informal youth groups in six thematic areas covering main directions for promoting civic positioning and participation in campaigns and initiatives of young people and youth workers in Bulgaria.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The forthcoming policy developments are in the field of increasing of the teachers salaries as a measurement to boost the attractiveness of the profession and help with the problem of ageing of the teachers. The proposition of the document Постановление на Министерски съвет (decision of the Council of Ministers) by the Council of Ministers that more funds by the public budget are going for increasing teachers salaries in 2020.

Ongoing debates

In 2019, practitioners and experts debated the topic of the increasing of the salaries of teachers. The main actors involved were representatives of the Teachers Union and financial experts.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Improving the health of young people and their well-being is one of the major priorities of the [National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020](#) (Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020).

In 2011 the [Ministry of Health](#) established the [National Center of Public Health and Analyses](#), which, together with the [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) and other stakeholders and organisations, develops youth-related policies in this field. The main fields of action institutions are operating in are encouraging physical activity, improving sexual culture, access to health education and mental health.

According to a [study](#) carried out in 2018 by [Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Bulgaria office](#), 54% of young people determine their health condition as “Excellent”, 29% say it is “Very good”, 15 – “Good”, and hardly 1% - “Fair”. [2018 Annual Report on Youth](#) (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2018) shows that hardly 1/3 of young people in the country practice sport.

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

During the recent years we are witnessing alarming trends with regard to young people’s health in Bulgaria. [2018 Annual Report on Youth](#) (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2018) shows that more than half (53%) of young people at the age of 25 and 29 years drink spirits, and 14% of them have administered light drugs. As a comparison, 52% of young people drink alcohol in 2010.

In 2016 the [National Center of Public Health and Analyses](#) and several NGOs participated in the international initiative [ACT!2030](#). According to the published data it is clear that the use of cigarettes is widely disseminated among young people. Bulgaria ranks first among European countries with regard to smoking in teenage. The trend of high use of alcohol remains unchanged. 86% of students at the age of 16 have used alcohol; almost 60% of them have drunk during the last month, and 46% have got drunk at least once during this period.

The following negative trends can be seen with regard to sexual health and behavior:

- Start of sexual life at the age of 16;
- Wide practice of unsafe sexual contacts (30% of young people do not use condoms for their first sexual intercourse);
- Use of drugs and alcohol before and during sexual intercourse;
- Maintaining parallel sexual relations;
- 10 and more years older sex partners.

As per the data of the [Ministry of Health](#), the number of young people infected with HIV is relatively higher, and 34% of newly registered HIV-positive individuals are at the age of 20 to 29 years.

Main concepts

The [health status](#) of people in Bulgaria has improved more slowly than in other EU countries, as shown by persistently low life expectancy. Several recent reforms have attempted to shift the Bulgarian health system away from over-reliance on hospital care and to increase efficiency. Nevertheless, challenges in terms of access and quality remain substantial. The concept of health and wellbeing includes state of physical and mental stable condition of the individuals.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The major institution that takes care of and governs the national health policy is the **Ministry of Health**. It is supported by the **National Center of Public Health and Analyses (NCPHA)** especially established in 2011, and by the **Ministry of Youth and Sports**. NCPHA is a structure of the national healthcare system and works for the protection of public health, promotion of health and prophylaxis of diseases, information provision for healthcare management. The center manages, controls and coordinates the information activities in healthcare by:

- Developing and unifying medical and statistics documents for the health status of the population and for the resources and activity of healthcare establishments;
- Developing mathematical models and forecasts for the demographic and health status of the population;
- Ensuring operational and annual medical-statistics and economic information;
- Carrying out activities for development of common health information system and e-healthcare;
- Developing and introducing a system for classification of patients and reporting and payment technologies;
- Maintaining, updating and publishing health information standards;

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The main objective of the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** is to implement common, consistent and sustainable youth policy in the country.

The wide scope of problems affecting young people requires multi-sectoral approach in the youth policy. To this end, it could not be successful without the appropriate cooperation with other sectors, such as education, employment, gender equality, healthcare, competitiveness, etc. This multi-sectoral approach needs to be developed at national, regional, district and municipal level by including targeted actions supporting the development of young people in the sectoral policies, and by ensuring opportunities for constructive dialogue with them when formulating, implementing and evaluating the youth policy.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

The main focus of both the **National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020** (Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020) and in the **National Strategy for Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 –2022)** (Националната стратегия за развитие на физическото възпитание и спорта в Република България (2012 –2022)) is sports and physical activity among young people.

2018 Annual Report on Youth (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2018) shows that hardly 35% of young people practice sports, and the other two thirds state they do not practice physical activity. The trends show that men are more active than women, however the share of young people who do not practice sport increase with the increase of the age.

Data show that gyms are the main place where young people practice sport – 42%, followed by outdoor sports grounds/ facilities – 33%. The gym is the main place for practicing sports in Sofia and district cities, while outdoor sports grounds/ facilities are mostly used in small towns and villages. According to the enquiry among young people, the lack of time is outlined as the major reason for young people not to practice sport –

more than one third. 28% of them state that they are not interested, not willing, or do not need to be physically active.

The main priorities of the National Strategy for Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 –2022) (Националната стратегия за развитие на физическото възпитание и спорта в Република България (2012 –2022)) are as follows:

- Physical education and sports in leisure time;
- Physical education and sports for students;
- Physical education and sports for people with disabilities;
- Top level sports.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

Promoting physical activity of children and young people and ensuring opportunities for their involvement in sport activities are among the major priorities of the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** (MYS). MYS policy, measures and activities in this area are determined by taking into account the role of sport as an important factor of human development and the need to ensure opportunities for choice and access of people to practice physical exercises and sports. They are developed in accordance with the objective and the main tasks of the **National Strategy for Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 –2022)** (Националната стратегия за развитие на физическото възпитание и спорта в Република България (2012 –2022)) and are in pursuance of the measures as set out in the **Governance Program of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria 2017-2021** (Програмата за управление на правителството на Република България 2017-2021), and in accordance with the EU guidelines and recommendations for promotion of health enhancing physical activity of young citizens.

With regard to ensuring better conditions and opportunities for physical activity and practicing sport by children and young people, the objectives, measures and activities of **MYS** are aimed at:

- Motivating children to participate in sports activities with view of improvement of their physical capacity, diversification and full-value use of leisure time.
- Ensuring conditions for children and young people to be physically active by practicing sports and opportunities for performance and development in sports.
- Using the role of sport for prevention against diseases, obesity, spine curvature disorders, intolerance, aggression, violence, use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- Formation and development of social qualities of children – teamwork skills, tolerance, leadership, discipline, confidence, observing the rules and principles of fair play.

MYS funds the implementation of **Grassroots Sport Development Program** (Програма за развитие на спорта за всички) to support the activity of multisport organisations. The program provides opportunities for sport of representatives of different social groups, mainly children and young people. More than 200 sport events and competitions in more than 50 sports disciplines are realized on annual basis, involving more than 170 000 participants. The funds ensured for grassroots sports, children and young people are about BGN 5 000 000 per year.

Since 2016, **MYS** implements a new program for people for disabilities – **Program for Development of Sports for People with Disabilities** (Програма за развитие на спорта за хората с увреждания). **MYS** main objective is to improve the conditions and to provide opportunities for adapted physical activity and sports by people with disabilities as a factor for improvement of their living quality, rehabilitation and social integration. More than 60 sport events and competitions are realized under this program involving about 1500 participants in different towns and cities across the country.

Physical education in schools

In pursuance of the policy for promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyle of students from first to twelfth grade in the Bulgarian schools, in addition to the compulsory physical education and sports classes, another class for organizing and staging sport activities approved by the Minister of Education and Science by proposal of the Minister of Youth and Sports is put on the weekly curriculum. There is an option to organize school teams that motivates students to participate in school games and other sport activities.

Two programs are implemented with regard to sport for students: **Development of Students' Sports Program** (програма „Развитие на спорта на учащите“) and **Sports for Children at Risk Program** (програма „Спорт за деца в риск“). They provide opportunities to multisport organisations operating in the field of school, university sport and sport for children at risk, and to sport clubs to realise sport projects and to develop their activity on the territory of all municipalities in the country.

The **Development of Students' Sports Program** (програма „Развитие на спорта на учащите“) ensures conditions for encouraging students to physical activity and systematic practice of sport. Programs objectives are to increase the number of school and university sport clubs subject to registration by the licensed multisport federations and associations for the purposes of improving their sport activity, and to increase the number of school and university students who practice sport actively. For the realization of this program, **MYS** ensures funds in total amount of BGN 350 000 which are distributed among the three projects – the one of the **Bulgarian Student Sports Association** (Българска асоциация спорт за учащи), **Academic Association of University Sports** (АУС „Академик“), and **Bulgarian Sports Federation for Children and Youth at Risk**. The government, municipalities, education establishments and sports organisations have initiated actions for full value and efficient use of sports facilities and venues by students. The number of school students, university students and children at risk involved in the project activities of the multisport federations and associations for 2018 is more than 10 600 in 26 sport disciplines.

Sports for Children at Risk Program (програма „Спорт за деца в риск“) is funded and implemented in 2018. The program is aimed at increasing the number of children at risk involved in sports activities by expanding the services offered in the field of sports and by extending the scope of involvement in sports activities. The program's objectives are to encourage the government and local authorities, sports and non-governmental organizations to create appropriate and accessible conditions for sport, to ensure sports specialists, to improve the physical, mental and functional condition, and the social integration and adaptation of children at risk. The program activities create optimal conditions for improving the opportunities for practicing physical exercises and sports.

On annual basis, the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** provides financial support for staging School Games for students from 5th to 12th grade and School Games for adolescents with impaired hearing, vision, those with physical disabilities and central nervous system disorders. Their participation in school teams and competitions is a tool for engaging their leisure time, directing their emotions and energy to sport activities, establishment of healthy habits and prevention of aggression.

During the academic year 2018/2019 88 000 students in 8 sport disciplines participated in the competitions for students from 5th to 12th grade. The funds provided by **MYS** for the organization and staging of these School Games are in the amount of BGN 508 000. The number of participants in the School Games for students with impaired hearing, impaired vision, those with physical disabilities and central nervous system disorders in 2018/2019 is 330 in 11 sport disciplines, and the funds provided by **MYS** are in the amount of BGN 32 510.

Collaboration and partnerships

The **Ministry of Youth and Sports** works actively and cooperates successfully both with institutions and civil and nongovernmental organisations. The **Ministry of Education** and all

sports federations play a key role and facilitate the preparation and implementation of strategies and programs described in the previous chapters.

Last but not least, MYS also works with civil and nongovernmental organisations active in the field of youth, which give feedback, share ideas, opinions and views, and realise very successful projects in this field.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

One of the main strategic objectives of the **National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020** (**Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020**) is to promote healthy lifestyle among young people. The main fields of action with this regard are as follows:

- Prevention of factors causing risks for young people’s health. This can be achieved by promoting and supporting the cooperation between youth workers, health specialists, young people and sports organisations for the establishment of healthy lifestyle among young people. Furthermore, MYS has set the goal to ensure effective application of the EU physical activity guidelines among young people, especially those with disabilities.
- Improvement of the sexual culture of young people. The main focus here is on the development and dissemination of health information corresponding to the needs of young people through mobilisation of youth information networks. In partnership with the **Ministry of Education** and the **Ministry of Health**, the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** works for the development and application of new forms of health education at schools, as well as promotion of health education in culture clubs (читалища), youth centers, sports and youth organisations, including by applying the “peer-to-peer learning” approach, for the purposes of obtaining knowledge, attitudes and skills for healthy lifestyle, safe behaviour and avoiding health endangering practices. Last but not least, the focus is on improvement of the access of young people to high quality services appropriate for them and to updated scientific information on the issues of sexual and reproductive health, prevention of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The other strategic document aimed at young people is the **National Program for Prevention of Chronic Non-Infectious Diseases 2013-2020** (**Националната програма за превенция на хроничните незаразни болести 2014-2020**) of the **Ministry of Health**. Target groups comprise babies, children and young people up to 29 years of age, women in fertile age, pregnant and breastfeeding women, active population, elderly people, medical specialists and associated medical specialists/ healthcare professionals, non-medical specialists and partners.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

The **Youth Policies Directorate** (**Дирекция „Младежки политики“**) at the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** implements **National Youth Program /2016-2020/** (**Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/**) with two subprograms: “Development of Youth Information and Consultative Centers Network” and “National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns”. One of the 6 thematic areas of the second subprogram is “Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle among Young People”.

The other program funded by the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** aimed at promotion of healthy lifestyle and nutrition is the **National Program for Youth Activities under article 10a of the Gambling Act** (**Националната програма за изпълнение на младежки дейности по чл.10а от Закона за хазарта**). During the period 2017 – at present 14 projects in total have been funded with the amount of up to BGN 100 000.

During the reporting period a significant number of activities aimed at health prevention and prophylaxis of diseases among children and students have been realized within the frames of the **National Program for Prevention of Chronic Non-Infectious Diseases 2013-2020** (Националната програма за превенция на хроничните незаразни болести 2014-2020) of the **Ministry of Health**. Activities have been aimed at restricting the lifestyle-related risk factors (smoking, harmful nutrition, low physical activity, use of alcohol, etc.); the biological factors of risk to chronic non-infectious diseases. Different training methods and training forms have been used: lectures, talks, discussion, trainings, TV and radio shows, audio and video films, video displays, exhibitions, quizzes, thematic days, health celebrations, sports competitions, contests, campaigns, etc.

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.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Elementary, high education (high school, vocational school) and universities in Bulgaria provide various possibilities for encouraging modern built health literacy, lowering the risky to health conduct and helping kids and adolescents for their future "navigation" in the system of healthcare. According to the research on the topic of **Health literacy**.

The age group of young people 13-14 are in 7th or 8th grade of the educational system. The subject **Биология и здравно образование** (Biology and Health Education) is mandatory part of the curriculum of the private and public schools in the country. That includes knowledge of body functioning, main concepts of health care, prevention and deceases.

Peer-to-peer education approaches

- **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. Peer-to-peer education approaches might be included in the activities of the program.

Collaboration and partnerships

The collaboration and partnership on top-level is appearing in the implementation of the following National Programs:

- 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

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

National Program for the Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act 2018 is the program under which projects for raising awareness on healthy lifestyle can be developed, especially in the field of addiction prevention, active lifestyle and well-being.

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

There is not stand alone strategy for mental health of young people or mental health. The strategic document covering the overall healthcare matter in the country is the **Национална здравна стратегия 2020** National Health strategy 2020. In Bulgaria, one of the policies of the general National Health Strategy 2014-2020 'Creating conditions for health for all through the lifespan' dedicated to mental health, is 'Protecting and improving mental health'. The focus of this mental health policy is on mental health promotion, starting from early childhood and continuing through the lifespan.

Improving the mental health of young people

There are not specifically target available top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives addressing the mental health of young people and suicide prevention.

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

Policy framework

There is not a policy framework dedicated only to early detection and signposting of young people facing health risk.

Stakeholders

There is no mechanism on national level to involve different stakeholders in detecting young people at health risk at early stage.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

On top level there is no policy framework, program or initiative aiming more youth friendly healthcare. The NGO sector is organizing campaigns and initiatives concerning youth health.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

There is a project of a normative **Проект на Постановление на Министерски съвет** act by the Council of Ministers aiming the opening of a children hospital in 2020 for children with chronic illnesses and children with disabilities in the city of Burgas. The topic will also influence the young people in the age group 15-18 who will be covered by the target group of the eventual facility.

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

8.1. General context

In general, culture is perceived as crucial national aspect of young people's life and as inevitable part of their national identity.

Culture is a lifestyle that requires quality and diversity of offered cultural content to enable every individual citizen to give meaning to his/her existence, including through his/her involvement in the creation of new forms of expression. From the perspective of society, culture is the basis for achieving such quality of life that makes every citizen a creative and full-value personality able to contemplate his/her existence as a result of ensured access to the cultural achievements of mankind.

According to the data of the [National Institute of Statistics](#) in 2016 the share of young people at the age of 25 – 35 who have visited live performances (9,2%) and cinema (14,8%) 4 to 6 times a year is a little bit higher than the share of people at the age of 35 – 54 (8,4% and 8,5%, respectively). The share of participation in cultural activities and events is equal for both age groups – 6,5%. The participation of people from the two age groups in amateur groups, sports groups, hobby societies, clubs of interests, is low. In 2011, the share of people who have not participated in such activities is 92,6% (25 – 34 years) and 92,7% (35 – 54 years). For more details, refer to Chapter 8.1

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Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

In accordance with the [Culture Protection and Development Act \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#), the main principles of the national cultural policy are as follows:

1. democracy of cultural policy, freedom of artistic creativity and not allowing censorship;
2. decentralization of governance and funding of cultural activities;
3. equality of authors and cultural organisations;
4. protection and enrichment of cultural and historic heritage, preservation of Bulgarian literary language, traditions and customs;
5. protection of national cultural identity and the culture of Bulgarian communities abroad;
6. promotion of cultural diversity while preserving the unity of the national culture;
7. encouragement of cultural industry and market of works of art and supporting producer's work in the field of culture;

8. finding, supporting and training of young talents in the field of culture;
9. encouragement of donorship, patronage and sponsorship in the field of culture;
10. development and improvement of education in the field of arts and culture.

The **National Institute of Statistics** provides statistics for the participation of population at the age of 25 – 64 years in cultural activities and events.

Data are classified in the following groups:

- Individuals who have visited live performances by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence
- Individuals who have gone to cinema by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence
- Individuals who have visited cultural sights by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence
- Population with reference to book reading by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence
- Population with reference to number of books read by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence
- Population with reference to newspaper reading by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence
- Participation of individuals at the age of 25-64 years in activities of amateur groups, hobby societies, clubs of interests by sex, age, education, employment status and place of residence

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE VISITED LIVE PERFORMANCES BY AGE (2016)

	Total – pcs.	1-3 times during the last 12 months		4-6 times during the last 12 months		More than 7 times during the last 12 months		Never during the last 12 months	
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total	3 852 978	1 119 292	29.1	297 605	7.7	169 452	4.4	2 266 629	58.8
By age									
25 - 34	915 011	279 033	30.5	83 980	9.2	45 540	5.00	506 457	55.3
35 - 54	1 988 166	594 202	29.9	167 854	8.4	90 777	4.6	1 135 333	57.1
55 - 64	949 801	246 057	25.9	45 771	4.8	(33135)	(3.5)	624 838	65.8

	Total – pcs.	1-3 times during the last 12 months		4-6 times during the last 12 months		More than 7 times during the last 12 months		Never during the last 12 months	
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total	3 863 951	949 901	24.6	323 609	8.4	189 001	4.9	2 401 441	62.1
By age									
25 - 34	931 504	286 450	30.8	137 437	14.8	95 412	10.2	412 204	44.3
35 - 54	1 983 473	548 052	27.6	168 646	8.5	79 987	4.0	1 186 788	59.8
55 - 64	948 974	115 399	12.2	(17526)	(1.8)	13 601	1.4	802 448	84.6

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE VISITED CULTURAL SIGHTS BY AGE (2016)

	Total – pcs.		1-3 times during the last 12 months		4-6 times during the last 12 months		More than 7 times during the last 12 months		Never during the last 12 months	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total	3 829 172	998 225	26.1	233 391	6.1	160 377	4.2	2 437 178	63.6	
By age										
25 - 34	909 790	260 669	28.7	59 091	6.5	43 986	4.8	546 045	60.0	
35 - 54	1 970 616	524 144	26.6	128 702	6.5	92 886	4.7	1 224 884	62.2	
55 - 64	948 766	213 413	22.5	45 599	4.8	(23505)	(2.5)	666 250	70.2	

POPULATION WITH REFERENCE TO BOOK READING BY AGE (2016)

	Total – pcs.		Individuals who have read at least one book during the last 12 months		Individuals who have not read any books during the last 12 months	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total	3 892 607	2 067 269	53.1	1 825 338	46.9	
By age						
25 - 34	926 243	491 071	53.0	435 172	47.0	
35 - 54	1 997 597	1 091 465	54.6	906 132	45.4	
55 - 64	968 767	484 733	50.0	484 034	50.0	

POPULATION WITH REFERENCE TO NUMBER OF BOOKS READ BY AGE (2016)

	Total – pcs.		Less than 5 books during the last 12 months		5-10 books during the last 12 months		More than 10 books during the last 12 months	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total	2 057 433	1 072 432	52.1	569 546	27.7	415 455	20.2	
By age								
25 - 34	490 375	249 189	50.8	138 643	28.3	102 543	20.9	
35 - 54	1 086 119	564 408	52.0	307 218	28.3	214 492	19.7	
55 - 64	480 939	258 834	53.8	123 684	25.7	98 421	20.5	

PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS AT THE AGE OF 25-64 YEARS IN ACTIVITIES OF AMATEUR GROUPS, HOBBY SOCIETIES, CLUBS OF INTERESTS BY AGE (2011)

	Total – pcs.		Individuals who have participated during the last 12 months		Individuals who have not participated during the last 12 months	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total	4 078 320	296 934	7.3	3 781 385	92.7	
By age						
25-34	1 000 550	74 529	7.4	926 021	92.6	
35-54	2 041 254	148 485	7.3	1 892 770	92.7	
55-64	1 036 516	73 921	7.1	962 595	92.9	

According to the publication of the National Institute of Statistics *2018 Key Data about Culture in the Republic of Bulgaria* (Основни данни за културата в Република България през 2018 година), as at 31.12.2018:

- There are 174 museums operating in the country, which are registered in accordance with the **Cultural Heritage Act** (Закон за културното наследство), and with regard to the theme scope 93 of them are general, and 81 – specialized (inclusive art galleries). The number of visits to museums in 2018 is 5 084 thousand, and in comparison to 2017, this number decreases by 0.5%. About one fourth of such visits (1 025 thousand)

are made during the free access days. There is an increase of museum visits by foreigners – by 147 thousand, or by 13.2% in comparison to the previous year.

- In 2018, 15 155 performances were organised in the 75 *theaters* operating in the country visited by 2 389 thousand spectators. In comparison to 2017 performances decrease by 1.2%, while visits increase by 7.5%. The average number of visitors per performance also increases – from 145 in 2017 to 158 in 2018.
- In 2018, 51 *music groups* develop their creative work – 5 philharmonic orchestras, 25 professional ensembles for folk songs and dances, and 21 orchestras. The performances of these groups increase by 1.6%, and the visits decrease by 0.1% in comparison to 2017.
- In 2018 the number of libraries with book stock of more than 200 thousand library units remains unchanged in comparison to the previous year (47). Their aggregate book stock comprises 34 320 thousand library documents – books, periodicals: newspapers, magazines, bulletins, etc. The number of registered readers is 239 thousand, which is 3.6% less than the previous year, while visits increase by 6.7% and reach 4 563 thousand.
- At the end of 2018, there are 69 cinemas in the country with 226 screens. Their number remains unchanged in comparison to 2017. There are 11 multiplexes where 61.6% of all screenings and 68.1% of all visits have been made. In comparison to 2017, in 2018 cinema screenings decrease by 2.1% and visits – by 11.3%.
- In 2018, 83 registered and licensed radio operators work in the country. They have broadcasted 727.0 thousand hours of radio shows, or 0.5% (3.4 thousand hours) more than in 2017.
- In 2018, there are 116 registered and licensed Bulgarian TV operators functioning in the country, and their number decreases by 1 in comparison to the previous year.

Upon assignment of Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Bulgaria office, a sociological study Bulgarian Youth 2018/2019 („Българската младеж 2018/2019“) was conducted in 2018. Data were collected at the beginning of 2018 and the study involved more than 10 000 people at the age of 14 – 29. The study report describes the main results and conclusions of the national sociological study on the Bulgarian youth, which is a representative study of young people at the age of 14 to 29 years. The study covers a wide scope of problems related to their experience and strives in different areas of life, such as education, employment, political involvement, family relations, leisure time, and use of information and communication technologies, as well as their values, attitudes and beliefs.

One of the study topics is *Leisure Time and Lifestyles*. In modern societies, leisure time is this area of life, together with paid work, in which the individual has plenty of opportunities to invest time and money for fun and communication, for creativity and personal expression.

For Bulgarian youth leisure time becomes a major life area during the transition to modern society. The study allows to compare the frequency of performing 18 activities by five-levels scale. Among them we can distinguish completely passive activities, such as “relaxing”, activities that do not require significant efforts by young people, such as listening music, to very engaging activities, such as sports, creative activities and voluntary work. Some of the activities involve communication with other people – family and friends, and others are practiced mainly individually, such as preying and mediation. Some activities require more funds, such as restaurant, café or bar visit and shopping, and others – less funds, such as spending time with family or listening music. In general, passive activities prevail during Bulgarian young people’s leisure time, with significant share of “doing nothing” and communicating with family and friends. *Book reading* is a rare activity for today’s young people. One third of young people read seldom – once a month or more rarely, and one fifth of them never read. Young people with higher education and students read most, and those with primary and lower education and

unemployed read least. Those who don't read are represented in all groups, even the group of individuals with higher education – 10% of them do not read at all. Ethnical background shows strong stratification here – 72% of roma declare that they never read. *Newspaper and magazine reading* is even more rare activity among Bulgarian young people today. *Watching movies every day* shows high increase as a practice of unemployed people and reaches two thirds of them. The education of respondent and their parents, as well as the social status of the family do not have unidirectional effect, however residence connection is strong and predictable. 59% of young people living in villages and only 45 % of those living in big cities and the capital watch movies every day. This is the most popular activity of young people in the Northeastern region (66 %). For the purposes of comparison, only 41% of young people in the Southwestern region do this. Frequency of *creativity activities* (writing, drawing, playing a music instrument) during leisure time is different for a little bit more than one third of Bulgarian young people. Here young women prevail as almost half of them are involved in arts. Teenagers are more frequently involved in creativity than young people at the age of 20 and more years, and unemployed individuals form the group of those least involved in arts. Parents' education has strong influence, and the share of young people who are not engaged in creativity increases from 46% in the rich families to 69% in the poor families. One third of Bulgarian young people *visit a youth center or a club of interests* during leisure time. Data show dependence on the social status of the family – 44% of those who do not visit are from rich families and this share increases to reach 69 % of young people from poor families.

Main concepts

The **Ministry of Culture** is in charge of the national policy of culture, cultural organisations and bodies for protection of culture, its national identity, and the ways for supporting and funding cultural work and authors.

The **Ministry of Youth and Sports** is in charge of the national youth policy. Taking into account the multi-sectoral nature of youth policy, the **Youth Act (Закон за младежта)** stipulates that one of the main principles of the governmental policy in this field is the coordination of youth policies in the field of education, social policy, healthcare, culture, sports, justice, internal affairs and defence.

The **Ministry of Education and Science** is in charge of the national policy in the field of education and science.

National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) is the Bulgarian organization that supports at national level the creation, development and dissemination of Bulgarian culture and arts in the country and abroad. **National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“)** is established by the **Culture Protection and Development Act (Закона за закрила и развитие на културата)** and starts its work in November 2000. Its main objective is to support the development of culture by raising, managing and spending funds intended for the implementation of the national policy in the field of culture as set out in the programs of the government of the Republic of Bulgaria for the respective period and in the **Culture Protection and Development Act (Закона за закрила и развитие на културата)**. Some of the resources of the Fund are spent for creative scholarships supporting young and distinguished authors and other young specialists in the field of culture for a period of 2 years, as well as for programs and projects aimed at expanding the access of children and young people to cultural activities.

The **National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage (Национален институт за недвижимо културно наследство)** supports the Minister of Culture in the implementation of the governmental policy in the field of protection of the immovable cultural heritage.

Schools of arts and culture (Училища по изкуствата и по културата) have their own specificity that gives them a status of cultural institutes mainly aimed at ensuring professional training and education in the field of arts and culture (article 13 of the **Culture Protection and Development Act (Закона за закрила и развитие на културата)**). They are located proportionately across the territory of the country, some of them being situated in

the big cities, and others – in regions with strong traditions in the respective field of art. See section 8.5.

Cultural institutions comprise museums, theaters and musical groups (stage arts), and libraries.

Chitalishta /Culture clubs/ (Читалища). In accordance with article 2(1) of the **National Culture Clubs Act (Закон за народните читалища)**, national chitalishta (culture clubs) are traditional self-governing Bulgarian cultural and educational associations in settlements, which perform governmental cultural and educational assignments. All natural persons, irrespective of their age and sex, political and religious beliefs, and ethnical background, may participate in their activities. Chitalishta (culture clubs) are non-profit legal entities.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

In accordance with the approved structure in the country, the governmental cultural policy in Bulgaria is implemented at two levels – national and local.

At national level, the responsibility for the establishment and implementation of cultural policy is allocated between the legislative authority – the **National Assembly**, and the executive authority – the **Council of Ministers**.

At local level, cultural policy is implemented by the local self-governance authorities – the municipalities.

The **Ministry of Culture** is the supreme central executive authority in the field of culture, which has the right of legislative initiative. It is empowered to formulate and implement the main principles of governmental cultural policy. Furthermore, authors, as well as nongovernmental organisations operating in the field of culture, are another direct and active participant in the process of formation of the cultural policy.

The **Ministry of Culture** implements policy for protection and development of culture in accordance with its functions and powers and in observance of the principles of law (See section 8.1).

The **Ministry of Education and Science** develops and adopts state standards of education and curriculums. General education in school is the same for all types of schools and is obtained in the course of the entire course of study at schools, covering, among other things, key competences, such as initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural competence and skills for expression through creativity.

A **Culture and Media Committee** is established at the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, which reviews bills and other acts of the National Assembly in the field of culture and media. It is in charge of ex-post impact assessment of laws falling within its jurisdiction, which is aimed at identifying their efficiency and level of achievement of objectives.

Municipalities and local self-governance authorities implement their culture and art programs at local level. Municipalities formulate and implement their policy for protection and development of culture combining the principles of the national cultural policy and the local conditions and traditions. In accordance with the **Culture Protection and Development Act (Закон за закрила и развитие на културата)**, municipal councils, among other things, adopt resolutions for granting creative scholarships to support young authors of culture.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

As part of the general governance in the country, the **Ministry of Culture** actively interacts with all governmental and municipal authorities in the implementation of the cultural policy at national level. Furthermore, active cooperation is also established with a number of

foreign cultural institutes established and operating on the territory of the country, among which: **British Council**, **Institut Francais**, **Goethe Institut**, **Instituto Cervantes**.

While performing its functions, the **Ministry of Culture** is supported by public expert councils and committees comprising representatives of creative societies, interested authorities and organisations, as well as individual authors and experts.

An Ordinance on the terms and conditions for protection of children with distinguished talents (Наредба за условията и реда за осъществяване на закрила на деца с изявени дарби) is adopted. Protection of children with distinguished talents is a system of measures that ensures the development of children's talents by ensuring financial support and opportunity for expression.

Protection aimed at:

1. encouraging creative talents and needs of children;
2. ensuring opportunities and conditions for admission in sports schools and art schools;
3. financial support and incentives in the form of scholarships and specialized education programs.

Protection under this Ordinance is provided by:

1. the Minister of Culture, Minister of Education and Science, Minister of Youth and Sports;
2. mayors of municipalities;
3. the chairperson of the **Child Protection State Agency (Държавна агенция за закрила на детето)** and the administration supporting them for the performance of their functions;
4. Social Aid directorates at the **Social Aid Agency (Агенция за социално подпомагане)**.

In coordination with the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Youth and Sports, every year, not later than the 31st of January, the Minister of Culture submits to the Council of Ministers a **Program of measures for protection of children with distinguished talents from state and municipal schools (Програма на мерките за закрила на деца с изявени дарби от държавни и общински училища)** for the current calendar year. The program covers the national and international contests, Olympiads and competitions for which protection measures under the Ordinance are implemented by means of lump-sum financial support and scholarships.

In coordination with the **Ministry of Education and Science**, the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** and the **National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria**, on annual basis and within the respective time periods for preparation of the draft state budget for the next year, the **Ministry of Culture** submits to the **Ministry of Finance** a summary proposal for funding of the program. The funds allocated for protection measures in 2019 are as follows:

- **Ministry of Culture** – BGN 503 445
- **Ministry of Education and Science** – BGN 793 050
- **Ministry of Youth and Sports** – BGN 503 505.

In accordance with the Youth Act (Закон за младежта), the Minister of Youth and Sports is supported by the National Consultative Council on Youth with regard to the implementation of the governmental youth policy. The National Consultative Council on Youth:

1. gives opinions on draft legal regulations and strategic documents relevant to the youth policy;
2. proposes measures for achievement of the objectives of the governmental youth policy;
3. discusses other issues relevant to the implementation of the youth policy.

The National Consultative Council on Youth comprises the following members:

1. deputy minister of youth and sports, deputy minister of economy, deputy minister of tourism, deputy minister of labour and social policy, deputy minister of healthcare, deputy minister of culture, deputy minister of interior, deputy minister of justice, deputy minister of regional development and public works, deputy minister of finance, deputy minister of education and science, deputy chairperson of the Child Protection State Agency;
2. representative of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria;
3. representative of the National Representation of Student Councils;
4. one representative of each nationally represented youth organisation.

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

Currently a Strategy for Development of Bulgarian Culture 2019 – 2029 (Стратегия за развитие на българската култура 2019 – 2029) is in process of preparation. See section 8.10.

National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020 (Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020). The strategy covers a ten-years' period and is published on the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (http://mpes.government.bg/Documents/Documents/Strategii/strategy_youth_2010-2020.pdf).

Scope and contents

In pursuance of the National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020 (Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020), the main tasks of youth policy in the field of culture and creativity are as follows:

- to expand the opportunities for non-formal education of young people through public support and provision of services for broadening the knowledge, experience and skills of young people aimed at their inclusion to the values of civil society, science, culture, arts, healthy lifestyle, safety of road traffic and prevention of antisocial behaviours;
- improvement of opportunities for realisation of social and creative skills of young people, depending on their interests, and encouraging initiative, youth creativity and expression by means of:
 1. Supporting young debutants in arts and different cultural industries;
 2. Encouraging the contribution of youth work for the realisation of creative abilities of young people;
 3. Supporting the development of young Bulgarian authors and their participation in the European and world cultural exchange.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The Ministry of Culture will be responsible for the implementation of the future Strategy for Development of Bulgarian Culture 2019 – 2029.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is in charge with the implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020 (Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020). The implementation of the Strategy is assessed with the annual National Youth Report.

Revisions/updates

There are no previous strategies for development culture, youth strategies, or any other strategic documents relevant to creativity and culture for young people.

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

In 2019 the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science signed an agreement for cooperation between schools and preschools and state cultural institutes in the country. This agreement provides for that preschools and schools will organise visits to state cultural institutes in the country, and they will develop and propose drafts educational programs, performances, concerts and other stage arts. The aim is to enhance children's and students' interest in Bulgarian identity, traditions, history, and modern forms in the field of theater, music and dancing art. At the beginning of every school year, cultural institutes will announce the forthcoming events on their websites and will receive orders for visits from schools and preschools.

In 2018 the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science signed an agreement for cooperation for the purposes of implementing measures and activities between institutions within the system of preschool and school education and state, regional and municipal museums and art galleries in the country. (See section 8.9)

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) implements a number of programs, one of which is the Cultural Heritage Program (програма „Културно наследство“).

The program is implemented in two modules.

Cultural Industries and Cultural Tourism Module supports projects for promotion of Bulgarian cultural heritage through cultural tourism and development of cultural organisations' capacity via establishment of cross-sectoral partnerships, sustainable practices and development of business models for successful cultural industries at local level.

Some of the objectives of this module are:

- to support the preservation of crafts and to stimulate industries being developed on the basis of cultural heritage and values
- to stimulate cultural organisations to use cultural tourism as an entrepreneurship tool;
- to establish multisectoral partnerships and exchange of experience and good practices;
- to stimulate innovative and ethnical practices in the development of cultural tourism, etc.

The priority projects funded under this module are as follows:

- projects that actively involve educational institutions through children, school and student audiences in the process and ensure their engagement through communication of new knowledge about the value of cultural heritage.
- projects establishing cross-sectoral partnerships between organisations in the field of culture and tourist industry, local organisations and institutions and/or representatives of local community, voluntary civil associations, private sector, and media, etc.

Available funding for this module is up to BGN 10 000 per project.

Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage Module supports projects for preservation, research and promotion of intangible cultural heritage of Bulgaria and development of means for improved access to cultural heritage through digital technologies and delivery

of cultural content. This module is aimed at highlighting the contribution of cultural heritage to cultural diversity, identity and significant historic processes in Bulgaria and Europe.

Some of the objectives of this module are:

- to create innovative projects (including researches) presenting cultural values in an accessible way;
- to encourage better understanding of vivid cultural heritage and the specificity of its transfer between generations, etc.

The priority projects funded under this module are as follows:

- projects for development of means for improved access and promotion of cultural heritage through digital technologies;
- projects that study and promote local cultural heritage, etc.

Available funding for this module is up to BGN 20 000 per project.

The budget of the whole program is BGN 180 000. Eligible candidates are Bulgarian cultural organisations (legal entities).

In 2018 under the [National Youth Program /2016-2020/](#) ([Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/](#)), the [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) has funded a project [Volunteers Represent the Folklore Legend of Angel Voyvoda](#) implemented by non-profit association [BagaTur](#). The aim of the project is to promote volunteering and to recognize its role as a required tool for improvement of living environment and quality by creating conditions for non-formal communication and full-value use of young people's leisure time. Furthermore, the project promotes volunteering as a useful mean for establishment of historic, health and multifunctional initiatives in the field of cultural heritage that provide knowledge and skills for reconstruction and interpretative representations of folklore legends and myths. The participants in the project were young people at the age of 15 and 29 years.

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Education in culture and arts is extremely important as it refers to the preparation of major specialists in all sectors of culture and arts. Future suggests high quality education and motivation for work of teachers in the field of arts and culture with the ultimate goal to improve theatric, musical and dancing culture. Their importance both for the consumption of cultural values and for creation of new and/or alternative forms with regard to the development of arts, is the main reason for paying special attention to these topics in the cultural policies of modern societies. The inclusion of educational modules on cultural heritage and culture management in different educational institutions is inevitable part of this trend.

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

There are 23 secondary schools of arts and culture. In terms of territorial scope, schools of arts and schools of culture are located in 12 districts, including 14 municipalities. There are 10 artistic schools that educate students for the professions artist and designer – in Sofia, Plovdiv, Kazanlak, Sliven, Troyan, Tryavna, Smolyan and Kunino; 6 music schools, including 4 schools for classical music instruments, singing and classical dances – in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Stara Zagora; 2 schools for folk instruments and folk singing and Buglarian dances – in Kotel and Shiroka Laka; 3 art schools – in Ruse, Varna and Pleven, for music, painting and dancing arts; National School of Dancing Arts in Sofia; National Secondary School of Ancient Languages and Cultures “Konstantin Kiril Filosof” in Sofia; National School Complex of Culture with Italian Language and Culture College in Gorna Banya /Sofia/ with the participation of the Republic of Italy; National Vocational Secondary School of Polygraphics and Photography in Sofia.

Upon graduation students in the schools of arts sit state exams on theory and practice of profession in accordance with national examination programs approved by the Minister of Culture. There are national examination programs approved for obtaining the professional qualifications for the following professions: musician-instrumentalist and musician-vocalist for classical instruments, classical singing, pop and jazz singing; musician-instrumentalist and musician-vocalist for folk instruments and folk singing; artist; designer; ballet-dancer; dancer – Bulgarian dances; dancer – modern dances; actor – drama theater; actor – puppet theater; stone-cutter.

In accordance with **Ordinance No 7 on profiled education (Наредба № 7 за профилираната подготовка)** issued by the Minister of Education and Science, the state standard of education for profiled education is a set of requirements to the results from the course of study on compulsory modules of each profiled subject, and determines the competences – knowledge, skills and attitudes expected to be acquired at the end of the upper secondary education.

The specific objectives of music training are:

- to expand and deepen the knowledge and skills on musical culture of students by mastering competences of theory and history of music arts;
- to develop skills for cultural and creative expression;
- to establish behavioural models for active musical culture of students as part of the system of modern culture;
- to realise the role of musical culture as an important factor in the globalization of contemporary world.

The specific objectives of fine arts training are:

- to develop artistic culture of students through mastering fundamental knowledge about the theory and history of fine arts;
- to stimulate abilities for creative self-expression through the application of basic means of expression;
- to comment visual culture as part of the system of modern culture;
- to understand the role of visual culture as an important factor in the globalization of contemporary world.

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

The University of Veliko Tarnovo (Великотърновски университет) offers master's program Social and Educational Work with Young People (Социалнопедагогическа работа с младежи). The master's program is aimed at ensuring extended general theoretical, methodological and practical training of future specialists for their successful professional work as youth workers. It is based on modern socio-economic needs and the specificity of work with young people from different social groups.

The master's program ensures:

- training for pursuing the youth worker profession through development of professional competences;
- improvement of educational, social, pedagogical, psychological and research potential of future pedagogic specialists.

Knowledge:

- profound theoretical knowledge of legal and regulatory foundations of the organization of youth policies and the governance of these policies from the perspectives of governmental sector and regional priorities;
- knowledge about youth policy in Bulgaria, its actual status and priorities, with specific focus on social and educational aspects;
- knowledge of youth as sociodemographic group, focusing on its demographic profile, education structure, attitudes to family and marriage;
- knowledge of specificity of professional work in support of young people with regard to education, employment, creation of family and full-value realisation.

Skills:

- skills for social and educational, and consultancy activity in different sectors of social sphere, of educational system and in youth-related nongovernmental and public structures;
- general and special skills to work for developing young people's abilities;
- skills for adaptation, for making mobile and adequate decisions in accordance with advanced scientific achievements and the changing social environment and with the social context of young people;
- skills for organizing and holding integrated and individual training;
- skills for work in multicultural educational environment;
- skills for identification and formation of cultural needs of varied social groups;
- skills for development and implementation of cultural and educational programs;

National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski" offers master's degree program "Youth Activities and Sport". The main skills and competences provided by this master's degree program are as follows:

- Work in national and international teams
- Preparation and analysis of normative documents
- Insurance and management of information
- Development of ideas, projects and scientific data
- Organization and management of project activities
- Interrelation between different state, private, public and non-governmental youth organizations

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof. Asen Diamandiev" – Plovdiv (Академия за музикално, танцово и изобразително изкуство "Проф. Асен Диамандиев" – Пловдив) is an accredited higher education institution providing training for bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees in various specialties of different arts: music or fine arts pedagogy, performing art (classical, folklore or pop and jazz instruments or singing), conducting (classical or folklore choir and orchestra), Bulgarian folklore choreography, ballet art, graphics design and photography, scenography, church painting, costume and fashion, graphics, sculpture, multimedia and virtual reality, art management, etc.

New Bulgarian University offers master's degree program Art Management (Management of Cultural Institutes and Creative Industries). The program is aimed at developing specialists who are able to create and develop own cultural institutions and to manage cultural/ creative industries. While trying to provide students with opportunities to obtain entrepreneurial and managerial knowledge and skills in the field of cultural management, the program offers courses in the field of funding in culture; project development and

management; policies and legislation in the field of culture and cultural management; strategic planning; human resource management, intellectual property management, etc.

The University offers many other programs in the field of creativity and culture. Some of these are:

- Archeological Researches
- Exposition Design and Creative Industries
- Painting
- Classical Music
- Composition and Conducting
- Cultural Tourism
- Cultural and Social Anthropology
- Literature, Book Publishing, Media
- Fashion and Styling
- Music Performance
- Music Sciences
- Musical – Music Drama and Comedy
- Pop and Jazz
- Stage Design and Media
- Dancing
- Creative Writing, etc.

Providing quality access to creative environments

In 2019 the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bulgarian Academy of Science developed a joint program "Education with Science" („Образование с наука"). Under this program students from all schools in Sofia will be able to have out-of-class activities in museums and institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Science. There they will study mathematics in online classrooms, program robots, offer solutions for coping with climate challenges, carry out anthropological researches, chemical experiments, projects in mechanics and holograms, apply cosmic technologies in ecology, etc. 26 projects for the amount of BGN 500 000 are approved under this program through which the museums of the Bulgarian Academy of Science will develop educational programs and activities for the students. The program further plans to organise summer schools for the children and their teachers.

The program is aimed at provoking interest in mathematics, technology, natural sciences, and to expand educational environment. Similar programs are implemented with cultural institutions as well. Every school excursion comprises a visit to sites of educational and cultural importance, thus providing career orientation. The program "Education with Science" („Образование с наука") will help to motivate more students to engage in science and to obtain better knowledge of mathematics and natural sciences. Initially, it will be directed mainly to the children from Sofia, but during the next years its scope will be expanded. The **Bulgarian Academy of Science** has its own traditions in working with young people. The program is more focused on STEM disciplines, however it is spiritually presented through museums and promotes the profession of "researcher".

In accordance with the **2017 Annual Report on Youth (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2017)** with regard to culture and creativity, the **Ministry of Culture** continues implementing the **Program of measures for protection of children with distinguished talents from state and municipal schools (Програма на мерките за закрила на деца с изявени дарби от**

държавни и общински училища) to support children and young people at the age of 15 – 20 years. During the year, 1046 young people in total have received scholarships and single financial grants under this program by proposal of the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Youth and Sports. The funds for the implementation of the program are provided by the national budget and are in the amount of BGN 1 800 000.

In 2017 the **Ministry of Culture** has granted 213 scholarships and 21 single financial grants to students from state and municipal schools.

To promote and support culture clubs (читалища) as centers of information, non-formal education, cultural performance and civic education, the **Ministry of Culture** implements a program for development of amateur creativity and protection of intangible cultural heritage. The program provides financial support to creative projects of culture clubs (читалища), which are implemented jointly with other nongovernmental organisations and municipalities. One of the priorities of the **Ministry of Culture** is to support events aimed at children and young people, including festivals, summons, celebrations, contests and other forms for development of creative potential, for manifestation of talents, for promotion of the achievements of children and youth schools of art, for preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge and skills (intangible cultural heritage), as well as for exchange of effective practices to attract children and youth audiences in the activities of culture clubs (читалища) and other cultural institutions.

50 projects of municipalities, culture clubs (читалища) and other nongovernmental organisations in total amount of BGN 140 000 have been supported in 2017. Some of the financially supported projects are: national contests for bagpipe players ("Magic Rhythms"), for accordion players ("Dancing Keys") and classical guitar players "Academic Marin Goleminov"), National Folklore Festival of Two-Voice Singing – municipality of Nedelino, International Festival of Masquerade Games "Surva 2017" – municipality of Pernik, National Children Folklore Festival – "Sun is Coming Up" („Слънце иде“) – village of Dren, National Student Folklore Feast "It was Born, It was Reborn" („Родило се, преродило“) – city of Yambol, International Children Easter Festival – town of Bosilegrad, Days of National Revival and Patriotic Song "The Gun Shot" („Топчето пукна“) – town of Klisura, National Summon "Predecessors' Days" („Дни на предците“) – municipality of Kaspichan, Week of Arts – municipality of Samokov, International Festival of Authentic Folklore – village of Dorkovo, International Folklore Festival "Dunavtsi Sings and Dances" – town of Dunavtsi, cultural program on the occasion of the 180th Anniversary from the birth of Vasil Levski, Forum of Young Bulgarians from the Balkan Countries – city of Sofia, etc.

In accordance with the **2018 Annual Report on Youth (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2018)**, for the purposes of developing the talent, creative skills and cultural expression of young people, the **Ministry of Culture** has implemented a **Program of Measures for Protection of Children with Distinguished Talents from State, Municipal and Private Schools (Програма на мерките за закрила на деца с изяви дарби от държавни, общински и частни училища)** and has provided scholarships and single financial grants to 973 young people in total by proposal of the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Youth and Sports. The funds for the implementation of the program are provided by the national budget and are in the amount of BGN 1 800 000.

In 2018 the **Ministry of Culture** has granted 281 scholarships and 27 single financial grants to students from state and municipal schools.

The **Ministry of Culture** provides support for the development of creative skills and inclusion of young people to stage arts under program for support of creative projects in the field of stage arts. This program focuses on the inclusion of young people and encouraging their interest to the theater, music and dance arts, as well as on the new generation of artists who are directly involved in the creation and development of stage arts. The program supports the work of stage art festivals. As a priority the program considers festivals for youth audience and active involvement of young performers, such

as the Festival of Association for Free Theater and "Antistatic" which work for the development of the newest forms in modern theater and modern dance. It further supports the Festival of Young People in Theater, which ensures a forum for expression of debut authors. The festival "Small Season" has similar, however more extended mission. The festival presents the achievements and supports the development of youth creativity in different areas of art. In the field of music the following contests for young performers are organised: Young Virtuosos, Pancho Vladigerov International Contest, European Music Festival, and in the field of dance the priority is the Ballet Contest for Young Performers in Varna. All these contests stimulate the creative development of young dancers, composers and music performers. Two sessions for support of festivals in the field of theatric and music and dance art have been conducted in 2018 and have supported 48 festivals and contests with the amount of BGN 281 661.

The program further supports the creation of new theatric, musical and dancing works and the distribution of the finished product across the country. In addition to supporting young people in their creative process, the program is also aimed at ensuring access of youth audience to the newest works in the field of stage arts, thus developing the fastidious taste and attitude to the high artistic work. Two sessions for support of creative projects in the field of theatre art have been conducted in 2018 to support 36 projects with the amount of BGN 196 524. One session has been conducted in the field of music and dancing art to support 10 performances and concerts with the amount of BGN 63 500, and another one for modern dance supporting 9 projects with the amount of BGN 89 893. Five sessions have been conducted under the targeted program for support of creative projects to support 33 targeted projects with the amount of BGN 326 137.

In 2018 the **Ministry of Culture** has announced a session for funding of projects in the field of movable cultural heritage, museums and visual arts on "Museum as an Educational Environment". BGN 165 000 have been granted. 26 projects have been approved for funding and most of their activities are aimed at educational programs for children and young people at preschool and school age.

The National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) implements the Debuts Program (програма „Дебюти“). The aim of program is to attract high quality debut projects and to train candidates in basic skills in the area of project management and public funding in the following fields:

- visual and digital arts;
- for creation of feature, documentary, animation and experimental cinema;
- publication, dissemination and promotion of literature content;
- creation of music content;
- stage arts.

This program comprises 5 modules and namely:

Visual and Digital Arts

The priorities of this module are as follows:

- performances and events in different towns and/or cities and use of varied platforms for dissemination for the purposes of reaching wider audience;
- link between various techniques of artistic realisation and art styles.

Some of the activities funded under this module are:

- projects for creation and dissemination of debut authors' artistic works, designer products, etc., through events, exhibitions, advanced media, etc.;
- projects involving elements of painting, sculpture, architecture, graphics, illustrations, ceramics, wood carving, textile, design, photography, installations, performance with visual elements, street art, etc.;

- projects for creation and dissemination of artistic works and practices based on digital technology as a major element of the creative process, or their presentation (video art, installations, performance, video game concepts, multimedia arts, visual effects, internet art, interactive art, 3D and VR, etc.
- projects for modern and advanced forms of digital arts and modern media)
- debut projects with the involvement of at least 70% debutants in the creative team.

Screen Arts

The priorities of this module are as follows:

- performances and events in different towns and/or cities and use of varied platforms for dissemination for the purposes of reaching wider audience;
- teamwork of artists and cultural managers/ collaborations with artists from different regions of the country and abroad;
- projects developed on the basis of author's works;
- innovative projects that enrich or experiment with means of expressions and genres of the respective form of art or apply interdisciplinary approaches.

Some of the activities funded under this module are:

- projects for creation and dissemination of short debut feature films (up to 30 minutes), documentary films (up to 30 minutes) and cartoons (up to 12 minutes)
- projects for creation and dissemination of short feature, documentary and cartoon series;
- projects for experimental cinema;
- debut projects with the involvement of at least 70% debutants in the creative team.

Literature

As a priority this module funds projects for creation and dissemination of debut author's fiction and drama works.

Music

This module supports the professional realisation of Bulgarian artists at the age of up to 35 years in the field of music.

The priorities of this module are as follows:

- performances and events in different towns and/or cities and use of varied platforms for dissemination for the purposes of reaching wider audience
- projects developed on the basis of author's works;
- innovative projects that enrich or experiment with means of expressions and genres of the respective form of art or apply interdisciplinary approaches.

Some of the activities funded under this module are

- creation and dissemination of debut author's music projects;
- song recording and shooting its video only if the song has not been launched.

Stage Arts

The priorities of this module are as follows:

- projects that develop modern stage practices;
- performances and events in different towns and/or cities and use of varied platforms for dissemination for the purposes of reaching wider audience;
- projects developed on the basis of author's works.

Some of the activities funded under this module are

- publication and dissemination of debut projects in the field of stage arts;
- debut projects with the involvement of at least 70% debutants in the creative team.

The total budget of the program for all five modules is BGN 300 000. It funds projects in the amount of up to BGN 20 000 inclusive (up to BGN 10 000 for the Literature and Music modules).

This module supports the professional realisation of Bulgarian artists at the age of up to 35 years in the field of visual arts, screen arts, literature, music and stage arts.

Definition of DEBUTANT

In accordance with the terms and conditions of the Debuts Program, debutant refers to any natural person or a group of natural persons at the age of up to 35 years who realise up to their third independent professional attempt in the respective field.

The eligible candidates under this program are:

- Bulgarian natural persons – artists at the age of up to 35 years who realise their first independent professional attempt in the respective field;
- creative/ production/ publishing organisations or curators/ art managers, who support and present debutants in the realisation and dissemination of their debut projects (including, state, municipal, private)

Another program implemented by the National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) is the Mobility Program (програма „Мобилност“), Amateur Cultural Organisations and Artists Module (модул „Непрофесионални културни организации и артисти“).

The objectives of this program are as follows:

- projects that contribute to the enhancement of contacts of the representatives of the Bulgarian amateur cultural sector at international level and establishment of long-term partnerships;
- projects supporting the decentralization and diversity of the cultural life in the country;
- promotion of the Bulgarian amateur culture and art at international cultural events and forums;
- projects for sharing and mastering good practices in short- and long-term perspective;
- projects involving young people (up to the age of 30) and engage them on long-term basis in the amateur cultural sector.

As a priority the program funds the following projects:

- projects selected for the respective event;
- projects for planning future activities with the inviting organization/ participants in the event;
- projects contributing to the establishment of cultural connections and interactions with Europe and European countries;
- projects for participation of Bulgarian amateur artists at international, national and local cultural forums (cultural events, programs, festivals, debates, conferences, seminars, etc.)
- projects for participation of foreign artists, managers and promoters in the field of culture and arts in national and local forums;
- projects for involvement of Bulgarian artists in international cultural exchange, international cultural networks and initiatives;

- projects for decentralization of cultural events.

The program funds project expenses in the amount of up to BGN 1500 inclusive for individual trips, and up to BGN 5000 for group trips. The annual budget of the program is BGN 250 000.

Eligible candidates are as follows:

- all cultural organisations, including non-profit organisations, as well as individual cultural figures residing in Bulgaria;
- Bulgarian natural persons representing non-formal groups of artists;
- Bulgarian cultural organisations representing foreign natural persons – cultural operators and artists invited to participate in cultural events in Bulgaria.

Creative Development Program (програма „Творческо развитие“) of the National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) has two modules: Long-Term and Short-Term Events.

This program is aimed at:

- participation of Bulgarian artists, cultural figures and professionals in international, national and local training events and professional development activities;
- ensuring scholarships for organisations that carry out training events and professional development activities (for Bulgarian participants only).

The priorities of the program are:

- upgrading mastered practices and skills and high quality exchange;
- active participation in debates and new trends in the field of development of the candidates.

Target groups:

- artists, cultural managers, critics who are in process of study;
- realized artists, cultural managers and critics who are looking for opportunities to develop their skills.

Eligible projects:

- projects for participation of Bulgarian authors in training events and professional development activities (seminar, workshop, planner, practice, studio, etc.) with duration of more and less than one month, respectively (long- and short-term);
- projects ensuring scholarships for participation of Bulgarian artists in training events.

Eligible candidates:

- Bulgarian natural persons;
- all cultural organisations, including non-profit organisations.

The maximum amount of long-term project funding is BGN 8000, and for short-term project funding – BGN 4000.

The total amount of funds available under this program is BGN 60 000 for the two modules.

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

In 2018 under the National Youth Program /2016-2020/ (Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/), the Ministry of Youth and Sports has funded a project on Youth Art Entrepreneurship implemented by There's Hope for Everyone Association (Сдружение

„Има надежда за всички“). Trainings on youth art entrepreneurship were organised in the frames of the project in the following areas: cultural management, principles of entrepreneurship, management and funding, human resource management, communication and presentation skills, etc. The training focused on business models and business planning in arts and creative industries, sources of funding, brand development, and traditional and digital marketing.

Trainings were fully based on the non-formal learning methods. Participants were able to share their ideas, to discuss on specific themes, to obtain important information in the field of art and culture, and about the opportunities for social entrepreneurship.

The following activities were organised within the frames of the project:

- Youth Art Entrepreneurship Gallery. The main purpose of the activity was to create opportunities for applying the knowledge obtained during the training and to enable the participants to present themselves and their products before the visitors. The participants met famous artists and discussed with them various opportunities for their professional and creative expression, as well as future ideals. Professionals gave young people valuable guidance and shared the specificities of art entrepreneurship with them.
- Art studio – workshop presenting to the visitors, guests and participants diverse painting techniques. It gave the opportunity to all stakeholders to have practical advice in the field of youth art entrepreneurship.
- Manual for Realisation of Young Authors. The publication was published in 300 copies. They were disseminated among the participants, students and other young people interested in youth art entrepreneurship – schools, universities, employment agencies and organisations operating in the field of culture and art. The Manual is developed on the basis of research materials and the experience of experts and other successful professionals in this field.
- Round Table on Innovations and European Practices in the Field of Youth Art Entrepreneurship. Young people who took part in the training and other young people interested in culture and art, dealing with art or willing to develop as art entrepreneurs took part in the round table. The participants were made familiar with the European practices and innovations in the field of cultural entrepreneurship, thus raising their awareness in this area.

At the end of December 2019, *There's Hope for Everyone Association* (Сдружение „Има надежда за всички“) will implement another project funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports under the National Youth Program /2016-2020/ (Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/) on Innovations in Youth Art Entrepreneurship.

See section 8.4 – Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people: Cultural Heritage Program (програма „Културно наследство“) of the National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“).

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

In accordance with Ordinance No 7 on profiled education (Наредба № 7 за профилираната подготовка) issued by the Minister of Education and Science, profiled education on entrepreneurship is aimed at developing principal knowledge, skills and attitudes for successful continuation of education in a university, or for starting own business. Education focuses on the development of entrepreneurship culture and the pertaining qualities, skills and attitudes to entrepreneurship. This culture is based on the proactive behaviour, development of innovation and initiative of young people, of their teamwork skills, of their sense of responsibility and motivation for success. The main purpose of profiled education on entrepreneurship is to outline the economic culture, managerial skills, competences and behavioural models in the field of entrepreneurship.

As a result of such profiled education, students:

- are encouraged to improve their self-confidence by taking responsibility;

- develop their inventiveness and creativity through appropriate methodologies for training tailored to their age;
- upgrade important skills, such as making informed decision, teamwork skills, problem solving, establishment of partnership networks, etc.

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

The Ministry of Education and Science implements a program for innovations in the field of secondary education called **Innovative Schools** (Иновативни училища). Every year non-specialised schools may submit projects to apply for innovative school. The program for innovations in the field of secondary education is aimed at creating a network of innovative schools in Bulgaria. Innovative schools are a model of modern school where students improve their education performance and enhance their ability for critical thinking and creativity through innovative education processes, teaching techniques, school leadership and curricula. The list of innovative schools for every academic year is subject to approval by the Council of Ministers by proposal of the Minister of Education and Science. The innovative elements may be embedded in the teaching methodology, the organization, school environment, quality of education, academic content, and/or in 10% of the curricula and programs for the respective stage of education.

Educate to Create was a flagship one and a half day conference on education during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2018). The event was co-organised by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

The conference gave the opportunity to bring attention to the pressing need to raise digital skills and competence levels across Europe and to support young people in using technologies for creativity, knowledge construction and effective and efficient learning. It focused on the 'ecosystem' surrounding the learner and addressed teacher training, support for organisations, cooperation with industry and the role of non-formal education.

This event tied in with two of the main political priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency namely digital skills and youth, as well as with the policy objectives of the **Digital Education Action Plan** adopted in January 2018 by the European Commission. It also supported the **Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture**, which highlights the urgent need to boost levels of digital competence and work towards a European Education Area, where driving innovation in education and modernising the development of curricula are key objectives. Around 300 participants and more than 40 high-level speakers took part in the event at Sofia Tech Park, the innovation and digital hub of Bulgaria's capital. The conference targeted a diverse number of stakeholders- policy makers, educators, students, innovators, the business sector, NGO representatives and researchers.

As technology increasingly transforms our world, young people need to be able to shape, manipulate and solve problems with technology. This is crucial not only for today's job market but for full participation in many aspects of daily life. The **Digital Education Action Plan**, adopted by the European Commission in January, highlights the need for young people in Europe to be more than simply users of technology and to become the next digital creators, innovators and leaders.

Across the continent, a growing variety of organisations, volunteers, tech enthusiasts and parents are running workshops, clubs and events that help stimulate digital creativity. Schools are also playing a key role with teachers fostering creativity with digital means. Many young people are exploring digital creativity of their own accord. Such digital making can take many forms from blogging to programming and coding, robotics, 3D printing, music, art, fashion and film-making.

Young children and teenagers are innately creative and are drawn to activities through which they can create new objects and artefacts and solve problems. Technology can help nurture creativity both within and outside of school. In the school context, digital creativity can be found in many subject areas, from art, music to sports lessons. Digital making can also be 'cross curricular' in its nature which can be both a challenge and an opportunity. Many young people learn digital making skills in schools but off the timetable in lunchtime or afternoon clubs.

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

See section 8.4 – Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people: Cultural Heritage Program (програма „Културно наследство“) of the National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“).

See section 8.5 – Providing quality access to creative environments: Debuts Program (програма „Дебюти“), Visual and Digital Arts module of the National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“).

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

There is no single document that covers the participation of young people in culture and creativity. Synergies between public policies and programs are ensured through the interministerial consultative bodies supporting the development and implementation of governmental policies in the field of youth, culture and education. See section 8.2 – Cross-sectoral cooperation.

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

The Youth Fair Festival (фестивал „Панаир на младите“) has been launched in 2007 as an initiative of the Youth Theater “Nikolay Binev” (Младежки театър „Николай Бинев“). The idea of the forum is to be a platform for expression of young theatre actors in their stage attempts and projects. Every year, at the beginning of the new theater season, the stages of the Youth Theater host the young people for a week.

The Youth Fair Festival – SITE-SPECIFIC Theatre 2019 (Фестивал „Панаир на младите – SITE-SPECIFIC Theatre 2019“) is organized with the kind support of Sofia Municipality and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria. The event was part of the 2019 Calendar of cultural events of Sofia Municipality. The twelfth edition of the one and only SITE-SPECIFIC theater festival in Bulgaria was held in October 2019. For another year the festival offered to the audience unique theater experiences and magnificent performances within the untraditional theater spaces of the Youth Theater “Nikolay Binev” (Младежки театър „Николай Бинев“).

SITE-SPECIFIC theater means a type of stage performance inspired by the specific space, which does not refer to the traditional notions of stage and theater hall.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

In accordance with the 2018 Annual Report on Youth (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2018), for the purposes of promoting and supporting the knowledge of different ethnic communities and their culture aimed at encouraging tolerance, understanding and interaction between communities, the Ministry of Culture supports financially creative projects of organisations of ethnic communities and of other cultural institutions operating

in the field of intercultural dialogue. Numerous events have been supported in 2018, including: Shofar Annual Awards for Tolerance of the [Organisation of Jews in Bulgaria Shalom](#), organization and staging of concert and activities on the occasion of the Roma's New Year "Vasilitsa", celebration of 8th of April – International Day of Romas, etc.

The National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) funds projects under [program Socially Engaged Arts \(програма „Социално ангажирани изкуства“\)](#). The program is aimed at projects in all fields of art and culture addressing social problems and causes and applying creative approaches when dealing with disadvantaged communities and groups.

By funding various projects, the program is aimed at:

- encouraging the work with disadvantaged groups and unrepresented social groups in creative processes;
- developing marginalised groups and communities through arts;
- implementing social design projects;
- generating energy and willingness for positive change through art that affects and addresses social topics of public importance;
- establishing prerequisites for positive change in the public attitudes and engagement in various social cases;
- attracting attention and resources to socially important topics;
- involving socially unrepresented groups and disadvantaged groups in creative processes for creation of cultural product/ event.

The scope of eligible activities and objectives of the program is as follows:

- projects aimed at ensuring creative freedom of participants;
- projects that provide opportunities for interaction between the target group and other communities;
- projects that provide opportunities for applying artistic psycho-social practices by a professional in the respective field to the target groups;
- projects that ensure access to art and culture for people and communities that rarely have access to cultural content;
- projects that provide opportunities for active interaction between the community members or between different communities through art and creative processes;
- projects for development of creative processes and products that successfully demonstrate the specific features of the community and develop its sense of identity;
- creative projects that attract public attention to important social topics, etc.

The budget of the program is BGN 120 000. The allowed grant per project is in the amount of BGN 15 000 inclusive.

In 2018 under the National Youth Program /2016-2020/ (Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/), the Ministry of Youth and Sports has funded a project on "Theater Art as a Mean of Communication and Personal Development of Youth" implemented by Key to Happiness Association (Сдружение „Ключ към щастие“). The project involved young people from small towns on the territory of Sandanski Municipality.

Trainings on the following topics were organised with the frames of the project:

- Transforming a literature text into theater event;
- Fundamental principles of director's work;
- Teamwork for development of production;
- Technical details, use of lighting. Music to the show;

- Label of the theatre. Nature and structure;
- Concentration and attention;
- Major principles of stage movements;
- Actions with imaginary objects. Interaction with the partner;
- Esthetics and props;
- Art management, etc.

15 theater performances in 15 different towns on the territory of Sandanski Municipality were organised. The outcomes of the project were as follows: creating attractive environment for development of young people in small towns and rural areas by establishing favourable, encouraging and supporting conditions for high quality professional realisation of young people in the field of theater art; enriching their knowledge and skills in various artistic activities, thus developing their intellect and forming their personality.

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

In accordance with an agreement for cooperation signed between the **Ministry of Culture** and the **Ministry of Education and Science** in 2018, the two ministries implement measures and activities involving the institutions of pre-school and school education and the national, regional and municipal museums and art galleries in the country. They cooperate as follows:

1. The institutions in the pre-school and school education organise visits of children and students to national, regional and municipal museums and art galleries in the country as part of their general education and in the form of out-of-school activities;
2. National, regional and municipal museums and art galleries develop and propose to the pre-school and school education institutions museum educational programs and initiatives for each class or group relevant to their pre-school and school education.
3. The organised visits to national, regional and municipal museums and galleries, as well as the out-of-class activities from early pre-school age are aimed at developing attitudes to culture and general and at obtaining better knowledge and interests in the field of cultural heritage and visual arts, and will be carried out on the basis of the proposed programs and initiatives.

Museums education programs and initiatives are directed to children and students with special educational needs and children and students whose mother language is other than Bulgarian.

8.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Currently the **Ministry of Culture** is in process of development of a Strategy for Development of Bulgarian Culture 2019 – 2029.

Ongoing debates

One of the objectives of the draft Strategy for Development of Bulgarian Culture 2019 – 2029 with regard to youth is better coverage of culture and arts in the compulsory school curriculum focusing on the development of creative thinking, expression and knowing the modern vivid culture.

The time horizon of the future Strategy for Development of Bulgarian Culture is 10 years – from 2019 to 2029. The document will be subject to update every two years and to

continuous monitoring taking into account the changing living conditions and developing sectors.

An action plan will be developed for the purposes of the implementation of the strategy, which will specify clear and reasonable deadlines, commitments and responsibilities.

Currently a new National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 is in process of development, however the first draft of the strategy is still not available.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

9.1 General context

Main concepts

The National Youth Program /2016-2020/ (Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/) is one of the tools for implementation of national youth policy priorities. It is based on the needs of young people in the country and is in harmony with the priorities of the EU youth policy.

The strategic objectives of the program support the implementation of the following strategic goals of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) (Националната стратегия за младежта (2010-2020)):

- Facilitating the access to high quality service for special support and full-value personal and social development of young people in accordance with their needs and interests;
- Promoting healthy lifestyle among young people;
- Developing volunteer activities among young people as a driver for personal development, mobility, learning, competitive power, social cohesion, solidarity between generations and formation of civic self-awareness;
- Creating attractive environment for development of young people in small towns and in rural areas;
- Creating favourable, encouraging and supporting environment for professional realisation of young people in Bulgaria.

With the adoption of the new European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 the process currently known as "Structured Dialogue" was transformed into "EU Youth Dialogue". The new framework of the process defines the new priorities – Engagement, Inclusion and Empowerment. The purpose of the forthcoming Dialogue-related activities is to reach the so called unorganised youth – young people who are not members of youth organisations and are not part of informal groups. For this purpose the Structured Dialogue (Структуриран диалог) website was created with online platform for participation.

The National Youth Forum (NYF) (Национален младежки форум (НМФ)) is the National Youth Council of Bulgaria. Together with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the members of the National Working Group for implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue – youth organisations and institutions, NYF actively develops the theme of effective participation of young people in decision-making processes at national and European level. The National Youth Forum is the biggest youth platform in Bulgaria, which unites 50 youth organisations across the country. It is a full member of the European Youth Forum and active partner of national and European institutions for the establishment and advocacy of youth policies. Its mission is to represent the interests and needs of young people in Bulgaria focusing on the importance and significance of youth organisations, their development and participation in social and sociopolitical processes, and to ensure efficient structured dialogue through cooperation with the respective stakeholders and institutions making decisions in the field of youth policy.

The Public Council on Youth Issues is a consultative unit at the Minister of Youth and Sports for the establishment of positions, opinions and initiatives for solving problems within their jurisdiction. The Public Council discusses and makes proposals for draft legal regulations and strategic documents and proposes specific initiatives in the field of young people in the country, gives recommendations to the Minister of Youth and Sports for solving issues within the youth sector, coordinates the interaction between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and nongovernmental sector representatives when developing and implementing the youth policies. The members of the Council are representatives of organisations

registered under the **Non-Profit Legal Entities Act (Закон за юридическите лица с нестопанска цел)** for pursuing activities in public benefit and for implementation of youth activities.

The National Consultative Youth Council is a consultative body supporting the Minister of Youth and Sports in the implementation of the national youth policy.

Youth interest in global issues

According to the data in Flash Eurobarometer No. 455 (published in 2018) in Bulgaria:

- 12% of young people are involved in a political organisation or a political party;
- 3% of young people are involved in an organisation promoting human rights or global development;
- 3% of young people are involved in an organisation active in the domain of climate change or environmental issues;
- 71% of young people have voted in any political election at local, regional, national or EU level during the last 3 years;
- 22% of young people have participated in organised voluntary activities.

According to the same study 65% of young people in Bulgaria believe that the environment protection and fight against climate change should be a priority of the EU, 28% believe that EU should have the management of migratory flows and integration of refugees as a priority, and another 6% state that this should be the democratic participation.

As stated in the 2018 Annual Report on Youth (Годишен доклад за младежта за 2018):

- Young people at the age of 15 – 19 are least interested in politics (3% - I am very interested, 22% - I am rather interested). The share of young people interested in politics increases with the age increase.
- 35% of young people in the country do not spend time to read latest news (15-19 years of age – those who are still not politically active.
- A 63% majority of young people believe that Bulgaria has rather benefitted of its EU membership. As a tradition, young people in Bulgaria have positive attitude to the EU membership.

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The **Ministry of Youth and Sports** implements the national youth policy, which is aimed at targeted and consistent actions of the government, municipalities, youth organisations and society for the purposes of establishing favourable conditions for full-value personal development of young people and their participation in the public and economic life, as well as their inclusion in the governance at local, district and national level. It coordinates the youth policies in the field of education, social policy, healthcare, culture, sports, justice, internal affairs and defence, and is in charge with the synergies between the national youth policy and the policy for young people implemented by and within the frames of the **European Union**, the **Council of Europe** and the **United Nations**.

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** is the major government authority charged with all issues of the foreign politics and international relations.

The **Human Resources Development Center (HRDC)** administers, promotes, advises, organises and coordinates the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in **Erasmus+** - the EU Program in the field of education, training, youth and sports, and its related horizontal programs and activities, in the **European Solidarity Corps Program**, and in other EU and

international educational programs and initiatives. It is subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Despite the strong cross-sectoral and horizontal nature of youth policy, there is no specific body for cross-sectoral cooperation. However, there are mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation ensured through the National Consultative Youth Council, the Public Council on Youth Issues, the members of which represent different ministries, agencies, youth organisations and other stakeholders. (see subsection 9.3)

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

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

The Public Council on Youth Issues is a consultative unit at the Minister of Youth and Sports for the establishment of positions, opinions and initiatives for solving problems within their jurisdiction. The Public Council discusses and makes proposals for draft legal regulations and strategic documents and proposes specific initiatives in the field of young people in the country, gives recommendations to the Minister of Youth and Sports for solving issues within the youth sector, coordinates the interaction between the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** and nongovernmental sector representatives when developing and implementing the youth policies. The members of the Council are representatives of organisations registered under the **Non-Profit Legal Entities Act (Закон за юридическите лица с нестопанска цел)** for pursuing activities in public benefit and for implementation of youth activities.

The National Consultative Youth Council is a consultative body supporting the Minister of Youth and Sports in the implementation of the national youth policy. The National Consultative Council on Youth comprises the following members:

1. deputy minister of youth and sports, deputy minister of economy, deputy minister of tourism, deputy minister of labour and social policy, deputy minister of healthcare, deputy minister of culture, deputy minister of interior, deputy minister of justice, deputy minister of regional development and public works, deputy minister of finance, deputy minister of education and science, deputy chairperson of the **Child Protection State Agency (Държавна агенция за закрила на детето)**;
2. representative of the **National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria**;
3. representative of the **National Representation of Student Councils (Национално представителство на студентските съвети в Република България)**;
4. one representative of each nationally represented youth organisation.

In Bulgaria a National Working Group for implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue is currently in process of establishment. (See subsection 9.7.)

As part of the administration of the Erasmus+ program, in 2018 HRDC has funded projects for structured dialogue between young people and youth policy-makers at local level. 1 956 young people have taken direct participation in these projects (more than 40% increase in comparison to 2017), which shows strong interest on the youth policy topics and active involvement in the civic society.

Furthermore, in 2018 two meetings of the national children's consultative body – the Council of Children, were held in the city of Haskovo and the city of Plovdiv. The procedure for selection of children – members of the Council, with the cooperation of the municipal authorities and district administrations, was carried out in 15 districts and 28 members were selected (main and substitute members). During their meetings, young people

discuss topics related to the closing of penitentiaries, child's mental health, the national child helpline 116 111, amendments in the Council's By-Laws for inclusion of children looking for and receiving international protection, thematic fields in the new Child National Strategy, planning of campaigns and discussion for establishment of awards for media engaged with the child care quality.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

Twice a year young people from Bulgaria participate in the political debates of the youth ministers within the frames of informal lunches or breakfasts organised during the regular sessions of the [EU Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council](#). They have the opportunity to discuss with policy-makers various themes on important issues set out by the [Presidency of the Council of the EU](#).

The EU Youth Conferences organised twice a year are another mechanism for exchange of views with politicians. The official Bulgarian delegates who participate in these conferences are selected by means of contest organised by the NYF and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Candidates need to be young people or representatives of youth organisations experienced in the field at the age of 15 to 29 years, or youth workers (without age limits).

Numerous activities were implemented in 2018 with regard to the increase of young people's civil activity. This year was rich of youth participation in the youth policy development and implementation processes in Bulgaria, having in mind that our country was charged with the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Meetings of the Public Council on Youth Issues at the Minister of Youth and Sports were held to discuss the calendar of Presidency events. The key event was the EU Youth Conference held in Sofia, which was attended by more than 200 participants from Europe, the Western Balkans and the East Partnership. The main purpose of the conference was to give opportunity for direct participation of young people in the development of the new [European Union Youth Strategy](#). The major deliverable of this conference is the establishment of the first youth goals, which are currently part of the new [European Union Youth Strategy](#).

In 2019, the Bulgarian UN youth delegate took part in the Climate Summit in September in New York. The National Program Bulgarian UN Youth Delegates (Национална програма „Български младежки делегати към ООН“) starts in 2006 and is implemented by the United Nations Association of Bulgaria. The National Youth Forum (NYF) (Национален младежки форум (НМФ)) and ISIC Bulgaria are partners of the program. For a thirteen year in a row, two young persons are official delegates of our country in the UN. The main vision of youth delegates is to be a bridge between young people in Bulgaria and the institutions – both at national and at international level. This is ensured through regular meetings with young people countrywide and enquiries among them for the purposes of identifying their key issues and needs. These data are summarised and analysed and are then used to prepare the speech of the youth delegates to the UN General Assembly and the ECOSOC Commission for Social Development. The Bulgarian government, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN recognise the Program Bulgarian UN Youth Delegates (Програма „Български младежки делегати“) as the legitimate voice of the young people in Bulgaria. Thus, every year two young people take part in the decision-making process at the highest international level and practically ensure the youth participation in the development of young people-related policies and strategies.

Structured dialogue is a tool that ensures that young people's opinion has been taken into account for the formation of youth-related policies within the European Union. In order to achieve this, structured dialogue unites young people, youth organisations, representatives of youth organisations and policy-makers across the EU to jointly discuss issues relevant to young people and to get involved in the youth policy at national and European level.

In 2019 the **Ministry of Youth and Sports** funded the participation of a Bulgarian youth leader in the Youth Model ICPD International Conference organised on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Nairobi Summit on Population and Development and held in Cairo, Egypt. The Cairo Conference was dedicated to the population and development issues, and in particular to extremely important topics such as sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people, gender equality and gender-based, the harmful practices in sexual and reproductive health, and to the global demographic situation.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

School and Preschool Education Act (Закон за училищното и предучилищното образование), school and school education is aimed inter alia at ensuring:

- Obtaining competences necessary for successful personal and professional realisation and active civil life in modern communities;
- Obtaining competences to apply the sustainable development principles;
- Obtaining competences to understand and apply the principles of democracy and constitutional state, of human rights and freedoms, of active and responsible civil participation;
- Establishing tolerance and respect to ethnical, cultural, language and religious identity of every citizen;
- Establishing tolerance and respect to the rights of children, students and people with disabilities;
- Obtaining competences to understand global processes, trends and their interrelations.

General education at school is equal for all types of schools and is obtained by studying the same general education subjects. General education is obtained in the course of the entire school training and covers the following groups of key competences:

1. competences in the field of Bulgarian language;
2. skills to communicate in foreign languages;
3. mathematic competence and major competences in the field of natural sciences and technologies;
4. digital competence;
5. learning skills;
6. social and civil competences;
7. initiative and entrepreneurship;
8. cultural competence and skills for expression through creativity;
9. skills for sustainable development and healthy lifestyle.

Above key competences are interrelated and represent a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the personal development of an individual through the lifetime, for establishment of active civil position and participation in social life, and for individual's fitness for realisation at the labour market.

Critical thinking, problem solutions, initiative, creativity, taking responsibility, teamwork, are all competences that are obtained through the study of all general education subjects.

The promotion of sustainable development principles, including environmental, economic and social dimensions and aimed at outlining a long-term vision of society is ensured

through the study of varied subjects and is aimed at developing skills for taking personal responsibility for the sustainable future.

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

The following campaigns and many other initiatives were organised in 2018 through which the Council of Children members make their peers aware of their rights and how to spend their leisure time usefully:

- City of Games
- Week of Healthy Nutrition
- Healthy and Safe Summer
- Life without Violence for all Children under the moto #ACT!
- Week of Tolerance (12-16 November)
- Week of Child's Rights (19-23 November),

At the beginning of February the International Day of Safe Internet was celebrated together with the Council of Children. In 15 districts across the country the children from the Council organised events dedicated on safe internet. With the support of the **Bulgarian National Television** and the **Fight against Organised Crime General Directorate at the Ministry of Interior (Генерална дирекция „Борба с организираната престъпност“ на МВР)** a movie on this topic was presented and issues about safety of children on the internet and online safety were discussed.

In 2017, together with Italy and Latvia, Bulgaria was part of the second group of countries that implemented pilot projects with the support of the **Council of Europe** for assessment of child participation in accordance with the **Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool**. The successful implementation of this project in Bulgaria increased the awareness of child participation and after the initial assessment of the status, the project outlined the good practices and identified measures for better compliance with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The assessment results show that Bulgaria has established and develops policies and mechanisms aimed at facilitating the inclusion of children in public life, legislation and all other processes that affect them. The **Child Protection State Agency (Държавна агенция за закрила на детето)** whose mission is to ensure the right of young people to express their opinion plays a key role in encouraging young people's participation in the processes of policy development, implementation and monitoring.

For the purposes of ensuring sustainability of measures undertaken under **Environment Operational Program 2014-2020**, three big initiatives were organised, including Green Olympiad. 1 400 students from 25 schools competed in environment quizzes, and more than 5 000 people participated in the online edition of the contest.

In 2018 the information centers within the system of the **Ministry of Environment and Water** (33) significantly increased their activity. All of them organise information and educational initiatives for increasing environmental mind and culture of different social groups, publish information materials and carry out training programs in partnership with institutions and nongovernmental organisations in different regions. During the year they have organised 11 national and 14 regional information and educational programs for improvement of environmental mind and culture of young people and various initiatives in partnership with institutions, business and nongovernmental organisations in different regions.

Information providers

The **Ministry of Education and Science** develops, updates and promotes information database in the field of civic education, health education, sustainable development education, prevention of violence through the development of curricula and educational materials, collection and introduction of products and good practices as a result of

implemented projects. It further supports the interaction between the educational, family, institutional and social environment and carries out activities in the area of civic, health and sustainable development education through cooperation and partnership between teachers, parents, students and representatives of organisations and institutions external for the school.

The **Ministry of Environment and Water** actively participates in the process of encouraging non-formal education for environment protection. It publishes educational materials and carries out national campaigns for protection of environment included in the **National Calendar of the Ministry of Education and Science for out-of-class and out-of-school activities** (Национален календар на Министерството на образованието и науката за извънкласните и извънучилищни дейности). The centers on the territory of **Pirin National Park** (НП „Пирин“) have organised 128 interactive activities with the participation of more than 4800 children and young people, and 8 educational excursions with more than 200 students from different cities.

In 2018, the campaigns and initiatives of the **Ministry of Environment and Water** have involved 36 700 children and students from about 700 schools and preschools across the country. To a great extent these initiatives facilitate the establishment of more attractive and favourable environment at school, for increasing students' interest in collective school life and for development of teamwork skills.

HRDC funds projects for capacity building in the field of youth aimed at a number of fields promoting the cooperation between organisations active in the field of youth, education, training and other socioeconomic sectors from different regions of the world. Such projects are aimed at recognizing and improving the youth work, non-formal education and volunteering and at establishing the connection between them and the educational systems and the employment markets. Furthermore, they support schemes for regional and international informal mobility for educational purposes aimed at encouraging young people's participation in the society.

Key initiatives

The strategic goals of the National Youth Program /2016-2020/ (Национална програма за младежта /2016-2020/) are achieved through the following activities:

Strategic goal: Facilitating the access to high quality service for special support and full-value personal and social development of young people in accordance with their needs and interests.

- Establishment of a network of youth information and consultative centers (YICC) providing high quality services for young people;
- Provision of consultancy services and trainings in support of personal and social development of young people, including for developing vital skills, as well as services for organization of young people's leisure time.
- Development and recognition of youth work.

Strategic goal: Promoting healthy lifestyle among young people

- Carrying out campaigns and initiatives aimed at development of knowledge and skills for healthy lifestyle, safe conduct and avoiding practices harmful for the health;
- Providing opportunities for training of young people on health, sports and physical activity issues, including by developing the peer-to-peer learning approach.

Strategic goal: Developing volunteer activities among young people as a driver for personal development, mobility, learning, competitive power, social cohesion, solidarity between generations and formation of civic self-awareness.

- Introducing and maintaining efficient practices for work with young volunteers, their training, encouragement, monitoring and assessment of their work, and recognition of their achievements.

- Organising the participation of young people in volunteering initiatives;
- Establishment of youth volunteering standards and public control in protection of young volunteers;
- Carrying out campaigns and initiatives for promotion of youth volunteering in society.

Strategic goal: Ensuring opportunities for overall participation of young people in social life and for their cohesion to the main democratic values and standards.

- Improving young people's awareness with regard to EU policies and their implementation at national level;
- Organising campaigns and initiatives on topical issues in pursuance of the EU and Council of Europe policies for young people.

Strategic goal: Creating attractive environment for development of young people in small towns and in rural areas.

- Introduction of mobile forms of youth and social work for young people from small towns, remote and hardly accessible areas;
- Ensuring efficient access to information, training and consultations of young people in small towns and rural areas;
- Promotion of initiatives of young people in small towns and rural areas.

Strategic goal: Creating favourable, encouraging and supporting environment for professional realisation of young people in Bulgaria.

- Promotion of social entrepreneurship among young people.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

The **Ministry of Environment and Water** implements consistent policy for improvement of environmental mind and culture of young people. In pursuance of the targets for encouraging the participation of young people and their organisations in the protection, improvement and management of natural resources, in 2018 the Ministry has prepared and carried out 11 national campaigns on the occasion of the events of the international eco-calendar. Another 14 campaigns on environment protection were organised across the country.

Within the frames of these campaigns, the **Ministry of Environment and Water** organised round tables, conferences for students and young people, outdoor classes, contests, exhibitions, nature protection initiatives, eco-trail routes, eco shows, cleaning and afforestation activities, separate waste disposal activities, quizzes, training seminars and various forums with the participation of tens of thousands of young people on the territory of the country. These initiatives are a good example for partnership with local authorities, institutions, business and nongovernmental organisations at regional level.

Some of the more popular campaigns are: international contest for young talents "Music and Earth"; educational programs "The Park as a Classroom", and "For the Balkan with Love" of Central Balkan National Park; the traditional "Carnival of Biodiversity" organised by Burgas Regional Inspection of Environment and Water, etc.

In 2018 a big project has been started together with Oceans without Borders Foundation for cleaning the Danube River from plastic waste. In the course of the initiatives, most of the regional units report increased attention to the work with children and young people from disadvantaged and minority groups and enhanced activity of schools and preschools from small municipalities and towns across the country.

Through its regional structures, the **Ministry of Environment and Water** actively participates and provides expert, logistic and financial support for the timely collection of wastes on the territory of the country within the frames of the campaign “**Let’s Clean Bulgaria for a Day**” („Да изчистим България”). During the campaign, the **Ministry of Environment and Water** exempts the disposal of collected wastes from charge, and the regional environment and water inspections attract hundreds of young people and partner nongovernmental organisations, eco clubs and schools across the regions.

The national campaign “**For Clean Environment**” („За чиста околна среда”) takes special place in terms of its scope. During the years it has proven to be an effective mechanism for activity and financial support of municipalities, schools and preschools to undertake actions such as cleaning, afforestation, greening, construction or reconstruction of children playgrounds, recreation areas, etc. The projects implemented within the frames of the campaign ensure that the modern trends in the field of environment protection are taken into account by the educational process. This year’s edition of the contest has funded 110 projects of schools, 132 projects of preschools and 232 projects of municipalities.

Green production and consumption

Many of the environmental and human health issues refer to unsustainable consumption and production methods. They result in increased use of natural resources, generation of more wastes, and at the same time in increase of the needs of transport and infrastructure for their transportation and disposal. Experts monitor with concern the overconsumption of pesticides, herbicides and manure in agriculture. Disposal of waste packages is most visible – a problem which has become a global issue for less than two decades.

For the purposes of changing the attitude to nutrition and separate collection of wastes, civic education standards are introduced as a prerequisite for raising awareness among students, their families and the society in general. The state educational standards for educational content comprise basic cores of educational content related to sustainable development education. According to the standard, the environmental education is directed to the development of environmental culture, awareness and conduct with view of the knowledge in the field of environment, protection, improvement, management and rational use of natural resources, environment and environmental balance protection.

The first of its kind training biofarm for children “**Sunny Garden**” is developed on the territory of the Agroenvironmental center at the **University of Agriculture – Plovdiv**. The project is funded by the **Norwegian Program for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development Cooperation in Bulgaria** (Норвежка програма за сътрудничество). The purpose of Sunny Garden Biofarm is to contribute to the environmental education of children and to improve school and university students’ knowledge on sustainable production, and in particular bio agriculture, on sustainable lifestyle and environment protection.

The **Eco-Schools Program** (програма “Екоучилища”) is an international program initiated and managed by nongovernmental organisations – members of the Environmental Education Foundation. 108 schools and preschools work for the Eco-Schools Program in Bulgaria. 62 educational establishments are awarded with Green Flag.

Litter Less campaign is aimed at decrease of wastes and pollution. It is implemented in 25 countries, including Bulgaria and has the objective to engage and educate children and young people on waste issues and to encourage long-term change of their conduct. Fifteen schools in Bulgaria were granted initial funds to facilitate the campaign activities.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

During the period 01.10.2017 – 30.09.2018 the National Center of Public Health and Analyses implemented a project “Youth Leadership for Development and Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”. The project involved participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Iraq and Afghanistan. The total budget of the project was BGN 188 740. The target group comprised youth leaders, national coordinators and activists of national Y-PEER networks in the Western Balkan countries, the Black Sea region and countries which are characterized by internal instability and are sources of migration flows, potential staff and experts in national and regional institutions of their countries. The overall objectives of the project were:

- To facilitate the exchange of experience in promoting democracy, protecting human rights and supporting civil society in the development of evidence-based youth policies and programs, by building capacity and empowering young people from partner countries in the Western Balkans, the Black Sea region and countries characterized by internal instability and sources of migration flows.
- To contribute to building the administrative capacity for improving the health and education of young people and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Development Agenda in the Western Balkans, the Black Sea region and countries characterized by internal instability and are sources of migration flows.
- To promote the Bulgarian Development Aid during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Development cooperation activities

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of the development cooperation policy. It implements a budget program “International Development Cooperation” (Бюджетна програма „Международно сътрудничество за развитие“). The program is aimed at supporting the institutional and administrative capacity building of the partner countries from the Western Balkans, the Black Sea region/ East Partnership and other countries meeting the requirements of the OECD Development Aid Committee.

However not directly targeted at young people, the projects funded under the program should focus on the following priority fields:

- Strengthening democracy and support for better governance, protection of human rights and civil society;
- Environment protection;
- Improvement of the quality of education and protection of the rights of children with disabilities and those with fewer opportunities;
- Sustainable management in the field of agriculture and food;
- Support for higher quality of healthcare;
- Support for initiatives for expanding joint trade and investment activity;
- Protection of cultural diversity;
- Capacity building in support of security and development.

9.7 Current debates and reforms

A National Working Group for implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue is now in process of establishment. In general, the group will perform the following tasks:

- Ensuring consistent and continuous process of implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue throughout all cycles;
- Raising the awareness of the EU Youth Dialogue process at national and local level among the society, young people, nongovernmental organisations and institutions;
- Ensuring efficient cooperation and dialogue between the youth sector and the institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Discussing proposals for improvement of the Dialogue between young people and institutions;
- Developing and maintaining a database of organisations and institutions;
- Developing common understanding and bottom-up approach with regard to the general thematic priority set out by the Council of the EU;
- Consultations with view of possible solutions that would be brought to the attention of the Council of the EU;
- Identifying specific actions to be brought to the attention of the Council of the EU for further discussion;
- Organising the preparation and dissemination of the regular thematic enquiries within the Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU;
- Summarising and receiving the results of the enquiry replies in a report to be sent to the European working group for the EU Youth Dialogue;
- Monitoring of the information and carrying out the required communication with the respective institutions and authorities of the European Union with regard to the funding possibilities for the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue;
- Preparing and adopting an action plan for the implementation of the Dialogue;
- Preparing project proposals and all required documents to the respective donor for the purposes of carrying out activities in support of the group's functions and the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue.

The National Working Group will comprise representatives of the following institutions and organisations in the country working with and relevant to the work with young people and the development and implementation of youth policies:

1. Ministry of Youth and Sports;
2. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
3. Ministry of Education and Science;
4. Employment Agency;
5. Human Resources Development Center;
6. National Center of Public Health and Analyses;
7. National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria;
8. Nationally represented youth organisations;
9. National Representation of Student Councils;
10. National Youth Forum;
11. Youth organisations – members of a professional union;
12. Two youth organisations working for the development of young people and youth work at local and/or regional level.

10. YOUTH WORK

Youth work takes place where young people are involved, as youth workers and young people are partners in the process. It covers social, cultural, educational, sports and political activities through non-formal and informal learning. There are various kinds of institutions for youth work, such as NGOs run by young people, youth organisations, youth associations, agencies and state bodies. They all provide different forms of youth work and conditions for youth activity at local, regional, national, European and international levels. One place to provide formal, non-formal and informal learning is youth centres. They support youth empowerment and social inclusion, which require a comprehensive and crosssectoral approach to overcome the various manifestations of marginalisation and isolation in society.

10.1 General context

Historical developments

Quality youth work is a prerequisite for ensuring the optimal development and practice of young people. Youth organisations, youth services and youth workers, together with relevant stakeholders, plan and implement activities and programmes that are relevant to the interests, needs and experiences of young people

In Bulgaria, the number of training handbooks on non-formal learning is limited and quite insufficient due to the early stage of development of the youth sector and youth work. The lack of a specific training framework in formal education for youth workers leads to inefficient use of the capacity of professionals working in the field. That is why the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Bulgaria started a project entitled the Operational Program Development of Human Resources officially in the mid 2019. Till the end of the same year only the first phase of research is accomplished and there is still not official presentation of the project. The main objective is to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and quality of youth services by creating, implementing and validating quality standards and creating objective performance indicators, taking into account the final result for the young person who uses them. The project will develop standards for youth services ensuring equal levels of quality in delivering services that lead to real knowledge, skills and competences, and building an effective system for evaluation and quality control. By establishing long-term and unified organisation for the funding of youth services, the project will introduce flexible models of funding and evaluation of youth services. Validation of standards and their implementation in the legal framework regulating the services provided to young people aged between 15 and 29 and improving the processes of planning, management and updating of the youth policies. After the approval process with all stakeholders, the standards will be available to youth services.

National definition or understanding of Youth Work

The legal definition of Youth Work in Bulgaria is part of the Youth act. It states that youth work is an organized activity or initiative which aims to present, protect and develop the interests and needs of the young people.

The main principles on which youth work is based are: voluntary participation, tolerance, altruism, co-operation and networking, adaptability, responsibility and fun. Youth work takes place where the young people are, involving them in a dynamic, unusual and creative process. It is an interdisciplinary activity, which uses the methods of non-formal learning.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

The main actor in the policy-making for youth work is the Ministry of youth and sports in Bulgaria. There specific department of the Ministry dedicated to youth policy and all its aspects it the Youth Policy department. The main non public actors are the NGOs (umbrella organisations such as the National Youth Forum; the Youth Centres where youth workers are employed.

On the top level in the implementation of the state youth policy is responsibility of the Ministry of youth and sports. The Minister of Youth and is supported by National Youth Advisory Council. The National Youth Advisory Council: takes positions on drafts legal acts and strategic documents related to youth policy; proposes measures for reaching the objectives of the state youth policy and debates other questions also related to conducting the youth policy

The structure of the Council includes:

Deputy-minister of Education, Youth and Science, Deputy-minister of Economics, Energetics and Tourism, Deputy-minister of Labour and Social policy, Deputy-minister of Health Services, Deputy-minister of Culture, Deputy-minister of Internal Affairs, Deputy-minister of Justice, Deputy-minister of Regional Development and Public works, Deputy-minister of Finances, Deputy-minister of Physical Education and Sport, Vice 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 Students' Councils; One representative from each nationally representative youth organization. Chairman of the Council is the Minister of Youth and Sports or an authorized by him Deputy-minister of Youth and Sports. The National Youth Advisory Council can also invite to its meetings other experts in the field of youth policy.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Youth work is related to several youth policy fields (education, social inclusion, volunteering) therefor the cross-sectoral cooperation between the main public actors is active trough the work of the National Youth Advisory Council. The annual report on youth is validated once it is consulted with other ministries and agencies. After they provide their statements on the report it can be voted by the National Assembly.

10.3 Support to youth work

Policy legal framework

There is not existing state alone strategy on youth work. Youth work is legally established under the National youth Strategy 2010-2020 and the Youth Act. Both of the legislative documents are under the scope of the Ministry of youth and sports.

In the text of the National Youth Strategy, youth workers are defined as a "necessary resource for implementation of the strategy. These are the specialists, prepared to support the personal, social and economic development and stimulating the young people to fully participate in the society, in a way appropriate for their age. They (the youth workers) fulfil the duties of professional consultants for the young people, responding their needs and interests and are present at youth, therapeutic and consulting centres, schools, helping by providing advice and directing the youngsters to solve various issues. The role of youth workers is particularly important for assuring special support for personal, social and economic development and empowerment of young people in order to assure their full participation in society, in accordance with their age."

Since 2015, “youth worker” is included in the Official List of the Professions in Bulgaria. It is therefore an official profession and labour contracts for this position can be signed by employees. This is a very important step, as those youth workers who are employed and get paid for this job usually have the position of “project co-ordinator” or “specialist/expert”. These are the categories of youth work providers.

In addition, there are activities undertaken by the National Youth Forum (an umbrella organisation of youth organisations in Bulgaria) in order to make the profession of youth worker more recognised, both by the government and society. One example of this, the seventh annual National Meeting of the Youth Organisations in Bulgaria, which took place in Varna from 24 to 28 June 2015, was dedicated to this matter (youth work and youth workers). There was even a Facebook campaign “I am a Youth Worker” – youth workers from all over Bulgaria were invited to upload a photo of themselves on the official Facebook page of the event, so they could show who youth workers are and where they work.

In Bulgaria there are four International Youth centres established under the initiative of the Norwegian fund and the Council of Europe. Together the four centres created a National Network of Youth Centres in October 2016 by signing a co-operation agreement between the managers of the four Bulgarian youth centres – Vratsa, Dobrich, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora. The main goal of the network is to advocate for the recognition of youth work at national level and to work towards common quality standards. The four centres are employing youth workers. Their target is the general youth group including young people with fewer opportunities, young migrants and refugees, young people at risk of exclusion.

Funding

The main sources of public funding is from the budget of the Ministry of Youth and sports through the National Youth Programme (2016-2020). It is one of the tools used to implement the priorities of national policies for young people. It is based on the needs of young people in the country and is in line with the priorities of European youth policy. The programme fulfils the objectives of the National Youth Strategy (2010- 2020). It focuses on the acquisition of key competences and integration of young people into the labour market by developing their personal and professional potential through non-formal training and counselling. The National Youth Programme (2016-2020) was designed on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the previous National Youth Programme (2011-2015) and the results of studies and analyses of the state and needs of young people in the country. In the evaluation of the previous programming period, measurable indicators to determine the concrete results of the current programme have been identified and examined. The duration of the current programming period is five years – from 2016 to 2020. The necessary funds for the implementation of the programme during the programming period (2016-2020) shall be provided within the framework of the ministry budget for the respective year and according to the spending ceilings in the three-year budget forecast. The national co-ordinator for the programme is the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The national co-ordinator shall approve the conditions for the drafting of project proposals under the programme, including the requirements of the applicant organisations and the projects they submit. The main vision of the programme is to improve the quality of life for young people by creating and implementing sustainable mechanisms for investing in youth as a significant social capital that contributes to the socio-economic development of Bulgaria as a member of the European Union.

The National Youth Programme is divided into two sub-programmes:

Sub-programme 1: Development of a network of youth information and consultancy centres. Since 2007, the work of these centres is entirely focused on the young generation of Bulgaria, providing free services based on non-formal education, including information services, consultancy services and training programmes. Their activities over the last 12 years have not undergone any significant change. In order to adapt to the changing needs

of youth, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is looking for new methods and ways to improve their work.

Sub-programme 2: national youth initiatives and campaigns Sub-programme 2 focuses on funding the implementation of project proposals by non-governmental organisations working in the youth field as well as by informal youth groups in six thematic areas covering main directions for promoting civic positioning and participation in campaigns and initiatives of young people and youth workers in Bulgaria. There are 5 thematic areas. One of them is

Thematic area 2 – Development and recognition of youth work.

The procedure for the evaluation of project proposals includes the following stages.

- Stage 1 – Administrative compliance
- Stage 2 – Qualitative assessment
- Stage 3 – Financial compliance
- Stage 4 – Ranking of project proposals.

The conditions for youth work providers for this programs is to be established as NGO working with young people. The described frameworks are identifying the budget.

Cooperation

The national authorities have not established or promoted frameworks of cooperation between all youth work stakeholders such as civil society organisations active in the field of youth work, public services dedicated to young people, youth workers and practitioners in the youth field and researchers and experts in the field of youth work and private organisations and social enterprises.

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Taking into account the dynamics in the youth field and the need for a competence framework guiding the youth policies in Bulgaria, from 2018 the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Bulgaria has developed a project under the Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources. The main objective is to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and quality of youth services by developing, implementing and validating quality standards and developing objective performance indicators, taking into account the final result for the young person.

The project officially started as from 1st July 2019. The first stage of the project was research and report on the needs of Bulgarian Youth and also included report on the good practices in the European Union and beyond. As part of the research *Онлайн проучване* в изпълнение на проект „Разработване и внедряване на стандарти за качество при предоставянето на младежки услуги в България“ (online research part of the project “developing and implementing of standards for quality youth services in Bulgaria) available in Bulgarian language was produced.

In December 2019, the second phase of the project is still undergoing. It will develop standards for youth services ensuring the quality in delivering services leading to real knowledge, skills and competences, building an effective system for evaluation and control. By establishing a long-term and unified organisation, the project will introduce flexible models of funding and evaluating youth services. Validation of standards and their implementation in the legal framework regulating services will be provided to young people aged 15 to 29 and will improve the processes of planning, management and updating of youth policies. After a process of approbation with the participation of all stakeholders the standards will be available for youth services.

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

The definition of youth worker exists in the Закон за младежта и спорта (National Youth Act). Youth worker is an adult person who has passed special training for work with young people and/or who has acquired professional experience to work with young people and to implement youth activities. Youth worker supports the youth organizations' work such as analyzing, planning, organizing, monitoring and evaluating the youth policy based on individual approach and assessment of specific needs of the young people. The national and the municipal youth programs include activities in support of the development and specialized training of the youth worker.

The possibilities for youth workers to take advantage of mobility opportunities in the European Union are managed by the National Agency for Erasmus +.

The educational opportunities and trainings available to youth workers are through educational institutions and through non formal education. The educational institutions that provide education for youth workers set their educational standards for the knowledge, skills and competences which their students are expected to have after completion of the course. For example: - Master's degree programme in socio-pedagogical work with youth, offered by the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius";

Bachelor and Master's degree programmes in non-formal education offered by the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski";

- Master's degree programme in youth activities and sport, offered by the National Sport Academy "Vasil Levski".
- In the academic 2016/2017, the Faculty in Pedagogy of the VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" opened a Master's Program in Youth Work.
- The non-formal education opportunity for youth workers is also available by the National youth Forum.

Национална младежка академия (National youth academy) is dividing in different thematic groups and gives the opportunity to the young people participating to develop different type of qualities.

Education, training and skills recognition

The Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" is among the first educational institutions in Bulgaria to offer a qualification program for a new profession – Youth Worker. In the academic 2016/2017, the Faculty in Pedagogy of the VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" opened a Master's Program in Youth Work.

There are not training for continuous professional development, either directly organised or funded by public authorities, available to youth workers – volunteers and/or professionals – to reinforce and expand their competences. There is no official legal procedure for the validation of skills and competences gained by youth workers through non-formal and informal learning.

Mobility of youth workers

There are not existing national policies/programmes/initiatives offering the possibility for youth workers to take part in exchange opportunities, cooperation and networking at local, regional, national and international level. Information should refer exclusively to programmes that are funded (at least for 50 %) by the top-level, implemented on a large scale.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

There is not a framework for recognition of the skills and competences acquired (e.g. self-assessment tools, documents released by youth work organisers); validation of those skills and competences (e.g. through portfolios, certificates, competence folders) and accreditation towards a qualification (full or partial) within the system of formal education (e.g. credits towards the attainment of a diploma).

Skills

There is not a top-level national policies and/or recognition mechanisms identify specific skills and competences such as social skills, life skills and communication skills that can be acquired through youth work. If so, authors should supply a brief description of them.

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

There are not specific information providers in the field of youth work. Every year of the occasion of the International Youth Day 12 August, The Ministry of Youth and Sports organized a Youth Organisations Fest. During this event NGOs and the national Agency for Erasmus+; the Youth Centres in the country and youth clubs can advertise and promote the opportunities they can offer regarding youth work trough art, exhibition and advertising materials with information.

Information providers

The information providers funded by public top-level authorities can be NGOs working with young people who can apply for the thematic area 2 – Development and recognition of youth work of the Sub-programme 2 of the National Program for Youth 2016-2020 called National youth initiatives and campaigns. It focuses on funding the implementation of project proposals by non-governmental organisations working in the youth field as well as by informal youth groups in six thematic areas covering main directions for promoting civic positioning and participation in campaigns and initiatives of young people and youth workers in Bulgaria.

Key initiatives

As an Example of a key initiative in the field of informing about youth work is the National confederation and workshop is the workshop for Популяризиране на младежката работа в България. Генериране на идеи за младежка заетост (Promoting youth work in Bulgaria. Generating ideas on youth employment funded by the National Program for Youth.

The initiatives and campaigns under this thematic area were not funded in 2017 and 2018. A project on this theme was funded in 2019 but it is still on implementation phase and the final reporting on concrete numbers of the involved young people will be available at earliest March 2020. There is not any specific target groups identified such as education institutions, sub-groups in the youth population, social services). NGOs working with young people who can apply and implement projects under the National Program for Youth 2016-2020.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The project Establishing Quality Standards in the field of youth which is implemented under the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" in English by the Ministry

of Youth and sports from 1st July 2019 described in 10.4 will be fully implemented throughout 2020. As a result of it at least 11 quality standards that will apply in the country. This is expected to happen in late 2020. The implementation of quality standard labels will affect the whole youth sector in the country and the youth work as well.

Ongoing debates

As the National youth Strategy (2010-2020) expires in 2020, the renewed version post 2021 will be developed and adopted in 2020. In 2019 public discussions with high level authorities from the Ministry of youth and sports and young people and institution representatives in 9 cities in Bulgaria were held. During the workshops the main priorities of the upcoming National Youth Strategy arrived. They are in three main pillars. As in the end of 2019 there is no official draft of the document.

GLOSSARY

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)

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National Youth Strategy

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[КОМИСИЯ ПО КУЛТУРА И МЕДИИ В НАРОДНОТО СЪБРАНИЕ НА РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ](#) (COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND THE MEDIA IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA)- Last access 9.10.2019

[Британски съвет в България](#) (British Council in Bulgaria)- Last access 9.10.2019

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[Национален статистически институт](#) (National statistical institute) – Last access 20.08.2019

[Популяризиране на младежката работа в България. Генериране на идеи за младежка заетост](#) (Promotion youth work in Bulgaria. Generation of ideas for youth employment) – Last access 10.07.2019

[Процедури за БФП \(ИНФОРМАЦИОННА СИСТЕМА ЗА УПРАВЛЕНИЕ И НАБЛЮДЕНИЕ НА СРЕДСТВАТА ОТ ЕС В БЪЛГАРИЯ 2020\)](#) (Grant procedures (INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF EU FUNDS IN BULGARIA 2020))- Last access 03.08.2019

[Министерство на здравеопазването](#) (Ministry of Health) – Last access 09.08.2019

[Междуйнституционален механизъм #Back2School \(МОН\)](#) (Interinstitutional program #Back2School) – Last access 24.07.2019

[Независим учителски синдикат](#) (Independent Teachers Union)- Last access 21.10.2019

[Регионални управления на образованието](#) ()- Last access 16.07.2019

[Фондация Фридрих Еберт](#) (The Friedrich Ebert Foundation) – Last access 8.10.2019

[Министерство на културата](#) (Ministry of culture) -Last access 9.10.2019

[Национален фонд „Култура“](#) (National fund for culture) – Last access 9.10.2019

[Национален институт за недвижимо културно наследство](#) (National Institute for immovable cultural heritage) - Last access 9.10.2019

[Регистър на народните читалища в Република България](#) (Register of Community Centers in the Republic of Bulgaria) - Last access 9.10.2019

[Национална програма за изпълнение на младежки дейности по чл. 10а от Закона за хазарта за 2019 година](#) (National program for implementation of youth activities under Art. 10a of the 2019 Gambling legal act) – Last access 10.12.2019

[Българска асоциация спорт за учащи](#) (Bulgarian student sports association) – Last access 13.12.2019

[Българска спортна федерация за деца и младежи в риск](#) (Bulgarian Sports Federation for Children and Youth at Risk) – Last access 13.12.2019

[Национална информационна система за младежта](#) (National Youth Information System) – Last access 16.12.2019

[Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Ministry of Justice](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Youth Policies Directorate within the Ministry](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

Council of Ministers (last access on 16 November 2018)

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[National Youth Information System \(NYIS\)](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[National Alliance for Volunteer Action /NAVA/](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[National Association of Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[European Center for the Development of Vocational Training \(CEDEFOP\)](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[NSI](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[NRA](#) (last access on 16.11.2018)

[NSSI](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

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[\(MoES\)](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

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[Professional information, consultation and guidance](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Program for summer internship in the state administration](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Ministry of Economy](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Labour Office Directorates](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[State Agriculture Fund](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

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[National Representation of Student Councils \(NRSC\)](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Ministry of Environment and Water \(MoEV\)](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

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2018:

 [Bulgaria.pdf](#)