



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Bulgaria

2020

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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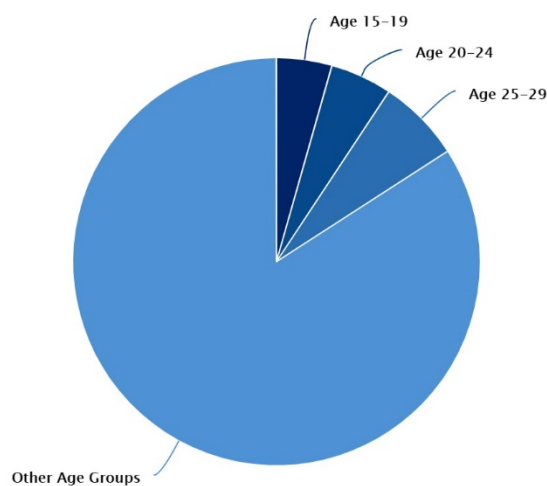
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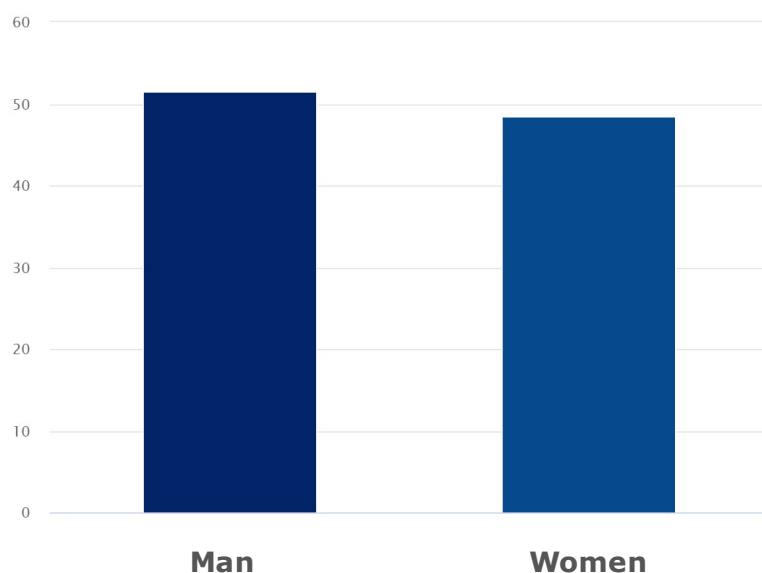
Bulgaria

OVERVIEW

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



Ratio of men and women in the youth population



Statistic references

References:

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_010 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2016): Eurostat, yth_demo_070 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

The state youth policy is purposeful and consistent activity of the state, municipalities, youth organizations and society, which aims to create favorable conditions for personal development of young people and their participation in society and economic life, as well as their involvement in local governance, regional and national level through promoting variety of activities for young people.

The state youth policy is pursued by the Council of Ministers through the Minister of Youth and Sports and in accordance with the National Youth Strategy.

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

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 Annual Action Plan ([План за изпълнение на националната стратегия за младежта](#));
- coordinates the preparation of the Annual Youth Report ([Годишен доклад за младежта](#));
- develops draft legal 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 for 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 ([Закон за младежта](#)) defines "youth" and "young people" as persons from 15 to 29 years of age, inclusive. 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 document, namely the [Combating Anti-Social Behaviour by Minors and Juveniles Act](#) which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. It regulates the activity of preventing and combating anti-social acts of minors and juveniles and ensures 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

The Youth Act ([Закон за младежта](#)) (Promulgated, State Gazette No. 31/20.04.2012, effective 20.04.2012, last amended, SG No. 21/13.03.2020, effective 13.03.2020) defines the basic principles, management and financing of the activities carried out in pursuance of the state policy on youth. It tackles topics such as development of youth policy, youth activities, youth organisations, youth volunteering, youth workers and information. 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 tackles topics such as development of youth policy, youth activities, youth organisations, youth volunteering, youth workers and information.

The national youth policy 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 national policy on youth are:

1. lawfulness, transparency, equality, focus, systematicity and continuity of policies of the central and local government and society at large, promoting the development of youth;
2. coordinated youth policies in education, social policy, health care, arts, sports and culture, the judicial sector, internal affairs and the defence sector;
3. bringing the national youth policy in line with the policies targeting young people developed by and within the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations;
4. integrating policies targeting young people and children;
5. ensuring dialogue and young people's participation in decision-making which affects youth policy;
6. freedom of youth association, freedom of youth initiatives, self-government of youth organisations;
7. decentralised youth policy.

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".

Revisions/updates

Last amended was made in 2020 in regards with amendments of other national legislations, SG No. 21/13.03.2020, effective 13.03.2020)

1.3 National Youth Strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

According to Article 4 of the Youth Act ([Закон за младежта](#)), the national youth policy shall be carried in line with a [National Youth Strategy](#). The National Youth Strategy shall set out the long-term national goals and priorities for the youth in Bulgaria for a period of 10 years. The target group of the Strategy is the population between the age of 15 and the age 29. The institution responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy is the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS). The National Youth Strategy is integrated in the overall national development policy.

Scope and contents

[The National Youth Strategy](#) sets out the long-term goals and priorities of the state youth policy of the Republic of Bulgaria for a period of 10 years. The National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria in 2010 after it has been submitted by the Council of Ministers. The National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) is focused on the building and implementing of consistent and sustainable youth policy in Bulgaria based on the sectoral approach, inter-sectoral cooperation and co-management with the young people at a local, regional and national level. It provides an assessment of the situation for young people in Bulgaria and sets the objectives of the national youth policy divided into nine strategic aims including the following priorities:

1. Encouraging economic activity and career development of young people;
2. Improving access to information and quality services;
3. Promoting a healthy lifestyle;
4. Prevention of social exclusion of disadvantaged young people;
5. Development of youth volunteering;
6. Increasing civic activity;
7. Development of young people in small settlements and rural areas;
8. Development of intercultural and international dialogue;
9. Increasing the role of young people in 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 fosters the adequate personal development of young people and their participation in social and economic life, as well as their inclusion in the decision-making process.

Revisions/updates

A key working method in the Ministry is to involve young people and youth organizations in the processes of youth policy development, implementation and monitoring. To implement the national youth policies the Ministry works on the basis of the Youth Act and the 2010-2020 National Youth Strategy. With the current strategy expiring in 2020, the Ministry is currently drafting a new Strategy for the period 2021-2030. 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. In February 2021 the draft document is under going interministerial procedure for approval of the draft document. The revisions from the sectorial ministries have to be addressed before the document is finally officially approved by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria.

1.4 Youth Policy Decision-Making

Structure of Decision-making

In the implementation of the youth development policies in Bulgaria a multi-sectoral 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, enhancing the health status of the population, etc.

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 access to information and quality services; Promoting a healthy lifestyle; Prevention of social exclusion; Youth volunteering; Participation; Rural development; Intercultural and international 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 department dedicated to Youth Policies. The Youth Policies Directorate within the Ministry of Youth and [Sports \(дирекция "Младежки политики" в Министерство на младежта и спорта\)](#) is responsible for the implementation of the national youth policy and youth programs.

Public council on youth matters

[The Youth Public Council](#) is an advisory unit to the Minister of Youth and Sports for forming positions, opinions and initiatives for solving problems within the competence of the Minister of Youth and Sports. It consists of representatives of organisations 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. The Council started operations in 2017. In 2019 12 new organisations joined the Council members to the previous 27 and currently there are 39 members. 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. Within their responsibilities is to propose concrete initiatives in the field of youth policy in the country. In addition to the Youth Public Council, Municipality Youth Councils and Children's Parliaments are established. They are subsidiary and advisory bodies to the local authorities in the field of youth policy.

[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 within 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 the [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, evaluates and the monitors the implementation of every policy, including youth policies. Annually, the Ministry of Youth and Sports prepares an Annual Youth Report. The Annual Youth Report provides a summary of policies, measures and actions aimed at young people in the country implemented by the responsible institutions in pursuance of the objectives of the national youth policy. This report further contains detailed analysis of the status of the Bulgarian young people in terms of economic activity and career development, access to information and quality services, healthy lifestyle, prevention of social exclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, youth volunteering, active

citizenship, young people in rural areas, international and intercultural dialogue and role of young people in crime prevention.

For more details, see section [1.6](#)

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

There is not permanent inter-ministerial working group but the youth policy is developed and implemented according to a cross-sectoral approach between ministries. 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 (Национален консултативен съвет за младежта).

When implementing the national youth policy, the Minister of Youth and Sports is assisted by the National Youth Advisory [Council \(Национален консултативен съвет за младежта\)](#). The National Youth Advisory Council shall: make statements on draft legislation and strategic papers related to youth policy, propose measures to achieve the goals of the national youth policy and discuss other questions related to implementing youth policy. The National Youth Advisory Council is chaired by the Minister of Youth and Sports or a Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports authorised by the former and includes the following members:

- 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 Chairperson 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

Political commitment to evidence-based youth policy

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.

The National Youth Information System contains: information about 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. The National Youth Information System is publicly available through the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

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. There are also active online surveys on young people's opinion on current youth topics at national and European level.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

There are no institutionalised mechanisms of cooperation. The cooperation between policy-making and research is on ad-hoc basis. Nevertheless policy-makers in the youth field often are invited by researchers and participate in focus-groups, questionnaires, interviews aiming at conducting an evidence-based research. One of the most recent examples for a research in the youth field conducted in synergy with policy-makers is the report "Youth Policy in Bulgaria – Challenges and Perspectives" ([Младежка политика в България-предизвикателства и преспективи](#)) performed by researchers from the National Youth Forum and Freidriech Ebert Shtifung and published in 2020. This report is dedicated to analysing the implementation of the National Youth Strategy (2010- 2020) and aims to provide recommendations how to improve the processes of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the next National Youth Strategy and how to involve more parties in the implementation of the youth policies.

National statistics and available data sources

The Annual Youth Report is prepared by the Ministry of Youth and Sports pursuant to Art. 5, paragraph 2 of the Youth Act and is adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. It reflects the changes in the social and economic well-being of young people and assesses the extent to which the goals and priorities of the National Youth Strategy have been accomplished in the relevant year.

The Annual Youth Report is prepared on the basis of the survey data and data submitted by all governmental institutions in the country related to the development of youth within their competence. Data from 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, is included in the Report. The results are used in the work of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the youth sector.

The Annual Youth Reports are publicly available. The 2019 Annual Youth Report was approved by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria in December 2020. The 2020 Annual Youth Report is in process of preparation (February 2021).

Budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field

The government has a line of funding for research on youth explicitly supporting evidence-based youth policy making with regard to the Annual Youth Report. Every year, a research is carried out, which is funded and designed especially for the purposes of the Annual Youth Report.

Furthermore, there is a government-funded evaluation of its youth-related programs and of policy outcomes. Examples of these are:

- Impact assessment of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) carried out in 2018 upon assignment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports;
- Interim impact assessment of the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) and the action plan thereto carried out in 2015 (under project "Information, Coordination and Partnership for Youth Policy Implementation in the Republic of Bulgaria" funded by Administrative Capacity Operational Program, co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund)

- [Subsequent impact assessment of the Youth Act](#) carried out in 2020 (under project “Capacity Building for Carrying out Impact Assessments in the Public Administration” implemented by the Council of Ministers Administration under Good Governance Operational Program, co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund).

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

Youth policies in Bulgaria are financed by the state budget and by the European funds. The [Youth Policies Directorate \(Дирекция „Младежки политики“\)](#) 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 national youth programs that are administered by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

There is a specific budget allocated for youth policy, as part of the public budget of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The recipients of the two national youth programs 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 started in 2017. 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.

The Program is implemented in three directions and the funds provided for its implementation were BGN 2 000 000 (two million Bulgarian levs) per year until 2020. In 2021 the allocated budget is BGN 5 405 000. Each priority area having a certain estimated budget, which can be changed within the specified amount upon the necessity and according to the available financial resource.

Few procedures for applying under the Program were opened in 2020, 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 and are in the process of implementation throughout the whole country.

- 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 set up in the National Youth Strategy. 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 National Youth Programme provides financial support for youth initiatives, as well as for informational, counselling and educational services for young people. The programme's direct target groups are young people aged 15 to 29 and youth workers and other specialists who organize and carry out activities in support of youth development. Implemented projects are in the areas of active citizenship, volunteering,

personal and professional realization, career orientation of young people, social inclusion, healthy lifestyle, and entrepreneurship. Special attention is dedicated to raising opportunities for the young people in the smaller towns and remote areas. The yearly budget for the National Programme for Youth is 800 000 lv.

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 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.

There were two open procedures in 2020 and 46 projects were funded

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 source of EU funds dedicated to youth policy are the Erasmus+ program and the European Solidarity Corps. For 20 years, the [Human Resource Development Centre \(HRDC\)](#), which is the Bulgarian Erasmus+ National Agency, 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.

Another EU fund used for youth policy is the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" administrated by the the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). The Ministry of Youth and Sports implements two projects funded under Operational Programme "Human resources development" (2014-2020) through the European Social Fund that have a direct impact over the field of youth policies. The projects are "National System for Planning, Monitoring and Reporting of the Implementation of Youth Policies" and "Development and Implementation of Quality Standards for Provision of Youth Services".

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has signed bilateral agreements for cooperation in the field of youth. There are bilateral agreements with Portugal and Romania, which provide

for activities of policy-coordination. The Ministry of Youth and sports has also signed such agreement with Serbia, which is a country – candidate for accession to the EU.

During the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU (01 January 2018 – 30 June 2018) Bulgaria set as one of its main four priorities "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. 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.

International cooperation

Bulgaria is a member of numerous international organizations among which the UN, and the Council of Europe. The Ministry of Youth and Sports actively cooperates with these two institutions regarding the youth policies. The National program "Bulgarian Youth delegate to the UN [Национална програма „Български младежки делегати към ООН](#)" started in 2006 and it is organized by the UN Bulgaria Дружеството за ООН в България with the support of the Ministry of foreign affairs of Bulgaria. Partners of the Program are other institutions and NGOs like National Youth Forum, National Youth Card Bulgaria, ISIC Bulgaria and Bulgarian forum for international development.

Council of Europe

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has its representative in the European Steering Committee for Youth, the Joint Council on Youth and the Programming Committee on Youth of the Council of Europe.

Since 2007, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (former State Agency for Youth and Sport) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Republic of 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. As a result of the Memorandum, regular youth exchange was conducted yearly until 2018.

In addition to the MoU with the Republic of Korea, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has the signed the following bilateral agreements in the field of youth policy that are currently active (February 2021):

Republic of Azerbaijan

Republic of Tunisia

Republic of Chile

Republic of India

Republic of Indonesia

Ukraine

Qatar

Nepal

Islamic Republic of Iran

Turkmenistan

1.9 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) expired at the end of 2020. The consultations for the new National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 have begun in late 2018. At the end of 2019 representatives of the Ministry held meetings with young people and NGOs in various cities and regions of the country. These meetings were aimed at discussing challenges as identified by young people themselves and at seeking possible solutions. In this process 13 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, Kardzhali and Sofia. More than 2000 young people at the age of 15-29 years have taken part in the consultations.

With view of the cross-sectoral approach of youth policies and the need to consult on specific thematic fields with experts in different areas, in March 2020 the Ministry of Youth and Sports established an interministerial working group to develop the operational goals and measures for implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2021-2030. In the end of October 2020 the National Council on Youth had a meeting in Sofia, where the draft of the document was presented.

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.

The draft of the renewed Strategy was available on the platform of public consultations (strategy.bg) during the period 14.01.2021-14.02.2021. The procedure of interministerial approval among the different ministries was carried out in February 2021. After the comments from this process are integrated in the draft document, a second procedure should be implemented and after that the Council of Ministries and the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria should approve the National Youth Strategy 2021-2030.

Ongoing debates

The debates regarding the National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 were available on the platform for public consultations (strategy.bg). The public consultations took place during the period 14.01-14.02.2021 in the platform (strategy.bg).

There were numerous stakeholders (mainly youth NGOs) who provided notes regarding the policy indicators of the draft of the Strategy. All of them were taken into consideration in the process of drafting the Strategy.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Volunteering in Bulgaria is not officially governed 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. 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 non-governmental sector. Despite the existing prejudices, volunteering is a strong feature of the non-governmental 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 this sector and to promote volunteering in Bulgaria. In 2000s non-profit organisations initiated a variety of activities, particularly for children and young people aiming at 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 increasing in the fields of environment and culture. In addition, non-profit organisations have increasingly become providers of social services.

In 2006, a number of non-profit organisations, among which the Bulgarian Red Cross, the National Alliance Volunteer Action (NAVA), Lale Foundation and the Bulgarian Non-Profit Law Center (NNPLC) initiated a process for regulation of volunteering and as a result they developed the first draft of a Volunteering Act. This first draft, which is not yet ratified by the Parliament, defines volunteering as an activity outside the scope of statutory employment relationships of an individual, which is performed on voluntary basis and without remuneration in non-profit organisations, local and state institutions.

Later on in 2015, the Ministry of Youth and Sports established a working group for drafting another Volunteering Act. The document was developed and the draft was submitted to the National Assembly for voting and committee discussions. The process was not completed and the draft of the Volunteering Act was frozen at that stage. As of March 2021, there is no effective Volunteering Act in Bulgaria.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports organises yearly an initiative "Volunteer Mission - (Not ImPossible)" dedicated to marking 5 December, the International Volunteer Day. The aim is to promote good examples of young people in Bulgaria who have worked for the benefit of society through. The initiative enjoys great interest among young people and youth organizations.

Main concepts

Article 35 of the [Закон за младежта \(Youth Act\)](#) stipulates that "Youth volunteering shall involve activities for the public good carried out free of pay by young people within the Republic of Bulgaria or in another country, as part of programmes and initiatives with social, youth, or sports agendas or other agendas intended to benefit society".

2.2 Administration and Governance of Youth Volunteering

Governance

There is no institution in Bulgaria dedicated exclusively to volunteering administration and management. Article 36 of the [Закон за младежта](#) Youth Act says that the central and local government shall promote youth volunteering through national and municipal youth programmes.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

There is no official mechanism for cross-sectoral cooperation dedicated exclusively to youth volunteering. In Bulgaria there is a [National Alliance for Volunteer Action \(NAVA\)](#) established on 29 June 2000 as a public benefit organization. The mission of NAVA is to promote volunteer traditions in Bulgaria and to change the attitudes of the community towards voluntary work by organizing various initiatives involving maximum number of community members and promoting the values of volunteering.

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

As part of the National Youth Program (2016-2020) (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. [The Youth Information Consulting Center started functioning in January 2017.](#)

2.3 National Strategy on Youth Volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

There is no separate law regulating volunteering. Draft laws have been written 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 Youth Act, thus it is also among the strategic goals in the National Youth Strategy \(2010-2020\).](#) The strategic goal "Youth volunteering development" aims to develop 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 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 exclusively to volunteering. Article 36 of the Youth Act ([Закон за младежта](#)) says that the central and local government shall promote youth volunteering through national and municipal youth programmes. Although there is no standalone program, the National Youth Program (2016-2020) contains a section dedicated to youth volunteering. Under Sub-program 2 – National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns, thematic area "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteering Initiatives" funding is available for projects aimed at establishing good knowledge of volunteering, exchanges of good practices and promotion of volunteering opportunities.

Funding

No public funding is provided in Bulgaria for the implementation of youth volunteer activities only. Through the state budget projects are financed under Sub-program "National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns", subject "Youth volunteering and participation in volunteer initiatives" of the National Youth Program (2016-2020) (Национална програма за младежта 2016-2020).

General characteristics of young volunteers

According to the research conducted for the purposes of the 2019 Annual Youth Report ([Годишен доклад за младежта за 2019 г.](#)), data on volunteering show positive attitude to the participation in volunteering/ charity causes. 68% of young people respond that it is worth participating in such kind of causes, without significant differences in terms of sex.

46% of young people declare their willingness to participate with voluntary work in case of disasters and failures. Topics like environment protection and social activities also attract the interest of young people.

Data show that there are two groups of young people in terms of volunteering: young people who would get involved in a kind of volunteering activity on ad hoc basis, whenever necessary, and young people who may be permanently engaged with volunteering based on their scope of interest.

The level of education influences young people's attitude to volunteering. 81% of young people with higher education state that it's worth participating in volunteering, while 57% of people with secondary and lower education share such opinion.

The participation of young people in charity activities is another key factor for determining their attitude to volunteering. Data show that about 46% of young people have participated with financial donations, including SMS. During the recent years, the SMS donation system in Bulgaria has developed and this is the major mean for donations by young people. In principle, volunteering among young people in Bulgaria is related to money and, to a less extent, with other types of activities. 27% of them have donated things or clothes. Data show that women are more willing to donate clothes and things than men. Only 15% of young people have participated in volunteering with labour.

The percentage of young people who have not participated in charity causes is high – 37%.

Only 2% of young people have participated in volunteering abroad, while 39% of them have been involved in such type of activities in Bulgaria. In terms of young people who have participated in volunteering in Bulgaria, there is no significant difference in terms of sex and age. It is obvious that the higher level of education creates another type of social responsibility.

Available support to young volunteers

There are no official top-level policy measures to support young volunteers and 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. Article 42 of the Youth Act stipulates that when involved in youth volunteering, every young volunteer shall receive health and safety instructions or specialist training, if applicable, from the event organisers.

Mechanisms of quality assurance

Although there is no standalone program, the National Youth Program (2016-2020) contains a section dedicated to youth volunteering. In 2020 the National Youth Program ([Национална програма за младежта](#)) (2016-2020) had opened calls for projects under Sub-program 2 – National Youth Initiatives and Campaigns, thematic area "Youth Volunteering and Participation in Volunteering Initiatives" The projects are aimed at establishing good knowledge of volunteering, exchanges of good practices and promotion of 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. The quality assurance mechanisms are according to the rules of the programme.

There are no criteria/indicators/standards used to assess the quality of programmes and schemes of youth volunteering as the national programmes are not for volunteering itself but for good practices in volunteering and its promotion. There is no a quality assurance mechanism established on top authority level

Target groups

There are no policies/programmes/projects/initiatives in the field of youth volunteering at national level that identify specific target groups within the youth population, young people in transition between education and employment, young unemployed, young adults without formal qualifications whose participation in voluntary activities is sought.

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 popularization 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.

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 2021-2030. 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.

With view of the cross-sectoral approach of youth policies and the need to consult on specific thematic fields with experts in different areas, in March 2020 the Ministry of Youth and Sports established an interministerial working group to develop the operational goals and measures for implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2021 - 2030.

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

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

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

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

[The national youth guarantee](#) of Bulgaria provides that every young person aged 15 to 24 years inclusive will receive a good job offer, continuation of education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of being out of work or leaving the formal education system. The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria will be implemented step by step. For young people registered with the Labour Offices, a proposal will be submitted by the end of the 4th month of their registration. Young people who do not work and do not study and are not registered with the labour offices will be informed about the possible services they can use after registering with the labour offices within one month of receiving their individual data and address correspondence in the institution or organization that will activate these. Any individual unemployed youth registered with the labour offices will be given an individual action plan, which will also define his/her profile. According to this profile, the young person will receive a job offer (subsidized either on the primary labour market) or for training (vocational training, key competences, continuing education). Further professional guidance, career counselling and motivational training will be provided.

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

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

3.2 Administration and Governance

Governance

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

It has a leading role in the development of labour market regulations, the [Employment Strategy](#), the [National Reform Program](#) and the [National Employment Action Plans](#). The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy updates and maintains the [National Classification of Occupations and Positions](#) (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 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](#).

Skills development

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 labor market requirements. The project was created under the Operational Program "Science and Education for Smart Growth" by the Ministry of Education and Science. ([MoES](#))

As a result of 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 labor 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 Labor 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;
- Subsidizing 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.

Funding

Quality assurance

3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships

The Program for summer student internships in the state administration is organized by the Council of Ministers.

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

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

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

3.6 Integration of Young People in the Labour Market

Youth employment measures

The main purpose of the Career Start Program ([Програма „Старт на кариерата”](#)) is to provide opportunities to unemployed young people who have completed their higher education to acquire employment experience aimed at facilitating the education to job transition.

The immediate goals of the program are as follows:

- Prevention of dequalification of young people;

- Prevention of “brain drain”;
- Provision of opportunities to renew the public administration;
- Provision of opportunities for subsequent employment of some of the young people at permanent jobs;
- Achievement of flexible combination of knowledge and experience corresponding to the requirements of the market economy.
- The target group of the program comprises young people under 29 years without employment experience for the university specialty they have completed who have registered in the Labour Office Directorates.

The employers are public administrations – central government authorities, including their secondary budget units and their territorial divisions within the executive power administration in accordance with article 36 of the Administration Act, the district and municipal administrations.

After the selection in accordance with the criteria approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and an interview with the employer, the unemployed young people who are registered in the Labour Office Directorates are employed under employment contract for a period of 12 months. The Program is implemented by the Employment Agency ([Агенция по заетостта](#)) throughout the country.

As a result of 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 which 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:

- [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 Activation of Inactive Persons ([Активизиране на неактивните лица](#)).

The Employment Agency implements the National Program Activation of Inactive Persons. The main objective of the program is to activate and engage on the labour market inactive people, including discouraged and young people up to 29 years of age (inclusive) who are not in employment and education and are not registered in the Labour Office Directorates, and of unemployed people, by means of individual or group application of tools and services for their attraction and motivation to register in the Labour Office Directorates, and by means of their involvement in training, return to the education system and/or employment. The program further strives to motivate unemployed working-age people who are subject to monthly social assistance, to become employed under municipal programs for community service.

The program is aimed at:

- Social integration of economically inactive working age people and of unemployed people from vulnerable groups on the labour market and mitigating the risk of poverty.
- Supporting the labour and social integration of unemployed persons through the provision of intermediation services, identification of any other services (social, medical, educational, etc.), they need, and by assisting their provision.
- Supporting the organization and provision of community service by unemployed working age persons who receive social assistance, for the purposes of restoration/ acquisition of labour habits and by motivating them to search for a job and gain employment earnings in order to improve the living conditions in the municipalities.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

There are no top-level measures focusing especially on young people.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people.

There are no specific measures on reconciliation of private and working life for young people.

Funding of schemes/initiatives

[Trainings and Employment for Young People project \(проект „Обучения и заетост за младите хора“\)](#)”) under the Human Resources Development Operational Program provides opportunities for integration of unemployed young people under 29 years of age inclusive, who are registered in the Labour Office Directorates at the Employment Agency, in employment at an employer by providing trainings and subsidy for continuous employment. Project activities are realised on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria since 2016. The project funding is in the amount of BGN 115 854 936 (approximately EUR 59 235 688), including BGN 98 476 695,60 (approximately EUR 50 350 334) EU funding and BGN 17 378 240,40 (approximately EUR 8 885 353) national co-funding.

The project is implemented in two components

Component I

Information and orienteering directly to vacant jobs for individuals from the target group for whom the job does not require to participate in training.

Carrying out trainings for professional qualification and/or key competence 4 “Digital competence” and key competence 2 “Foreign language training”.

Ensuring tutor for young people who are directly employed at vacant jobs for which young people do not need to participate in training – for maximum period of 3 months.

Employment of individuals from the target group at jobs within the scope of single groups of professions in class 2 to 9 of the National Classification of Occupations and Jobs 2011, for a period of up to 12 months.

Component II

Information and orienteering directly to vacant jobs for individuals from the target group for whom the job does not require to participate in training.

Provision of training, including by issue of vouchers for obtaining key competences to unemployed persons with permanent disability.

Ensuring tutor for young people with permanent disability for maximum period of 3 months.

Employment of individuals with permanent disabilities at full-time and part-time jobs (at least 4 hours) within the scope of single groups of professions in class 2 to 9 of the National Classification of Occupations and Jobs 2011, for a period of up to 24 months. Provision of one-off incentives in the amount of six minimum salaries applicable

for the country for employers who have kept the job of the disabled employee for 6 months after the period of the subsidy.

Target groups

Component I

Inactive and unemployed persons under the age of 29. As a priority, support is provided to unemployed young people under 29 years of age who are with primary or lower education and are registered as continuously unemployed individuals in an Labour Office for 12 and more months

Component II

Inactive and unemployed persons under the age of 29 with permanent disability. As a priority, individuals with certified disability of 75% and more than 75% are involved. The implementation period of the program is: 2015-2023

Quality assurance

The youth employment measures implemented during the period 2015-2023, which are described in Funding of schemes/initiatives are funded by the Human Resources Development Operational Program

According to Decision No 792 of the Council of Ministers of 17.12.2013 (last amendment 2015) ([Решение № 792 на МС от 17.12.2013 г.](#)) on nominating the authorities in charge of the management, control, coordination and audit of the funds for the youth employment initiative are managed, controlled and coordinated by European Funds, International Programs and Projects Directorate General at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – managing authority of the Human Resources Development Operational Program.

The main [mechanisms](#) in place to monitor and ensure the quality of employment schemes and projects fall within the responsibilities of the authority, which is nominated to control the implementation of the Human Resources Development Operational Program, and namely, the European Funds, International Programs and Projects Directorate General at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy European Funds, International Programs and Projects Directorate General at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It performs inspections on the spot with regard to the implementation of the contractual activities in order to verify that:

- funded products and services are actually delivered (for example, subsidized employment, trainings, social services, consultations, etc.) and correspond to the projects approved for funding, the rules of the operation and the applicable legislation;
- representatives of the target groups have actually participated and the result from the interventions is available;
- the conditions for ensuring sustainability of each individual project are met.

In pursuance of their obligation, the Managing Body and the Employment Agency – in its capacity of specific beneficiary, performs scheduled and unscheduled audits of all projects, including interviews with the target groups, in order to verify the achievement of specific objectives and outcomes for the respective priorities of the Operational Program.

This ensures the monitoring and quality assurance of the youth employment measures and schemes implemented in the country.

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

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

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

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

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

Legal framework

3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence

There is not a standalone strategy/legal framework on development of entrepreneurship competence. Националната стратегия за младежта 2010-2020 (National Youth Strategy) has one key area of interest Active economic participation and entrepreneurship of young people. Under the Национална програма за младежта (the National program of youth.) different projects for developing entrepreneurship skills and competence in the young people have been developed.

Annually, the Ministry of Economy 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 and their share in the gross added value is increasing.

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.

Annually, the Ministry of Economy implements the project [„Техностарт 3- Насърчаване на иновационната активност на младите хора в България”](#) (“Technostart 3 – Promotion of Innovation Activism of Young People in Bulgaria”). This project is implemented in line with the National Strategy for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2014- 2020. The project aims to encourage young entrepreneurs – students, PhD and graduates in the earliest stage of the entrepreneurial cycle as the establishment of students’ companies is funded under the project. In order to obtain the funding each applicant, after approval of his business plan, must register a company at the Registry Agency and provide his own contribution of 10% of the grant amount in the form of funds and/or assets or up to 2 200 lv for every successful business plan separately. Currently, this project is the single initiative in Bulgaria that is financed entirely with public funds and provides grants for start-ups with business ideas in the field of industry and research and development. Although the initiative refers to entrepreneurship, innovative ideas and start-ups are also supported.

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. EDIT’s 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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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.

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 programs 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 organizations in opposition to hate speech and negative discrimination.

Young people's rights

UNICEF Bulgaria works on the issues of adolescences and young 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 - възраста на възможностите](#) (National Conference for the adolescence - 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 radicalization 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. ПД 07-5/2008 - targeted benefits for heating according to heating type;
 - through the [Social Protection Fund](#) – one-off benefits.
1. 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

1. [National Program for Child Protection 2017](#)
2. [National Program for the Prevention of Violence and Child Abuse](#)
3. [National Youth Program \(2016-2020\) for 2018](#)
4. [Program for Implementation of Youth Activities under Article 10a of the Gambling Act 2018](#)
5. [Национален план за изпълнение на Европейската гаранция за младежта 2014-2020](#) (National Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020)
6. [Програма за развитие на спорта за всички](#) (Program for the Development of Sport for All" for 2018)
7. [Програма „Развитие на студения спорт](#) (Program "Development of the Students' Sport")
8. [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)
9. [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. 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. In this process 12 field consultations with young people and youth organizations 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 presented the final draft of the renewed strategy in the end of 2020 to the National Youth Council and the Advisory Council on youth. There was

a meeting for presentation of the draft document and discussion between the Ministry of youth and sports and the National Council of the municipalities in Bulgaria.

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, labor 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 anticonstitutional cases, resolves disputes connected with the competence of authorities, etc.

Executive Power

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the main body of the executive power of the Republic of Bulgaria. It is composed of a Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and members – resource ministers, 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; 2. To discuss and make proposals under projects of strategic and program documents, as well as plans, statements and reports regarding the implementation of the youth policy in the country; 3. To propose specific initiatives in the field of the policy for young people in the country; 4. To consult the execution of the actions undertaken by the Minister of Youth and Sports, as well as to discuss the achieved results and to propose measures for the optimization of the realized actions. 5. To make recommendations to the Minister of Youth and Sports upon settlement of issues connected with specific problems in the field of the youth; 6. To coordinate the interaction between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and representatives of the non-government sector upon the development and application of youth policies.

The Council consists of representatives of organizations registered under [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 11th 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, programs, 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

New National Youth Strategy will be in place for the period 2021-2030. The Ministry of Youth and Sports presented the final draft of the renewed strategy in the end of 2020 to the National Youth Council and the Advisory Council on youth. There was a meeting for presentation of the draft document and discussion between the Ministry of youth and sports and the National Council of the municipalities in Bulgaria. There Youth participation is a key priority, the Strategy consists of specific measures regarding this topic.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 General context

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.

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

According to the 2019 Annual Youth Report ([Годишен доклад за младежта за 2019 г.](#)), the percentage of young people who continue their full-time education in university after they graduate high school is high.

Bulgaria develops rapidly in terms of information technologies. 54% of young people at the age 16 – 24 have basic or better digital skills.

The percentage of young people who hold certificates for any kind of professional qualification or a document issued with regard to non-formal education is low, however more and more young people start realizing that any additional qualification would provide them with better opportunities for successful realisation.

92% of young people with higher or college education, 66% of young people with secondary education, and 67% of young people with basic education speak a foreign language. More than 80% of young respondents say they speak English language. Data for high percentage of foreign language study are given in the [OECD PISA 2018 study](#). In 2018, Bulgaria registered a small proportion of students who do not learn foreign languages at school (0.4 %, rank 62/64).

37% of young people have participated in training or practice during their course of study. These are an important factor for the professional development and the career orientation of every young person.

According to the Education and Training Monitoring 2019 of the European Commission, the percent of early school leavers in 2019 is 12.7%

Even though school and education rank high among the values of young people at the age of 15-17 (82% go to school to obtain knowledge and to educate, 60% - to have a profession) as stated in the national representative study "Children's Voices" ([„Гласовете на децата“](#)) carried out by Market Links Agency upon assignment of UNICEF Bulgaria.

Young people are critical in terms of used teaching methods, curriculum, school organization, and believe that the training they get is not sufficient for their future professional and personal realisation, that practical classes at school are not enough and there is no connection between education and labour market.

13,9% of young people at the age of 20-29 complete their higher education in the field of technologies, technical studies and mathematics, the EU average being 19,1%.

Organisation of the education and training system

According to the stage or degree of education, non-specialised schools are as follows:

1. primary (1st – 4th grade inclusive);
2. elementary (1st – 7th grade inclusive);
3. high schools (8th – 12th grade inclusive);
4. joint (1st – 10th grade inclusive);
5. secondary schools (1st – 12th grade inclusive).

(2) According to the education content of the high schools, they are:

1. profiled high schools;
2. professional high schools.

Pre-school education

Preschool education is provided by nursery schools. The compulsory preschool education, in addition to nursery schools, may be also provided by schools that may ensure conditions to this effect in accordance with the terms and conditions of the state standard on preschool education and the state standard of education for physical environment and information and library service provision of nursery schools, schools and personal development support centers, and in terms of children at the age of 4 – only if there is no nursery school in the town/city/village. By decision of the mayor of the respective municipality, compulsory preschool education is provided by nursery schools only.

Pre-school (pre-primary) education in Bulgaria is compulsory from the school year beginning during the year in which the child reaches 4 years of age, where the parents choose one of the above options, and the state and the municipalities are obliged to ensure conditions to enroll children in nursery schools and preschool education groups.

School education

School education is compulsory until the age of 16 and starts during the school year in which the child reaches the age of 7. School education may start during the school year in which the child reaches 6 years of age at parent's discretion and if ready to go to school, which is verified in accordance with a procedure determined in accordance with the state standard of preschool education. Compulsory preschool and school education in state and municipal nursery schools and schools is free of charge for children and school students.

In the course of the school education, the school student may study the subject Mother Language. In the course of the school education, the school student may study the subject Foreign Language, other than the foreign languages according to the state standard of general education and the state standard of profiled education. In the course of the school education, the school student may study the subject Choreography. In the course of the school education, religions are studied in historic, philosophic and cultural aspect through the content of other subjects. In the course of the school education, the

school student may study the subject Religion as well. In the course of the school education, the school student may study subjects in the field of global, civic, health and intercultural education, entrepreneurship, personal finance management and programming, protection of the country, population and environment, subjects that establish childrens' and school students' national self-esteem, patriotic spirit and love of the country. Extended education comprises competences that develop and improve specific general education competences. Extended education is obtained by studying general education subjects within the course of the school education and subjects that complement the content integrated in other subjects.

Upper secondary general education

General education comprises the following groups of competences: 1. Competences in the field of Bulgarian language; 2. Competences in foreign languages; 3. Competences in mathematics and basic competences in the field of natural sciences and technologies; 4. Digital competences; 5. Learning skills; 6. Social and civic competences; 7. Initiative and entrepreneurship; 8. Cultural competences and creativity skills; 9. Skills to support sustainable development and skills for healthy lifestyle and sports. General education is obtained through studying general education subjects.

Profiled education covers enhanced competences for the respective profile determined by the state standard of general education. Profile means a complex of profiling subjects two of which are determined by the state standard of education and the other are determined by the school in the curriculums and are the same for 11th and 12th grade. Profiles are as follows: 1. Foreign languages; 2. Humanitarian studies; 3. Social studies; 4. Economic development; 5. Software and hardware studies; 6. Entrepreneurial studies; 7. Mathematics; 8. Natural studies; 9. Arts; 10. Music; 11. Physical education and sports. Profiled education is obtained in the upper secondary level by studying the profiling subjects for the respective profile.

Vocational education covers competences that are necessary for obtaining professional qualification and for obtaining license for professions that require such license, including for pursuing regulated professions. Vocational education ensures the achievement of the state standard of education for acquiring qualification for professions at both the lower and upper level of secondary education. Vocational education for each profession comprises general, sectoral, specific and extended training as well as training for the profession's theory and practice. The objectives, content and characteristics of types of vocational education are governed by the Vocational Education and Training Act.

Supplementary training covers competences that correspond to school student's interests and support the development of their talents. Subjects, modules and activities for obtaining supplementary training are offered by the school, depending on its capacity, are chosen by the school students, depending on their interests, and are determined in the school curricula. The content of the supplementary training is determined in the curricula approved by the school principal.

Specialized training is obtained in specialized schools through education in the field of sports, culture or arts, respectively, or through religious education. Specialized training is obtained by studying specialized subjects determined in the respective standard curriculum approved by the Minister of Education and Science. The content of the specialized training for the respective specialized subject for each grade is determined in curricula approved by: 1. the Minister of Culture for schools of arts and culture; 2. the Minister of Youth and Sports for sports schools. The content of specialized training for specialized subjects of religious education in theological schools is determined in curricula approved under the terms and conditions of the religion in coordination with the Minister of Education and Science.

In order to obtain general education in foreign language schools, at least three subjects, other than the Foreign Language subject should be studied in the respective language in the 9th and 10th grade.

Higher education

The Republic of Bulgaria is also among the first countries which signed the Joint Declaration for European Higher Education Area in 1999 in Bologna. The higher education governance is performed at state and institutional level. The state is responsible for the development and the implementation of a long-term national policy and establishment of conditions, which guarantee the academic autonomy of higher education institutions, the quality of education, and the provision of adequate conditions for performing scientific research. The institutional management is performed according to the rights for an academic autonomy of the higher education institutions, but the state assists for development of modern institutional governance through distribution of resources on a competitive basis. Bulgaria works actively towards building up of a favorable environment for modernization of higher education, in line with the needs of the society and of the business. Good practices are studied and multiplied. Possibilities for introduction of new models, which are related to application of modern approaches for institutional governance leading to better financial management, are studied.

Main concepts

School leaving “Отпадане от училище” means 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 „Преждевременно напуснали училище”, as persons between 18 and 24 years old with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training.

Special educational needs (inclusive education) for 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 [ministry](#) charged with 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 Regional education governance bodies ([Регионално управление на образованието \(РУО\)](#)) 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

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

There is existing national strategy called Strategy for reducing the share of early school leavers (2013 – 2020) ([Стратегия за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система \(2013 – 2020\)](#)). The main ways of achieving the policy goals of the strategy are prevention, intervention and compensation.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the processes connected to the implementation and coordination of the Strategy. An important milestone in the Strategy is the establishment of a Coordination mechanism ([referred to as the Mechanism](#)) ([back2school](#)) to tackle early school-leaving, involving the educational, social, health and administrative services as well as municipalities.

Shared responsibilities among different institutions are ensured through the mechanism partnership agreement and the coordination unit.

The coordination unit supports the Minister of Education and Science in the process of organization, coordination and control of the implementation of the Strategy with the help of other ministries, institutions and social partners.

Since its introduction for the time period 2013 – 2020, the strategy has not been amended. Action plans are prepared on annual basis and a two-year action plan was drafted for the period 2018-2020.

[A report for the implementation of the Strategy was published in 2019.](#) This interim report presents the results from the implementation of introduced policies and measures reported by the stakeholders – ministries and institutions, directorates and departments of the Ministry of Education and Science. The purpose of this report is to inform all stakeholders about the progress of the Strategy implementation in 2019 measured in accordance with the indicators of the Action Plan.

During the period 2013 – 2016, the share of early school leavers in Bulgaria increases from 12,5% in 2013 to 13,8% in 2016. For the first time since 2013, in 2017 the indicator decreases by 1,4% in comparison to 2016, thus reaching 12,7%. This is due both to the efficient policies for reducing early school leaving during the previous years and to the effective relevant policies aimed at inclusion in forms of education and training of those who have not completed secondary education. In 2018, the share of early school leavers remains at the 2017 level – 12,7%, i.e. no progress is reported in 2018.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

National Program "Together for Every Child" ([Национална програма „Заедно за всяко дете“](#))

One of the priorities of the work of the Ministry of Education and Science is to cover and involve children and school students at compulsory school age in the education system and to ensure equal access to education for all children and school students. The program consists of 2 modules:

1. Module 1 – Support of the Coverage Teams – BGN 100 000 (about EUR 50 000)
2. Module 2 – Good Practices for Interaction of Preschool and School Institutions with Parents – BGN 100 000 (about EUR 50 000).

The program is effective until 2020. Its total budget is BGN 200 000 (about EUR 100 000).

Eligible beneficiaries under Module 1 comprise schools, nursery schools, regional inspectorates on education, and under Module 2 – state and municipal nursery schools and schools.

The activities under the program should ensure interaction between institutions and parent community for the purposes of applying an integrated approach to the realisation of measures for improving the coverage of children and school students and their inclusion in the system of preschool and school education. The activities should also ensure active cooperation in accordance with the Coverage Mechanism model established with Council of Ministers' Decree No 100/08.06.2018, amended and supplemented by Council of Ministers' Decree No 259/14.10.2019.

Principles for funding under Module 1:

- Ensuring support for the implementation of the work of the coverage teams, including expenses for business trips of the coverage team with regard to the implementation of the Home Visit measure;
- Holding interinstitutional meetings at regional and/or municipal level organised by the Regional inspectorates on education with the participation of coverage teams to discuss and solve organizational and methodological issues to improve the effectiveness of the teams' work;
- Preparation and dissemination of information materials supporting the work of the teams to communicate the measures for coverage and keeping children and school students in the education system among parents and within the community – printed materials, videos, audio materials. The maximum amount of the grant per application is BGN 3500 (about EUR 1800).

Eligible beneficiaries under Module 2 comprise state and municipal nursery schools. The funds under this module are intended for the interaction of the coverage teams with the parents and other family members; for organization of activities to attract and engage all stakeholders in the process of coverage and keeping children and school students in the system of preschool and school education. Eligible activities comprise:

- Awareness raising campaigns for the role of education of children and school students among parents and within the community children live in;
- Activities aimed at involving parents/ families in the school life and motivating them for the education of their children through trainings, group training courses, lectures, etc.;
- Training of parents on how to recognise, prevent and avoid adverse manifestations among children and school students – discrimination, aggression, bullying, etc.;
- Organisation of initiatives for promoting best practices for interaction of institutions for coverage and inclusion of children and school students in education.

The maximum amount of the grant under any application submitted by the beneficiary is BGN 2000 (about EUR 1000).

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

Ready for Tomorrow – mentorship program for work with children of Ela Association ([Менторска програма за работа с деца „Готови за утре“ на Сдружение „Ела“](#)). The team of Ela Association for Shared Learning developed a mentorship program for work of young volunteers with children. The program addresses all stages and processes within the interaction between the mentor and the mentee, offers a structure and responds to the main demands of young people who are willing to spend time for being mentors.

The mentorship program comes as a natural continuation of the long-term work of the association with students in Pedagogy and other humanitarian programs and their training to work directly with children. With this program, the team of Ela offers a structured process with clearly defined roles, principles of work and proper relationship limits. The program considers targeting an important aspect of the mentorship process. The skill to set targets, to define steps for their achievement and the ability to analyze the results are important both for everyday and school life and for the professional development of children in future as well. Targeting is addressed as a tool to find school students' strengths and their actual use in life.

The program is presented in a handbook available on Ela Association's website. The handbook further addresses the challenges that a mentor could face and the ways to overcome them.

The program was developed with the help of student volunteers and schools students from the 5th grade in 156th School of General Education "Vasil Levski", Kremikovtsi. Children's feedback is totally positive. Almost all of them state they loved the communication with students. More than 80% believe that they set targets more easily after these meetings, and 70% share that it was nice to find out and discuss their own strengths and that they feel more confident in doing plans for themselves. The training program and the handbook for volunteering mentors are developed under project "Ready for Tomorrow – program for young volunteers as mentors of children from vulnerable groups". The project was funded by the National Youth Program (2016-2020) of the Ministry of Youth and Sports under contract No 25-00-25/02.06.2020.

The main topic of the new free online handbook developed by the [Center for Inclusive Education](#) is how to make school make sense again. It is aimed at supporting teachers and principals across the country to cope with the constantly increasing lack of motivation among school students to go to school.

The Handbook is a collection of the experience of the Center for Inclusive Education during the intermediate stage of the [School Makes Sense Program](#), implemented with the support of Velux Foundation in two Bulgarian schools – Secondary School Georgi Benkovski in the town of Teteven and Secondary School Hristo Smirnenki in the town of Brezovo. Only for a year the program managed to increase the motivation for learning of more than 70% of the participating children and even to decrease the number of unauthorized absences by 20% in comparison to the previous year by focusing on the link between learning and life.

Namely the broken link between school and life turns out to be among the key problems in the Bulgarian education – children do not understand how what they study in class would be useful for their future and therefore lose their interest in school. According to the national representative study of the Center, 30% of 6th grade students in Bulgaria are at risk of school leaving and 45% of them believe that the basic subjects, such as mathematics, history and natural sciences, are not interesting at all.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

There is a Coordination unit for performance of the Agreement for implementation of the Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020). The Unit is responsible for the implementation of the [Coordination mechanism \(referred to as the Mechanism\) \(back2school\)](#) to tackle early school-leaving, involving the educational, social, health and administrative services as well as municipalities.. The rules of procedure set out the functions, structure and organization of the work of the Coordination unit for performance of the Agreement for implementation of the Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020).

The unit supports the Minister of Education and Science in the process of organization, coordination and control of the implementation of the Strategy with the help of other ministries, institutions and social partners. It works in accordance with the proposed measures and actions and the competences of every government authority and organization – party to the agreement.

It comprises the ministers of: education and science, labor and social policy, interior, healthcare, regional development and public works, finance, 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 on 08.06.2018.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

There are no established procedures for validating competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings.

Young people can have the knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. They cannot be officially validated and no qualification can be obtained on the basis of those learning experiences. The system of Youth Pass is used in Bulgaria but the national authorities do not offer a validation scheme on competences obtained by non-formal learning and qualifications cannot be legally obtained.

Information and guidance

There are no established procedures for validating competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Quality assurance

There is no system of quality assurance of the arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal competences.

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 no 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 under the Erasmus+:

- 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.

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

There are no actions – either directly organised or funded – by top level authorities in support to cross-border mobility of young learners engaged in non-formal education and youth work.

In 2019, Free Youth Center, Vidin (Свободен младежки център, Видин) and Association for Development of Children and Youth – Open Club, Serbia, implemented the project "Region of Youth Participation" under CBC Program Interreg – IPA Bulgaria-Serbia 2014-2020. One of the activities of the project is training for youth leadership. It comprises training of school students on youth leadership on the basis of developed common methodology for school self-governance. This contributed to the development of youth leadership by training school students how to work in a network of school parliaments for the purposes of promoting young people's participation in the representative democracy and civil society. The grant under the project is BGN 143 075 (about EUR 73 000).

Quality assurance

According to its rules of organization, the Human Resources Development Center ([ЦРЧР](#)) is obliged to oversee the strict and effective application of the rules for administration of

the funds under the Erasmus+ Program, the European Solidarity Corps Program and other programs and projects. The Human Resources Development Center is the Bulgarian National Agency for the Erasmus+ program.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

Assessment and guidance of children with special educational needs towards integrated education or towards training in special nursery schools 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 educational needs, the legislation provides measures for gifted children although they are not determined as a separate category of children with special educational 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 European Union member states, the European Economic Area and Switzerland.

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 Operational 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

Innovation in formal education

Available data show that Bulgaria continues to have one of the highest percentage 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.

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

According to the School and Preschool Education Act ([Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование](#)) (effective from 01.08.2016, last amendment and supplement of 18 September 2020) innovative schools are schools that achieve improvement of the quality of education by:

1. developing and implementing innovative elements in terms of organization and/or content of education;
2. organise the management, education and school environment in a new or improved way;
3. use new teaching methods;
4. develop education content, programs and curricula in a new way.

The government grants BGN 20 million (about EUR 10 million) for the National Program "Establishment of STEM School Environment" ([Национална програма „Изграждане на училищна STEM среда“](#)). The funds are used for establishment and equipment of advanced centers at schools that develop innovations in the field of natural sciences, digital technologies, engineering and mathematics. 113 state and municipal schools will receive grants under this program in 2021. In 2020 the funds were allocated among 153 schools. The STEM centers are a learning model that facilitates mathematics and natural sciences training.

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 a [Media Literacy Coalition](#) in Education.

In terms of national documents, media literacy is provided for in the Ordinance of 2016 on civic education ([Наредбата от 2016 г. за гражданското образование](#)). Media literacy was included in this ordinance in 2018.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

The skill to search for and use information is directly related to the young people's ability to think critically and to be full-value and active citizens. Today, only 50% of school students may assess the authenticity of information.

During the school year 2018/2019, classes in media literacy were introduced for the first time in order to establish digital and media competences including 5 key skills – information literacy, communications and cooperation, creation of digital content, safety and problem solving. Despite the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Science, school students and teachers need adequate resources for training and teaching in these classes. This applies especially to disadvantaged areas where the environment is worse.

According to the Media Literacy Coalition in Education, inclusion of new classes is a positive step but this must be accompanied by appropriate teacher training. With regard to media literacy classes, the Coalition issued its position as early as the end of August 2018 stating that the introduction of digital literacy elements should be on all subjects and not in a limited number of hours as a separate discipline. At the same time, teachers should be supported to acquire the knowledge and skills that will make them more effective in delivering this knowledge to the students, the members of the coalition insisted. [The conference "How to Teach Media Literacy at School - Methods and Practices"](#), which took place on November 10th 2018 in Sofia, provided an opportunity to more than 80 teachers from all over the country to get acquainted with practice-tested methodologies for media literacy training for students from 1st to 12th grade.

The lack of a methodology for media literacy training has led members of the coalition to unite their expertise and support the process of introducing media literacy classes in schools. Several of the organizations involved in the coalition have already developed and established methodologies or are in the process of developing such ones on ongoing projects. Overall, they manage to cover all classes from 1st to 12th grade.

A good example of a particular project on the topic is the CLAS Project ([КЛАС \[Критични:Любознателни:Активни:Смели\]](#)) implemented by European Institute Foundation ([фондация „Европейски институт“](#)) for a period of 30 months. The start date of the project was 19.09.2019. The project is aimed at promoting the media literacy and civic education. It comprises 7 interrelated activities, including initiatives for training on civic education and media literacy for teachers and school students, three-days training camp on media literacy for school students, and establishment of local partnerships between civic organisations and educational institutions/ organisations. 3 educational materials and tools will be developed and disseminated – 2 handbooks (on civic education and media literacy) and online platform with educational blog/ vlog. Target groups comprise teachers and lecturers from disadvantaged areas across the country (14 towns), and the final beneficiaries comprise children and young people and school students at all ages from selected towns. As a result of the project, the media literacy and the quality of civic participation in the target towns are expected to improve.

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

Under the National Campaign “I Will Not Be Hacked ([„Национална информационно-образователна кампания „Няма да ме хакнат“](#))” 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.

Some of the supporters of the Campaign “I Will Not Be Hacked” are 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. It is 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.

How to make the best in a creative way while maintaining their security and that of others on the Internet? The 17 teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 in an online hackathon: [“Digital Media Literacy Solutions: My Right to an Opinion”](#) on May 9, 2020 looked for the answers to this question.

The hackathon is part of the project “Academy for Teenagers: My Right to an Opinion”, implemented by UNICEF and the Association of European Journalists-Bulgaria in partnership with Teen Station and the Media Literacy Coalition.

[IN-EDU PROJECT - Inclusive communities through Media literacy & Critical Thinking Education](#) - is a 24-month project run by 7 European partners based in Italy, Bulgaria, France, Croatia and Slovenia. It focuses on developing good practices in media literacy and critical thinking education via inclusive, non-formal learning programmes which combine training and events at community level.

The main aim of the project is to reinforce media literacy and critical thinking among students. The IN-EDU engagement programme does this through interactive activities at local level that encourage action and participation from teachers, parents and families, and other stakeholders – thus increasing also their awareness, knowledge and

competences on the subject. By working at local level the project intends to have an impact on the wider communities and play a part in preventing marginalization and countering inequality.

Media Literacy Changes the World is part of the project. The event was organised at the end of January 2021.

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

In February, 2019, the rapporteurs in the National Eurochild Forum – Bulgaria (NEF) and the children from Megaphone worked on the topic [“How to cope with online bullying?”](#) 75 children – representatives of the National Children Network, at the age of 10 and 18 years (37 boys and 38 girls) took part in the survey.

6 questions were asked:

1. Have you ever experienced or witnessed online bullying? If yes, what happened?
2. What would you do if someone insults or bullies you online?
3. What would you do if you see that someone insults a friend of yours or someone you know online?
4. How do teachers react when a schoolmate of yours shares that they experience or witness online bullying?
5. What should teachers do with the online bullies over a peer?
6. How can we prevent children and young people online bullying over peers?

The conclusions from this study reflect the opinions of children and young people:

To the question “How do teachers react when a schoolmate of yours shares that they experience or witness online bullying?”, most of the children respond that teachers would help, however the sum of the answers, according to which children do not refer to the teachers, teachers know a little about online bullying, teachers would do nothing, or the “I don’t know” answers, is higher than the answers that teachers would help. Furthermore, children say that teachers would help by forwarding the issue to a psychologist/ pedagogic councillor and that they would try to talk. There are few answers that teachers would talk about online safety or would involve specialists from this area.

One of the most common forms of online bullying, as children’s answers show, is among peers and quite frequently online bullying transforms in physical form of violence at school. The above considerations show that the involvement of teachers in the issue by means of trainings and increasing the children’s trust to them is crucial for reducing the online bullying and raising the awareness among children.

When children speak about what they would do if somebody insults them online, most of them put an emphasis on technical settings and on “blocking”, which also corresponds to the individual measures recommended by the Safe Internet National Center.

Many respondents say that they would not mind and will cope with this themselves, sometimes by violence as well. Few children say that they will ask for help from adult relatives or specialists. The predominant positions of children are a prerequisite to suggest that online bullying is a topic encompassed among children and adults intervene only in case of crisis.

In November 2020, the [United Nations Association of Bulgaria](#) organised online discussion on: [Online and Offline Violence against Children and Young People](#).

The participants in the discussion comprised representatives of the [National Safe Net Center](#), a lecturer from the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University and the Bulgarian Academy of Science, as well as a representative of the multinational team in the regional office [of Plan International – an organisation for development and humanitarian activities in the Asian-Pacific region](#). The participants discussed the situation in Bulgaria and

across the world, the legal framework in Bulgaria and how to react in case of online bullying.

The statistics of the National Safe Net Center ([Националният център за безопасен интернет](#)) show sharp increase of alerts. There are 8825 alerts for 2019 in comparison to 323 in 2016. 1/4 of young people at the age of 9 to 17 become victims of any kind of bullying by their peers, and 1/5 of them confess that they have performed such actions.

Data show that the reasons for increase of online bullying is that the digital generation grows in "sexually poisoned culture full of violence and that children and young people are not enough aware of the internet hazards.

Online environment enhances the opportunities for violence and exploitation of children by the closest circle – friends, partners and schoolmates. Most often, committers of online bullying are minor – 33% of the online content is generated by the children.

There are many institutions and organisations that play crucial role for the prevention of and protection against online bullying. The Criminal Code (Наказателният кодекс) provides for certain defence, as far as the crime may be established and proven. Non-profit organisations are most active in terms of violence against children.

According to the specialists who participated in this event, the Bulgarian society is not familiar with the topic of online bullying. Families and parents are not familiar with the risks in the internet and do not know how to react. The state should also become an assistant, trainer and guarantor for the protection of children.

Successful example for prevention is the Cyberscouts program of the National Safe Net Center. Cyberscouts teach students in the 5th grade how to protect themselves online by developing skills of the 21st century. As a result, school students teach their peers in class and manage to find pedophilic profiles and send alerts.

[The National Safe Net Center](#) was established in 2005. It is coordinated by the non-governmental Applied Researches and Communications Fund in partnership with Parents Association ([Асоциация "Родители"](#)) and DeKoni Advertising Agency (рекламна агенция ДеКони). The center deals with alerts for children pornography and online bullying, organises trainings, consultations of children, teachers, parents.

Plan International is an organization for development and humanitarian activity, which strengthens the rights of children and equality of girls. In 2019 it is active in 77 countries and reaches 21,6 million girls and 18,9 million boys worldwide.

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

Information providers / counselling structures

A Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Innovations in Non-Formal Education ([Център за интердисциплинарни изследвания и иновации в неформалното образование](#)) was established to cooperate for the further development and establishment of non-formal education as a field of active policy and practices in global, regional, national and institutional context.

The Center has the status of academic and scientific laboratory at the Social Work Department of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", which operates as a voluntary association of lecturers, PhD students, students and administrators at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

The objective of the Center is to integrate research, educational, methodological, production, information and consultative activities and services through innovation researches and practices and to provide expertise for the development of products, environments, resources, organisations and networks for the needs of non-formal education.

Awareness raising initiatives

In accordance with the Youth Act ([Закона за младежта](#)), the Ministry of Youth and Sports develops and maintains National Youth Information System (Национална информационна система за младежта ([НИСМ](#))) for the purposes of ensuring updated information for the needs of youth in the country and planning, monitoring, managing and assessing youth policies at national, regional and municipal level.

The National Youth Information System contains:

1. details of youth organisations in the country;
2. list of national representative youth organisations;
3. researches on the status of youth, analysis and assessments of the implementation of youth policies at national, regional and municipal level;
4. national and European documents related to the youth policy implementation;
5. updated information about the youth activity funding opportunities.

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

The NGO Portal ([НПО Портала](#)) publishes information from and for civic organisations:

- Latest news;
- Forthcoming events;
- Job, apprenticeship and volunteer announcements;
- Announcements for funding, contests, scholarships, etc.

The Human Resources Development Center ([Център за развитие на човешките ресурси](#)) is the Bulgarian Erasmus+ Agency. Information about all programs administered by the Center can be found on its website.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Since January 2021, on the Public Consultations Portal (Портал за обществени консултации ([strategy.bg](#))) there is an open debate for the Digital Qualification National Program.

The Digital Qualification National Program meets the need of targeted efforts and investments for ensuring high quality of preparation of school and university students, teachers and lecturers with view of the digital transformation of education.

The program is aimed at lecturers from the state higher education establishments accredited under the Higher Education Act, at teachers in secondary schools and at representatives of the business who are willing to start practicing teacher and lecturer activity. This will ensure enough staff for the education system who have high level of digital competence and who are motivated to improve it throughout their professional life. This will also contribute to the reinforcement of the connection between education, researches, employers and various institutions in the education system, including at European level, in the field of digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

For the purposes of achieving the objectives of the national program, qualification trainings of teachers, lecturers and business representatives will be organised. In order to improve the team interactions between lecturers, qualification trainings in the context of competence approach will be organised. Existing and future lecturers and teachers in subjects, disciplines and modules related to the work in digital environment, as well as

business representatives who are willing to start teacher and lecturer career will be a priority group of the program.

Ongoing debates

In May 2020, the National Youth Forum (NYF) ([Национален младежки форум](#)) – the biggest youth platform in Bulgaria with more than 50 member organisations countrywide, sent the Minister of Education and Science an [open letter on the role of non-formal learning and youth organisations in the achievement of learning results](#). With this letter, NYF and another 11 youth NGOs – members of NYF, working with non-formal learning methods, expressed their readiness to help for overcoming the consequences of the changes and measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With their letter, the authors of the letter called for:

- Recognition of youth organisations and youth work as key providers of trainings in the field of non-formal learning – proven method for personal development and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences;
- Involvement of youth organisations and all nongovernmental organisations and youth workers active in the field of non-formal learning, for the purposes of facilitating the process of overcoming the challenges in the education system through consultations and provision of innovative methods from long-term practice with young people;
- Development and application of standards in the education system on formal and non-formal trainings for acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences, together with representatives of nongovernmental organisations working the field;
- Recognition of the Council of Europe's standards on non-formal learning for the purposes of ensuring adequate and quality environment and infrastructure for the effectiveness of the education system, especially in the current Covid-19-related situation.

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 diseases.

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.

Guidance to stakeholders

Target groups

Funding

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

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

According to the [Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria \(Конституция на Република България\)](#), the state establishes conditions for free development of science, education and arts and supports them. It takes care for the protection of the national historic and cultural heritage. According to article 54 of the Constitution everyone shall have the right to avail himself/herself of the national and universal human cultural values and to develop his/her own culture in accordance with his/her ethnic self-identification, which shall be recognised and guaranteed by the law. Artistic, scientific and technological creativity shall be recognised and guaranteed by the law.

In accordance with the [Culture Protection and Development Act \(Закона за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#) (promulgated in 1999, last amendment and supplement of 9 June 2020) 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.

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

The [National Institute of Statistics](#) provides statistics for the participation of population at the age of 25 – 64 years in cultural activities and events.

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

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE GONE TO CINEMA 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	3 863 951	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

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	%
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

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	%
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

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	%
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

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 \(Закон за културното наследство\)](#). The number of visits to museums in 2018 is 5 084 thousand.
- In 2018, 15 155 performances were organised in the 75 theaters operating in the country visited by 2 389 thousand spectators.
- In 2018, 51 music groups develop their creative work – 5 philharmonic orchestras, 25 professional ensembles for folk songs and dances, and 21 orchestras.

- 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).
- At the end of 2018, there are 69 cinemas in the country with 226 screens.
- In 2018, 83 registered and licensed radio operators work in the country. 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.

According to the study, frequency of *creativity activities* (writing, drawing, playing a music instrument) in 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. One third of Bulgarian young people *visit a youth center or a club of interests* during leisure time.

Main concepts

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. According to the [Culture Protection and Development Act \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#) (promulgated in 1999, last amendment and supplement of 9 June 2020) municipalities define and implement their policy for the protection and development of culture by harmonizing the principles of the national cultural policy with the local conditions and traditions.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Culture Protection and Development Act \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#) sets out that 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.

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 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 Youth and Sports](#) is in charge of the national youth policy. Taking into account the multi-sectoral nature of youth policy, the [Youth Act \(Закон за младежта\)](#) (effective from 20.04.2012, last amendment 13 March 2020) 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. 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.

[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 \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#) 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 \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#). 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 \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#)). 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.

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. (article 16 of the [Culture Protection and Development Act \(Закон за закрила и развитие на културата\)](#))

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 (effective from 01.01.2004, last amendment – 31 March 2020). 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.

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 2020 are as follows:

- [Ministry of Culture](#) – BGN 502 710 (about EUR 257 000)
- [Ministry of Education and Science](#) – BGN 793 050 (about EUR 405 000)
- [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) – BGN 504 240 (about EUR 257 000).

In accordance with the [Youth Act \(Закон за младежта\)](#) (effective from 20.04.2012, last amendment 13 March 2020), 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

There is no particular national strategy on the creativity and culture for young people.

The [National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020 \(Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020\)](http://mpes.government.bg/Documents/Documents/Strategii/strategy_youth_2010-2020.pdf) 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) (http://mpes.government.bg/Documents/Documents/Strategii/strategy_youth_2010-2020.pdf).

Scope and contents

In pursuance of the [National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020 \(Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020\)](http://mpes.government.bg/Documents/Documents/Strategii/strategy_youth_2010-2020.pdf), 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:
 - supporting young debutants in arts and different cultural industries;
 - encouraging the contribution of youth work for the realisation of creative abilities of young people;
 - 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 Youth and Sports](http://mpes.government.bg) is in charge with the implementation of the [National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020 \(Национална стратегия за младежта 2010 – 2020\)](http://mpes.government.bg/Documents/Documents/Strategii/strategy_youth_2010-2020.pdf). 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 March 2019 the [Ministry of Culture](http://culture.government.bg) and the [Ministry of Education and Science](http://education.government.bg) signed an Agreement for Cooperation between Schools and Preschools and State Cultural Institutes (Споразумение за сътрудничество между училища и детски градини и държавните културни институти) 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.

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

In accordance with the [Youth Act \(Закон за младежта\)](#) (effective from 20.04.2012, last amendment 13 March 2020), the [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) develops and maintains a [National Youth Information System \(Национална информационна система за младежта\)](#) for the purposes of ensuring updated information for the needs of youth in the country. Among other things, the National Youth Information System provides information about the youth organisations in the country, researches, analysis and assessment for the implementation of youth policies at national, regional and municipal level, updated information for the opportunities for funding of youth activities.

There are four youth centers operating in the country [Youth Center Dobrich \(Младежки център Добрич\)](#), [Youth Center Vratsa \(Младежки център Враца\)](#), [Youth Center Plovdiv \(Младежки център Пловдив\)](#) and [Youth Center Stara Zagora \(Младежки център Стара Загора\)](#). The work of the youth centers is funded by the [Norway Grants](#) and with subsidies from the budget of the respective municipality.

The main purpose of the youth centers is to improve the wellbeing of young people and to provide youth services. Their tasks comprise ensuring equal access to education, training and employment, organization of different initiatives in various fields young people are interested in, dissemination of information among young people, etc. Youth workers and external specialists work with young people, their parents, youth organisations.

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 (about EUR 5000) 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 (about EUR 10 000) per project.

The program is annual and the annual budget of the whole program is BGN 180 000 (about EUR 90 000).

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.

55 projects of municipalities, culture clubs (читалища) and other nongovernmental organisations in total amount of BGN 140 000 (about EUR 70 000) have been supported in 2019. 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 2019" – municipality of Pernik, National School Folklore Feast "It was Born, It was Reborn" („Родило се, преродило”) – city of Yambol, Days of National Revival and Patriotic Song "The Gun Shot" („Топчето пукна”) – town of Klisura, Week of Arts – municipality of Samokov, etc.

The governmental subsidy for the culture clubs (читалища) was increased by 10% in the 2020 budget. The funds are allocated to 174 culture clubs (читалища) in 58 municipalities in all administrative districts across the country. They are intended for artistic and creative, organizational, library and information activity and research in the area of cultural heritage. The purpose is to support the culture clubs' libraries, art and foreign language schools, building-up and establishment of new learning forms, maintenance and creation of drama groups, creation and maintenance of collection of

cultural values. The aim of the governmental subsidy is to engage more children and young people from all groups within the community in various activities of the culture clubs (читалища).

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Ordinance No 5 of 30 November 2015 on general education (Наредба № 5 от 30 ноември 2015 г. за общообразователната подготовка) issued by the Minister of Education and Science and effective from 08.12.2015 defines the state standard of general education. General education is obtained during the entire course of school education and among other covers key competences in the field of culture and skills for creative expression. Music, Arts, Technologies and Entrepreneurship are among the subjects comprised in the general education.

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

In accordance with Ordinance No 7 of 11 August 2016 on profiled education (Наредба № 7 от 11 август 2016 г. за профилираната подготовка) issued by the Minister of Education and Science and effective from 26.08.2016, 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.

There are 23 profiled secondary schools of arts and culture across the country. In terms of territorial scope, schools of arts and schools of culture are located in 12 administrative districts in the country. 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 Bulgarian 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.

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.

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.

The maximum amount of long-term project funding is BGN 8000 (about EUR 4000), and for short-term project funding – BGN 4000 (about EUR 2000).

The program is annual and the total amount of funds available under this program per year is BGN 60 000 (about EUR 30 000) for the two modules.

Providing quality access to creative environments

The [Ministry of Culture](#) provides support for the development of creative skills and inclusion of young people in stage arts by means of the [Program for Support of Creative Projects in the Field of Stage Arts \(Правила за условията, реда и процедурите за провеждане на сесии за подпомагане на творчески проекти в областта на сценичните изкуства – 2020\)](#). In particular, this program focuses on the inclusion of young people

and enhancing their interest in the theater, music and dancing arts and supports the new generation of authors who are directly engaged in creation and development of stage arts. The program supports festivals of stage arts. As a priority, the program considers youth festivals and active participation of young performers. 41 festivals and contests in the field of theater, music and dancing arts were supported in 2019 with funds in the amount of BGN 361 538 (about EUR 185 000). For example, some of the events funded under the program are Festival of Young People in Theater that promotes debutant artists, Small Season Festival that presents the achievements and supports the development of youth creativity in different fields of art.

In accordance with the [2019 Annual Report on Youth \(Годишен доклад за младежта за 2019\)](#), 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 \(Програма на мерките за закрила на деца с изявени дарби от държавни, общински и частни училища\)](#) aimed at children and young people at the age of 14 – 18 years. 1 024 young people in total have received scholarships and single financial grants 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 (about EUR 900 000).

In 2019 the [Ministry of Culture](#) has granted 277 scholarships and 74 single financial grants to students from state and municipal schools.

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

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 • Screen Arts • Literature • Music • Stage Arts

The program is annual and the total budget of the program for all five modules is BGN 300 000 (about EUR 150 000) per year. It funds projects in the amount of up to BGN 20 000 (about EUR 10 000) inclusive (up to BGN 10 000 (about EUR 5 000) for the Literature and Music modules).

This program 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)

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: · Archaeological 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.

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

In accordance with [Ordinance No 7 of 11 August 2016 on profiled education \(Наредба № 7 от 11 август 2016 г. за профилираната подготовка\)](#) issued by the Minister of Education and Science and effective from 26.08.2016, 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.

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

The National Culture Fund (Национален фонд „Култура“) implements a 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 (about EUR 5000) 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 (about EUR 10 000) per project.

The program is annual and the annual budget of the whole program is BGN 180 000 (about EUR 90 000).

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.

For example, 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 are 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. 26 projects for the amount of BGN 500 000 (about EUR 250 000) 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 promotes the profession of “researcher”.

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. Annually, the event was part of the Calendar of cultural events of [Sofia Municipality](#). The yearly editions of the one and only SITE-SPECIFIC theater festival in Bulgaria offer the audience unique theater experiences and magnificent performances within the untraditional theater spaces of the [Youth Theater “Nikolay Binev” \(Младежки театър „Николай Бинев”\)](#).

The [National Culture Fund \(Национален фонд „Култура”\)](#) implements [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.

The program funds project expenses in the amount of up to BGN 1500 (about EUR 750) inclusive for individual trips, and up to BGN 5000 (about EUR 2500) for group trips. The annual budget of the program is BGN 250 000 (about EUR 125 000).

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.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

According to the 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) (effective from 01.01.2004, last amendment – 31 March 2020), the protection of children with distinguished talents is 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 \(Агенция за социално подпомагане\)](#).

[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 program is annual and budget of the program is BGN 120 000 (about EUR 60 000) per year. The allowed grant per project is in the amount of BGN 15 000 (about EUR 7 500) inclusive.

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

In accordance with an Agreement for Cooperation (Споразумение за сътрудничество) 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.

The activities and projects implemented under this Agreement for Cooperation are funded by the budgets of the two institutions.

8.10 Current debates and reforms

The National Youth Strategy (2010-2020) expired at the end of 2020. The consultations for the new National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 have begun in late 2018. At the end of 2019 representatives of the Ministry held meetings with young people and NGOs in various cities and regions of the country. These meetings were aimed at discussing challenges as identified by young people themselves and at seeking possible solutions. In this process 13 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, Kardzhali and Sofia. More than 2000 young people at the age of 15-29 years have taken part in the consultations.

With view of the cross-sectoral approach of youth policies and the need to consult on specific thematic fields with experts in different areas, in March 2020 the [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) established an interministerial working group to develop the operational goals and measures for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2021-2030.

The first official draft document was presented at a closing conference held in Sofia. The closing conference gave the participants in the meetings across the country the opportunity to meet and have discussions 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 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.

As at the end of 2020, the draft National Youth Strategy 2021-2030 is in process of public discussion and subject to other statutory procedures for approval.

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 \(Структурен диалог\)](#) 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

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) therefore the cross-sectoral cooperation between the main public actors is active through 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 stay-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 framework 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 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 the National Program for Youth 2016-2020.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

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.

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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)
Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW)
Youth and Sport Act
National Youth Strategy

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[National Youth Program \(2016-2020\)](#) ((last access on 16 November 2018)

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[Employment Strategy](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

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National Program for Safety and Health at Work 2018- 2020

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[Health and Safety at Work Act](#)

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[Integration of People with Disabilities Act](#)

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Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for the implementation of measures to prevent the abandonment of children and their placement in institutions, and their reintegration (last access on 16 November 2018)

[Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for financing the training for the acquisition of vocational qualification and motivational training, organized by the Employment Agency](#) (last access on 16 November 2018)

Data and statistics

A working version of the National Youth Report for 2016, based on a statistical study of Trend Research Center

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ARCHIVE

Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

2019

[Bulgaria_2019.pdf](#)

2018

[Bulgaria2018.pdf](#)