

Employment initiatives supporting 25+ NEETs

COUNTRY REPORT – BULGARIA

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**IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT ‘LOST
MILLENNIALS – TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH
NETWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES
TARGETING 25+ NEETS’**

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Project summary:

The project 'Lost Millennials' focuses on a regularly neglected group of the generation of Millennials: young people aged 25-29 neither in employment or education and training (25+ NEETs). This generation started their working life shortly after the economic crisis of 2008, perceiving uncertainty and lack of security for work and well-being, they are more likely to be inactive or in precarious jobs. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the successful integration of 25+ NEETs to the labour market through increasing knowledge on the effects of employment initiatives on 25+ NEETs, building capacity of stakeholders to perform impact studies and thus improving the quality of labour market interventions. This objective will be achieved through the creation of the transnational research network which will share know-how and good practices, the evaluations of governmental and community-based initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs, as well as the engagement of stakeholders to increase the policy-relevance of project results.

For more information, please visit our [website](#), contact us on lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu and follow our social media ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#)).

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Implemented by:



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1. Introduction

Bulgaria is the EU Member State that experienced the second largest decrease in rates of 15–29-year-olds neither in employment nor in education and training in the period 2011 – 2021 (-7.1 percentage points) (Eurostat, 2022a). In 2021, the total proportion of NEETs was 17.6% (ibid). This reduction appears to be linked to, inter alia, socio-economic and policy developments, such as record-low unemployment and record-high employment rates as well as policies aimed at reaching out to and economically activating young people (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 11). Since 2013, when Bulgaria presented its National European Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (2014-2020)¹, NEETs have been among the priority target groups of active labour market policies (ibid, pp. 10, 45). It is the achievement of the goals of the European Youth Guarantee (EYG) that constitutes the main focus of the state's efforts in relation to NEETs (ibid, p. 10).

Although the country's NEET rate has seen a notable long-term drop, in recent years it has tended to be above the EU average (Eurofound, 2021). Inactivity among Bulgarian NEETs is linked to a range of personal and socio-economic factors, such as unrealistic wage expectations, a lower level of education, and lack of jobs (Eurofound, 2017, p. 17; Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 9, 11). A closer look at the composition of NEET youth in Bulgaria reveals that a large proportion of NEETs are members of vulnerable or socially disadvantaged groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. In 2021, the rate of female NEETs was 20.9% and that of male, 14.5% (Eurostat, 2022a). While there has been a more general EU-wide trend of young women being more likely to neither be in employment nor in education or training than young men (ibid), in the case of Bulgaria the disparity between women and men is striking when it comes to older NEETs. In 2021, the rate of female and male NEETs aged 25-29 was 30.5% and 17.6%, respectively (ibid). Young mothers are a subgroup that requires specific support as the number of NEET women who have children significantly exceeds that of NEET men (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 9). The number of young members of ethnic minority groups (aged 15-34) who are of a NEET status is also remarkably high: about two in three young Roma and one in three young persons of a Turkish ethnicity find themselves outside the education system and the labour market (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 9-10). In addition, there is a significant disbalance in the ratio between NEETs living in rural vs urban areas. In fact, in 2021, the difference between the NEET rates in cities and rural areas was the largest in Bulgaria among EU States (18.2 percentage points) (Eurostat, 2022a). There are data indicating that persons with health problems, in

¹ Other strategic national policy and legislative documents of relevance to NEETs include the National Youth Strategy (2021-2030) and the Annual Action Plan for its implementation, the Youth Act of 2013, and the Governance Programme (2017-2021).

particular disabilities, are also a vulnerable group of NEETs in the country (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 10).

The prevailing social characteristics of NEETs in Bulgaria point to the existence of deficiencies in institutional efforts aimed at prevention and reintegration of youth belonging to vulnerable groups who are at risk of or have fallen out of education and employment. Furthermore, they indicate that there are deeper structural issues related to inadequate provision by the state of equal opportunities (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 9-10). That 'structural problems, rather than issues related to the business cycle, present challenges to the inclusion of young people in the labour market or in education' is also suggested by the fact that the vast majority NEETs in the country find themselves outside the labour force (not actively seeking work) which shows a high rate of youth disengagement (Eurofound, 2016, p. 20). While recent data are lacking, results from studies conducted in previous years highlight the related problem of long-term unemployment: in 2016, over 45% of unemployed youth had not had a job for the past 12 months or longer (Eurofound, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic² has exacerbated some of these problems and presented new challenges to policymakers charged with the task of improving the well-being of young people. Due to factors related to the epidemic situation in the country, the level of youth unemployment, including long-term unemployment, has risen (Eurofound, 2021, p. 55). Other issues increasing the vulnerability of young people in general and NEETs in particular include: prolonged periods of distance learning having a detrimental impact on employment prospects; decreased quality of education; lower income; limited social protection; decline in mental health; and negative expectations about the future (ibid). Policies aimed at addressing these challenges have been aimed at supporting retention in education and transition to employment (ibid). On the downside, young people have not been approached as a specific target group but have fallen within the scope of general labour market policies as a disadvantaged group (ibid). Furthermore, to this day there is no single dedicated system for tracking and mapping NEETs (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 10, 45) which hampers policy formulation, analysis and evaluation.

² It cannot be said that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the NEET rate in Bulgaria. While in 2020 the national rate of NEETs increased in comparison to 2019, it was still lower than the rate in previous years (2016, 2017), and there was a subsequent drop in 2021 (Eurostat, 2022b).

2. Institutional context of initiatives and programmes

Basic difference between initiatives and programmes

An initiative means any form of support for NEETs, which may generally have a smaller financial scope and implementation structure compared to programs. They can be administered both by public administration institutions (i.e., the state, regional authorities, municipalities/cities), as well as by non-profit organizations, or even by business entities (e.g., specific financial support).

The programmes represent more extensive and complex forms of financing for different types of target groups, among which it will be possible to identify NEETs as well. It is very likely that our observed target group NEETs can be defined as a possible target group for support among many other target groups, but no specific projects have been implemented for NEETs. This is also important information if it was possible to implement specific projects for this target group, but for various reasons they were not implemented.

Government efforts to achieve the goals of the EYG relating to NEETs are channelled in: 1) initiatives and programmes under the Human Resources Development Operational Program (HRD OP); 2) national programmes and projects that are funded under the state budget; and 3) measures under the Employment Promotion Act (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 47). In the course of the desk research carried out in preparation of the present report, a total of 47 national programmes and 43 national initiatives of relevance to NEETs implemented in the time period 2007 – present were identified.³ Those programmes and initiatives have all been listed in the annual National Employment Action Plan as measures related to active labour market policies. They have been funded either under the HRD OP or the state budget, or both. The initiatives and programmes which have received funding within the framework of the HRD OP are among the most significant in terms of scope and impact (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 53).⁴

³ Of those 90 programmes and initiatives, it is estimated that 3 have been funded within the framework of the HRD OP, while the remaining 87 have been financed through the state budget (13 of those 87 – as measures under the Employment Promotion Act).

⁴ It is important to note that there is a multitude of programmes and initiatives of national and local coverage which have received funding under the HRD OP but have not been included in the annual National Employment Action Plan. Due to the large number of those programmes and initiatives, they have remained outside the scope of the present country report. On the basis of the annual reports providing an overview of the HRD OP's application in Bulgaria, it can be estimated that in the course of the past 10 years over 2000 individual initiatives have been implemented within the framework of this programme. Nonetheless, the researchers are confident that the most significant national programmes and initiatives funded under the HRD OP have been taken into consideration as those have been incorporated in the annual National Employment Action Plan and therefore have been given due attention in this report.

When it comes to national programmes and initiatives of relevance to NEETs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) is the state institution ensuring the implementation of the National Employment Action Plan – a key policy document related to national employment policy. Typically, the MLSP is responsible for design, general coordination, guidance, implementation control, and evaluation of results, while its subsidiary, the Employment Agency (EA), carries out functions related to organisation, coordination, monitoring, resource allocation, provision of information, and dissemination at the national level. The EA is an executive agency to the MLSP tasked with the implementation of the national policy on employment promotion. Its main responsibilities include: registering unemployed actively seeking employment and available vacancies; providing employment mediation services; cooperating with municipalities and employers on the development of action plans; organising qualification and motivational training for unemployed and employed; and analysing and forecasting labour market supply and demand. Nine Regional Employment Service Directorates and Labour Office Directorates in over 100 settlements across the country are included in the EA's structure and contribute to the implementation of initiatives and programmes. The MLSP has one more subsidiary which has formal contact with NEETs, the Agency for Social Protection (ASP) and its regional departments (Social Assistance Directorates), however the role of these institutions is secondary to that of the EA (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 45). Most programmes and initiatives coordinated by the MLSP and the EA are implemented in cooperation with educational and vocational institutions and organisations, employers' organisations, employee organisations, and NGOs.

The results of the desk research carried out in preparation of this report show that there are 45 international initiatives (projects) of relevance to NEETs in Bulgaria which have been financed under the Erasmus + Programme of the European Commission (EC) and coordinated by Bulgarian institutions. The number of programmes and initiatives which have received funding under other EC programmes is much smaller (Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC) – 3; Justice Programme (JUST) – 1). When it comes to Erasmus + initiatives, a total of 357 institutions from 34 countries have participated as coordinators and partners. The average consortium is comprised of 7 to 8 organisations representing a diversity of stakeholders, including educational and training institutions (universities, secondary schools, non-formal education centres), research institutes, as well as organisations working in other sectors, such as sports, culture, volunteering, and international cooperation. National or regional public institutions, private sector organisations, and other types of entities have also taken part in the implementation of some initiatives and programmes, however, their level of involvement is relatively minor and needs to be stepped up.

There have been not more than three initiatives funded the Erasmus + Programme which have specifically mentioned NEETs as their target group. Those interventions have been developed by 11 entities from 8 countries and taken together have received less than 350,000 EUR. They have been

coordinated by private universities providing training in agribusiness, management, and rural development and have focused on building strategic partnerships for adult education through providing support to NEETs with a low level of skills and qualifications and people with disabilities.

List of national programmes of relevance to NEETs included in the annual National Employment Action Plan (2007-present)⁵

- [A New Beginning in Employment](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging the Employment of Unemployed Youth with a Low Level of Education and No Qualifications on Apprenticeship Positions Under the Supervision of Mentors’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Beautiful Bulgaria’](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- [Career Start Programme](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- [CLASSIC-PRO project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Project CROS](#) ‘Complex Framework Training, Self-employment – Business Initiative’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Programme for Provision of Employment for Young People in the Sphere of Culture](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age With Permanent Disabilities, War Invalids and Young People From Institutions Who Have Completed Their Education’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Provide Internship Opportunities for Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Open up ‘Green’ Work Positions and to Hire Unemployed Persons’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Hire Long-term Unemployed Persons’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons with Permanent Disabilities on Temporary, Season or Part-time Work Positions’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons on Part-time Positions’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)

⁵ This is an exhaustive list of all programmes which were identified as relevant to NEETs during the desk research carried out in preparation of the present report.

- 'Encouraging Employers to Hire on Part-time Positions Unemployed Youth up to 29 Years of Age Who Have Been Registered at the Labour Office for a Period Longer Than 12 Months' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Encouraging Employers to Provide Apprenticeship Opportunities' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Encouraging the Territorial Mobility of Unemployed Persons' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Encouraging Unemployed Persons to Start Own Business by Establishing Micro Enterprises' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Esculap' Programme (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [From Social Welfare Payments to Employment Provision](#) (The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Horizons Programme](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Interest-free Credit for People With Disabilities](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Kleo' National Programme](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Knowledge and Skills for Work roject](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- National Programme for Literacy and Qualifications Building for Roma (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [National Programme 'Melpomena'](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- [National Program 'Activation of Inactive Persons'](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- [National Program 'Assistants to Persons with Disabilities'](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [National Program for Employment and Training of People with Disabilities](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- National Programme for Training and Employment of Refugees (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [New Opportunity for Employment](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Opportunity for employment and self-employment' project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Professional Orientation' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Promoting Entrepreneurship' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Provision of Care in a Domestic Environment' Programme](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Provision of Motivational Training' (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)

- [Regional Employment Programmes](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Renewal and Preservation of the Bulgarian Forest’ Programme](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Security’ Programme](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- National Programme ‘Social Services in a Domestic Environment’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Teachers for Extracurricular Activities and Vacations’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Project ‘Training and Employment for Youths’](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Training and Employment Programme for Long-term Unemployed](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Programme for Training of Unemployed Persons Who Receive State Social Support](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Workforce Adaptation’](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Working Chance’](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Youth Employment Procedure](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)

List of national initiatives of relevance to NEETs included in the annual National Employment Action Plan (2007-present)⁶

- [Two-year Training Plan in the State Enterprise ‘Bulgarian-German Center for Professional Training’](#)(Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- [‘Adaptation to New Conditions’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- [‘An Alternative for You’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Catalogues’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Challenges’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Chance for Success’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Compass’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Directions’ Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)

⁶ This is an exhaustive list of all initiatives which were identified as relevant to NEETs in the course of the desk research carried out in preparation of the present report.

- [‘From Professional Training to Effective Employment’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [From Training to Employment](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Growing Through New Opportunities for Education and Employment’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Increasing Young People’s Awareness of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- Increasing Unemployed Persons’ Employment Opportunities Through Quality Professional Training (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Increasing Unemployed Persons’ Fitness for Employment Through Improved Professional and Key Competences](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Labour Activity’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- ‘New Perspective’ Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘New Skills – New Opportunities’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Opportunity for Realization’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ‘Own Business – Change of Profession’ Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [PRO-CHANCE ‘Professional Training for Everybody – a Chance for a Successful Transition Into Employment’](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Professional Training and Motivation for Learning and Work Aimed at Accomplishing Fitness for Work’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Professional’ Project](#) (Employment Agency)
- ‘Project for Young People Who Have Left School’ (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Prosperity’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Qualification, Personal Integration and Professional Assistance’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [‘Qualified Workers for Business’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- [‘Quality Workforce – Stable Labour Market’ Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- [‘Ready for Work’ Project](#) (Employment Agency)

- Conducting research about the opportunities to increase income and availability of labour in Bulgaria (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [RESTART Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Self-realization' Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Speed' Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Step Forward' Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- [Stimulus Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Study and Succeed in Bulgaria' Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Successful Together' Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- ['Successful Together – for Proper New Education' Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'This Is My Chance to Find Myself' Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency)
- 'Training for Employment' Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- ['We Are Also Able' Project](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- [With New Green and Ecological Knowledge and Skills Toward New Employment](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- ['Workforce Development'](#) Project (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)
- [With New Green and Ecological Knowledge and Skills Toward New Employment](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association)

List of initiatives of relevance to NEETs in Bulgaria funded under the Erasmus + Programme of the European Commission (2007-present)⁷

- ['Informal Learning – Expanding the Horizon for the Future Generation'](#) (European Commission)
- ['The Young Entrepreneurs of Today – Active European Citizens of Tomorrow'](#) (European Commission)

⁷ This is an exhaustive list of all initiatives which were identified as relevant to NEETs in the course of the desk research carried out in preparation of the present report.

- [‘Youth workers – the engine of social change in marginalized communities’](#) (European Commission)
- [Adult training course for small farmers on ecological and urban agriculture](#) (European Commission)
- [Art for Discussion and Inclusion](#) (European Commission)
- [Be Unique, Intelligent, Lucrative, Diligent – BUILD](#) (European Commission)
- [Blended virtual internships in the field of business and entrepreneurship](#) (European Commission)
- [Civic education - a tool for active society](#) (European Commission)
- [Codependency - Unlimited Devotion](#) (European Commission)
- [Creating Employment Opportunities Through Digital](#) Competence (European Commission)
- [Culinary Arts Education in Support of Youth Employment and Social Inclusion](#) (European Commission)
- [Digital Orientation Competences: continuation of my professional studies](#) (European Commission)
- [ECVET based further VET training to support the enhancement of entrepreneurship skills of young people and micro-SMEs via management accounting](#) (European Commission)
- [Enterprise goes green](#) (European Commission)
- [Egavet System For Recognition, Validation And Accreditation Of Skills, Knowledge And Competencies Of Supported Employment Providers For People With Disabilities](#) (European Commission)
- [Evergreen in the Evergreen: When Tradition Inspires Innovation](#) (European Commission)
- [Free platform for training search UNEM](#) (European Commission)
- [From Inclusive Education to Real Scale Transfer](#) (European Commission)
- [Interactive Education in 360°](#) (European Commission)
- [Job ToolKit](#) (European Commission)
- [Leisure time as a positivist youth peer pedagogy](#) (European Commission)
- [Media platform ‘Vocational Guidance’](#) (European Commission)
- [mEntoring prograMme for young People at risk for Labour fOrce entrY](#) (European Commission)
- [Mobile games in youth work](#) (European Commission)
- [National Meeting ‘Youth Work from A to Z’](#) (European Commission)
- [New digital skills for work with young people - a training course for youth workers](#) (European Commission)
- [Nowadays Digital Media Literacy, Artificial Intelligence and Youth Career Development](#) (European Commission)

- [OPEN MIND - gamified platform and open online course in Social Entrepreneurship for female learners and students from diverse fields of study](#) (European Commission)
- [Pave the Way to a Social Entrepreneurship](#) (European Commission)
- [Promoting Social Change Through Entrepreneurship](#) (European Commission)
- [Quality of youth career guidance and nowadays media literacy](#) (European Commission)
- [RE: INTEGRATIVE RE: ACTION](#) (European Commission)
- [Self-Awareness and Entrepreneurship of Youth in Risk](#) (European Commission)
- [Strengthening youth in time of crisis](#) (European Commission)
- [The good youth worker = Successful young people](#) (European Commission)
- [Youth digital skills for better activity and literacy](#) (European Commission)
- [Varna – City of Volunteers](#) (European Commission)
- [Volunteer Wave](#) (European Commission)
- [Volunteerism in Varna](#) (European Commission)
- [Volunteering – Factor for Realisation](#) (European Commission)
- [Together for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovations](#) (European Commission)
- [National Meeting ‘Youth Work from A to Z’](#) (European Commission)
- [From opportunity to a resource](#) (European Commission)
- [Prepare! Varna – European Youth Capital 2017!](#) (European Commission)
- [First Steps](#) (European Commission)

List of initiatives of relevance to NEETs in Bulgaria funded under the Justice Programme and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Commission (2007-present)⁸

- [Diversity Management and Inclusive Employment for Ethnic Minorities and Migrants in SMEs and NGOs \(DIME\)](#) (European Commission, Association ‘Znam I Moga’)
- Fighting Against Anti-Gypsism Through Training of Professionals and Empowerment of Roma Communities (European Commission, Comunita Papa Giovanni Xxiii)
- [Building economic independence: the way out of intimate partner violence. \(WE GO2\)](#) (European Commission, Actionaid International Italia Onlus)
- [WORKING ROMA Stop Labour Discrimination of Roma in Europe](#) (Lead partner: Andujar City Council (Spain); implementing partner in Bulgaria: Institute for Labour and Social Research (ILSR))

⁸ This is an exhaustive list of all initiatives which were identified as relevant to NEETs in the course of the desk research carried out in preparation of the present report.

3. Focus of initiatives/programmes

3.1 Typology of initiatives/programmes and their supported activities

In terms of their supported activities, the main types of national initiatives and programmes included in the annual National Employment Action Plan have been aimed at provision of: subsidised employment; education and training; work experience placement; career guidance and counselling; and mentoring and coaching. By far, the key tools used by the government to tackle the problem of unemployment, including among young people, have been hiring subsidies, on the one hand, and education and training, on the other. In a large number of initiatives and programmes, these two tools have been utilised simultaneously. Nonetheless, some experts argue that in its efforts the Bulgarian government has focused much more on subsidised employment provision than on education and training (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 51). Most interventions providing employment subsidies aim at securing full-time employment for a period of 3 to 6 months. A notable exception are subsidies to employers hiring long-term unemployed persons – these are provided for a period of up to 12 months. There have been only a few initiatives and programmes providing subsidies for part-time employment. There is no evidence of the use of employer incentives other than hiring subsidies. When it comes to education and training, activities dedicated to building key competences, professional qualifications, and motivation are a key element of many interventions. In addition, there have been some initiatives and programmes aimed at helping participants to acquire more basic skills, such as literacy, social skills and work-related habits. In regard to work experience placements, these are secured through a number of initiatives and programmes. In most cases, subsidies are used in order to encourage employers to create opportunities for internships and apprenticeships. Generally, such initiatives and programmes involve the provision of support by mentors. In such cases, funds are allocated for salaries of both unemployed persons and mentors. In relation to the provision of career guidance and counselling, activities to that end have been an important facet of a range of interventions. Disconcertingly, the implementation of activities related to psychological support is very rare.

In addition to these main types, there have also been some initiatives and programmes focusing on: jobs creation (social entrepreneurship); support for creating own business (e.g. through facilitating access to financial resources, giving information about existing opportunities, and providing professional training on how to start a business); support to businesses to tap into the pool of unemployed and the unemployed to access businesses (e.g. through organising meetings with employers); support for mobility; and awareness-raising (e.g. regarding opportunities which exist in relation to the EYG). Several initiatives have also been implemented that, among other things, provide capacity-building to trainers and mentors working with unemployed persons. There appear to be no interventions with the objective of providing ‘one-stop-shop support’ which would involve giving assistance and information to young

people 'not just in relation to their employability but also for issues beyond the narrower objectives of employment policies' (Eurofound, 2021, p. 56).

There have been nearly no in-depth qualitative evaluations of national programmes and initiatives, be those conducted internally or externally. Very general monitoring information (about overall expenditure and total number of supported persons) is made available by the MLSP for all programmes and initiatives listed in the annual National Employment Action Plan. There are several external evaluations of the net results of active labour market policies that provide some data regarding certain individual national programmes and initiatives. However, the data provided are very basic and mainly concern the proportion of persons supported by the programme or initiative who have entered employment as a result of the intervention. There have also been generic evaluations of measures under the HRD OP. Singular external evaluations of a small number of actions implemented under the Youth Employment Initiative (in the framework of Priority Axis 1 of the HRD OP) are available which present more complex and detailed assessments of the strengths and downsides of the initiatives in question and give useful recommendations.

When it comes to the supported activities of initiatives relevant to NEETs in Bulgaria which have been funded under the Erasmus + Programme, the vast majority of actions (44%) have focused on youth mobility, followed by strategic partnerships for adult education (15%) and vocational education and training (15%), while the remainder have involved minor activities related to dialogue and social inclusion. Referring to existing evaluations could help shed light on any successful approaches, risks, and challenges related to the scope of the activities which have been implemented. Unfortunately, public evaluations are available in the Erasmus + platform of the European Commission only for 5 initiatives (11%). Those evaluations (of which 4 were internal and 1 – external) have relied on mixed methods, including questionnaires, numerical indicators, self-reported references, and testimonies. Virtually all have concluded that the respective initiatives had had a positive impact and only minor disadvantages.

3.2 Geographic coverage of NEETs support

While the problem of NEETs in Bulgaria is one of national proportions, it also has a significant regional dimension. Regarding the share of NEETs (aged 15-34) across the country's six regions⁹, the results from the 2019 EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) show that nearly one third of all inactive youth are to be found in the Southern Central region (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 17). Among other things, data show that the level of school dropout in this region has stagnated (ibid, p. 66). In the Southern Central region, there appears to be a correlation between the higher NEET rate and the

⁹ Bulgaria's territory is divided into the following six regions: Northwestern, Northern Central, Northeastern, Southwestern, Southern Central, and Southeastern.

large presence of Roma (ibid, p. 9). In the region with the second highest proportion of NEETs, the North-western region, the labour market situation is generally deemed to be the most challenging in the country 'by a large margin' (ibid, p. 19).

Most initiatives and measures implemented by the state with a view to addressing unemployment, including youth unemployment, have had a national coverage. Some of those do give priority to regions where the unemployment rate (for the previous year) was higher than the national average. The most significant programmes of a regional scope are the Regional Employment Programmes which have been run on an annual basis since 2008. Every year, one regional programme is being implemented in each of the 28 provinces of Bulgaria. Notwithstanding this positive example, there may be a need for a more pronounced regional focus in the design and implementation of interventions aimed at improving the situation of NEETs. This is important in order to effectively respond to regional specificities, such as the prevailing socio-economic profile of NEETs, as illustrated by the example of the South-Central region where the majority of NEETs are members of the Roma ethnic minority.

In the context of the majority of initiatives and programmes of relevance to NEETs that have been implemented by the state, unemployed youth have been addressed as one among several target groups. Notably, unemployed youth have often been defined as a priority target group. There have been very few interventions which have focused solely on young persons who are outside the labour market. There are also a considerable number of initiatives and programmes which have focused on all unemployed persons and, while being relevant to NEETs in principle, have made no specific mention of unemployed youth as a target group. Although national programmes and initiatives have only very rarely approached unemployed youth as a sole target group, research shows that active labour market policies and related measures have positively impacted NEET rates at both the national and the local level (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 66). Nevertheless, experts point out that much more needs to be done in terms of creation of inclusion opportunities for young people by state institutions (ibid) and designing interventions exclusively focusing on NEETs would be an important step in this direction.

In regard to initiatives financed under the Erasmus + Programme, most consortia have involved partners from countries where NEETs-related issues have appeared similar, or at least similar in statistical terms (such as Italy, Spain, Turkey, Romania, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal and Poland). When it comes to their implementation within countries, in Bulgaria, the majority of projects have been implemented at the local level (44% - in the city of Sofia, 18% - in Plovdiv, followed by other cities and smaller towns, such as Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Montana, Dobrich, Haskovo, Pleven, Pazardzhik, Gabrovo and Pernik). The activities which have taken place in the country's two largest cities, Sofia and Plovdiv, have mostly focused on fostering strategic partnerships, while efforts aimed at improving youth mobility have been

primarily undertaken in smaller towns located in what are considered to be the less developed parts of the country.

4. Financial aspects of initiatives and programmes

Table 1: Overview of the financial allocation of key programmes and initiatives of relevance to NEETs included in the annual National Employment Action Plan (2007-present)¹⁰

| Title of initiative/ programme | Financial allocation of initiative/programme in total (in EUR ¹¹) | Financial allocation (or estimate) for NEETs only (in EUR) | Funding source |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| Two-year Training Plan in the State Enterprise 'Bulgarian-German Center for Professional Training' (2022-2023) | 2022: 2 042 473 2023: 2 042 473 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| Training and Employment Programme for Long-term Unemployed (2021-2023) | 2021: 3 445 389 2022: 2 373 459 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Beautiful Bulgaria' Programme (2007-present) | 2011: 1 536 028 2013: 1 536 028 2015: 1 536 028 2017: 1 536 028 2019: 1 536 028 2020: 2 048 037 2021: 2 560 057 2022: 2 560 057 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age' (2007-present) | 2011: 285 189 2013: 3 224 620 2015: 871 897 2017: 1 591 124 2019: 361 326 2020: 173 519 2021: 836 550 2022: 617 961 | 2020: 173 519 2021: 836 550 2022: 617 961 | Government, state budget |
| 'Career Start' Programme (2003- present) | 2011: 1 969 000 2013: 8 285 000 | n.a. | Government, state budget |

¹⁰ This table does not include all national programmes and initiatives. The entries are programmes and initiatives which have had a larger budget and have given a more significant level of attention to unemployed youth.

¹¹ As the allocated amounts have been delegated by the state in BGN, an online converter has been used in order to provide the corresponding sums in EUR.

| | | | |
|---|---|------|--------------------------|
| | 2015: 2 710 000 2017: 3 027 000 2019: 2 109 000 2020: 1 964 000 2021: 3 691 000 2022: 3 514 000 | | |
| 'Melpomena' National Programme (2007- present) | 2011: 231 803 2013: 286 034 2015: 547 185 2017: 655 663 2019: 959 690 2020: 978 388 2021: 1 254 002 2022: 1 396 262 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| National Programme for Employment and Training of People with Disabilities (2007-present) | 2011: 3 335 445 2013: 4 349 881 2015: 3 098 585 2017: 4 445 454 2019: 4 203 302 2020: 3 975 783 2021: 4 597 640 2022: 6 004 253 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Activation of Inactive Persons' National Programme (2008-present) | 2011: 222 425 2013: 339 738 2015: 654 675 2017: 941 499 2019: 1 955 550 2020: 2 007 915 2021: 2 302 837 2022: 2 272 990 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| Regional Employment Programmes (2008-present) | 2011: 1 933 046 2013: 2 833 807 2015: 4 217 835 2017: 3 469 067 2019: 4 521 529 2020: 2 442 488 2021: 6 260 224 2022: 25 043 275 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Ready for Work' Project (2017-2023) | 2017 – 2 547 824 2019 – 3 923 649 2020: 2 547 824 | n.a. | HRD OP |

| | | | |
|---|---|------|--------------------------|
| | 2021: 1 818 238 2022: 2 547 824 | | |
| 'Workforce Adaptation' Project (2022) | 586 024 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Knowledge and Skills for Work' Project (2022) | 613 109 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Stimulus' Project (2022) | 612 526 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Successful Together' Project (2022) | 613 113 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'A New Beginning in Employment' Programme (2019-2021) | 2019: 765 764 2020: 715 769 2021: 714 762 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Adaptation to New Conditions' Project (2021) | 712 966 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'An Alternative for You' (2021) | 716 385 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Opportunity for Realisation' Project (2021) | 714 422 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Speed' Project (2021) | 705 280 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Provision of Care in a Domestic Environment' Programme (2020) | 8 815 514 | | Government, state budget |
| 'Classic-PRO' Project (2020) | 701 269 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Workforce Development' Project (2020) | 714 815 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Successful Together – for Proper New Education' Project (2019) | 765 613 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Catalogues' Project (2019) | 765 261 | | Government, state budget |
| 'Challenges' Project (2019) | 766 192 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'We Are Also Able' Project (2018-2019) | 2018: 885 104 2019: 760 802 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Restart' Project (2018) | 921 949 | n.a. | Government, state budget |

| | | | |
|--|--|------|--------------------------|
| 'Complex Framework Training, Self-employment – Business Initiative (CROS-B)' Project (2017-2018) | 2017: 582 974 2018: 804 669 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Working Chance' Programme (2012-2017) | 2015: 2 213 563 2016: 1 218 569 2017: 1 037 668 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Qualified Workers for Business' Project (2017) | 1 037 019 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Step Forward' Project (2017) | 1 123 310 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Qualification, Personal Integration and Professional Assistance' Project (2016) | 836 876 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Security' National Programme (2015) | 2 764 371 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Study and Succeed in Bulgaria' Project (2015) | 1 641 038 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'From Social Welfare Payments to Employment Provision' Programme (2003-2015) | 2011 – 9 691 913 2013: 15 511 435 2014: 5 613 762 2015: 2 049 983 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Directions' Project (2015) | 1 869 344 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Professional training for everybody – a chance for a successful transition into employment (PRO-CHANCE)' Project (2015) | 1 814 859 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'New Opportunity for Employment' Programme (2009-2014) | 2012: 1 448 872 2013: 2 254 178 2014: 350 041 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Professional Training and Motivation for Learning and Work Aimed at Accomplishing Fitness for Work' Project (2014) | 1 553 637 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Compass' Project (2014) | 1 452 996 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'From Training to Employment' Project (2014) | 1 545 085 | n.a. | Government, state budget |

| | | | |
|--|---|------|--------------------------|
| 'Professional' Project (2013) | 1 519 865 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Increasing Unemployed Persons' Fitness for Employment Through Improved Professional and Key Competences' (2013) | 1 489 897 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Self-realisation' Project (2011-2012) | 2011: 436 530 2012: 1 166 224 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Increasing Unemployed Persons' Employment Opportunities Through Quality Professional Training' (2012) | 1 462 646 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Teachers for Extracurricular Activities and Vacations' (2007-2009) | 2007: no available information 2008: no available information 2009: 788 497 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Renewal and Preservation of the Bulgarian Forest' Programme (2008-2009) | 2008: no available information 2009: 4 566 737 | n.a. | Government, state budget |
| 'Social Services in a Domestic Environment' National Programme (2009) | 4 601 808 | n.a. | Government, state budget |

Table 2: Overview of the financial allocation of key initiatives of relevance to NEETs in Bulgaria funded under the Erasmus + Programme of the European Commission (2007-present)¹²

| Title of initiative/ programme | Period of implementation | Financial allocation (in EUR) | Financial allocation (or estimate) for NEETs only | Funding source |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|----------------|
| New digital skills for work with young people - a training course for youth workers | [Start date: 01-01-2021 End date: 30-09-2021] | 28 176,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Strengthening youth in time of crisis | [Start date: 01-01-2021 End date: 30-08-2021] | 17 875,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |

¹² This table contains information about all 45 initiatives.

| | | | | |
|---|--|------------|-----|-----------|
| National Meeting 'Youth Work from A to Z' | [Start date: 01-08-2020 End date: 30-06-2022] | 14 580,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Art for Discussion and Inclusion | [Start date: 05-05-2020 End date: 04-10-2021] | 26 211,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Creating Employment Opportunities Through Digital Competence | [Start date: 03-02-2020 End date: 02-02-2022] | 26 195,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Youth digital skills for better activity and literacy | [Start date: 01-02-2020 End date: 30-11-2020] | 22 922,58 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Blended virtual internships in the field of business and entrepreneurship | [Start date: 15-11-2019 End date: 14-11-2021] | 124 783,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Job ToolKit | [Start date: 15-10-2019 End date: 14-08-2021] | 130 350,15 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Codependency - Unlimited Devotion | [Start date: 01-10-2019 End date: 31-12-2021] | 126 850,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| mEntoring prograMme for young People at risk for Labour fOrce entrY | [Start date: 01-10-2019 End date: 30-09-2021] | 113 331,58 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Nowadays Digital Media Literacy, Artificial Intelligence and Youth Career Development | [Start date: 01-09-2019 End date: 31-05-2021] | 157 638,27 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| The good youth worker = Successful young people | [Start date: 01-08-2019 End date: 31-01-2020] | 21 075,27 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| ECVET based further VET training to support the enhancement of entrepreneurship skills of young people and micro-SMEs via management accounting | [Start date: 17-12-2018 End date: 16-06-2021] | 206 449,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Adult training course for small farmers on ecological and urban agriculture | [Start date: 03-12-2018 End date: 02-06-2021] | 134 161,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Free platform for training search UNEM | [Start date: 15-10-2018 End date: 14-01-2021] | 179 721,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |

| | | | | |
|---|--|------------|-----|-----------|
| Promoting Social Change Through Entrepreneurship | [Start date: 01-06-2018 End date: 31-10-2018] | 30 884,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| From Inclusive Education to Real Scale Transfer | [Start date: 15-01-2018 End date: 30-04-2021] | 489 209,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| 'Informal learning – expanding the horizon for the future generation' | [Start date: 07-01-2018 End date: 06-06-2018] | 35 850,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| RE: INTEGRATIVE RE: ACTION | [Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019] | 146 085,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Self-Awareness and Entrepreneurship of Youth in Risk | [Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019] | 182 765,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Pave the Way to a Social Entrepreneurship | [Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019] | 148 913,63 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Media platform 'Vocational Guidance' | [Start date: 01-09-2017 End date: 31-08-2020] | 260 288,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Leisure time as a positivist youth peer pedagogy | [Start date: 01-09-2017 End date: 31-08-2019] | 179 890,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Together for social entrepreneurship and social innovations | [Start date: 15-06-2017 End date: 14-11-2017] | 28 619,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| 'Youth workers – the engine of social change in marginalized communities' | [Start date: 15-01-2017 End date: 14-06-2017] | 32 250,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| OPEN MIND - gamified platform and open online course in Social Entrepreneurship for female learners and students from diverse fields of study | [Start date: 01-11-2016 End date: 31-10-2018] | 251 596,91 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Interactive Education in 360° | [Start date: 01-09-2016 End date: 28-02-2019] | 324 400,75 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| First Steps | [Start date: 01-08-2016 End date: 31-08-2017] | 25 365,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Civic education - a tool for active society | [Start date: 01-01-2016 End date: 31-12-2017] | 77 900,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |

| | | | | |
|--|--|------------|-----|-----------|
| Digital Orientation Competences: continuation of my professional studies | [Start date: 01-01-2016 End date: 31-12-2017] | 186 794,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Be Unique, Intelligent, Lucrative, Diligent – BUILD | [Start date: 01-11-2015 End date: 31-10-2016] | 25 576,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Culinary Arts Education in Support of Youth Employment and Social Inclusion | [Start date: 01-09-2015 End date: 31-08-2017] | 201 031,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Prepare! Varna – European Youth Capital 2017! | [Start date: 01-09-2015 End date: 31-08-2017] | 79 051,50 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Volunteer Wave | [Start date: 01-07-2015 End date: 31-01-2017] | 82 465,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| National meeting ‘Young employee’ | [Start date: 01-05-2015 End date: 31-07-2015] | 27 536,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Evergreen in the Evergreen: When Tradition Inspires Innovation | [Start date: 01-04-2015 End date: 31-08-2015] | 13 744,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Volunteerism – a factor for career success | [Start date: 02-02-2015 End date: 01-09-2016] | 113 881,50 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Mobile games in youth work | [Start date: 01-01-2015 End date: 31-12-2015] | 117 545,39 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Eqavet System for Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Skills, Knowledge and Competencies of Supported Employment Providers for People with Disabilities | [Start date: 01-09-2014 End date: 31-08-2017] | 370 303,47 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Quality of youth career guidance and nowadays media literacy | [Start date: 01-09-2014 End date: 31-08-2016] | 223 975,23 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Enterprise goes green | [Start date: 01-08-2014 End date: 28-02-2015] | 19 991,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| From opportunity to a resource | [Start date: 01-08-2014 End date: 31-12-2014] | 14 609,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |

| | | | | |
|---|--|-----------|-----|-----------|
| Volunteerism in Varna | [Start date: 01-08-2014 End date: 31-12-2014] | 30 120,58 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| Varna – City of Volunteers | [Start date: 17-06-2014 End date: 16-02-2016] | 42 370,67 | n/a | Erasmus + |
| ‘The young entrepreneurs of today – active European citizens of tomorrow’ | [Start date: 17-06-2014 End date: 30-11-2014] | 32 017,00 | n/a | Erasmus + |

The annual amount allocated to implementing the National Employment Action Plan has remained at approximately 37 295 000 EUR for the time period 2010 – 2020. This lack of adaptation of resource allocation to changing labour market conditions (such as the considerable increase in the minimum wage over this time period), logically supports the conclusion that active labour market policies and related programmes and initiatives have had to be scaled back (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 51). Over the past two years, the annual sum dedicated to the National Employment Action Plan’s implementation has increased to 42 403 000 EUR in 2021 and 62 839 000 EUR in 2022. However, it is difficult to gauge to what extent this larger budget is to be attributed to the accelerating rise in inflation rates and if it represents an actual increase in the financial resources allocated to active labour market policies.

There is no publicly available information regarding the amounts set aside for the implementation of those aspects of the initiatives and programmes included in the National Employment Action Plan which specifically target unemployed youth. Data on the number of young persons supported are also lacking and thus it is not possible to make approximate estimates of the financial resources expended for the support of inactive young persons. Such an approximation in relation to programmes has been calculated for the year 2018: on the basis of the sums which have been expended on the national programmes, on the one side, and information about the share of young people these programmes have included (provided by the EA after a request), on the other side, the Institute for Market Economics (2019, p. 51) has estimated that 16.7% of the annual budget for that year was dedicated to unemployed youth (aged 15 to 29).

Perhaps the largest financial allocation targeting young persons who find themselves outside the labour market has been made in the context of the ‘Career Start’ Programme as this is a recurrent programme which has been implemented over a long period of time (2003-present), has focused only on unemployed youth, and has had a substantial budget (2020 - 1, 964 mln EUR; 2021 - 3, 691 mln EUR; 2022 - 3, 514 mln EUR). Significant contributions have also been made by the following recurring programmes which have either included unemployed youth up to 29 years of age as one of their target

groups or have focused solely on this particular group: 'Activation of Inactive Persons' National Programme (2020 - 2, 007 mln EUR; 2021 - 2, 302 mln EUR; 2022 - 2, 272 mln EUR); Regional Employment Programmes (2020 - 2, 442 mln EUR; 2021 - 6, 260 mln EUR; 2022 - 25, 043 mln EUR); 'From Social Welfare Payments to Employment Provision' (2013 - 15, 511 mln EUR; 2014 - 5, 613 mln EUR; 2015 - 2, 049 mln EUR); and 'Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age' (2020 - 0, 173 mln EUR; 2021 - 0, 836 mln EUR; 2022 - 0, 617 mln EUR). Because of the lack of publicly available breakdowns of the budgets of individual national programmes and initiatives, it is difficult to assess the proportionality of the financial scope of those interventions in terms of activities and number of supported persons.

When it comes to the ratio between the shares of state funding versus European funding of national programmes and initiatives, this is difficult to assess. As highlighted in Section 2, the present report only focuses on national programmes and initiatives which have been included in the annual National Employment Action Plan. Thus, a large multitude of initiatives funded under the HRD OP remain outside the scope of this study. As for the programmes and initiatives included in the National Employment Action Plan, these are financed either under the state budget or under the HRD OP, or both. According to the annual plans for the period 2007-2022, the majority of those programmes and initiatives have been funded under the state budget. However, it should be noted that it may still be the case that EU funds are the original funding source even of such programmes and initiatives. As social policy in Bulgaria is highly centralised and there is insufficient transparency regarding funding and expenditure (including of active labour market policies), it is possible that the state may largely rely on European funding, while channelling these funds through state institutions.

The initiatives funded under the Erasmus + Programme of the EC have received a total of 5 125 346.47 EUR (in the time period 2007-present). The largest amount (9.5%) has been allocated to the project 'From Inclusive Education to Real Scale Transfer (FIERST)' which has clearly identified NEETs as a target group. On the basis of the desk research carried out in preparation of this report, it has been estimated that 55% of the actions, or 25 of all 45, have received 90% of the total financial allocation provided by the Erasmus + Programme. All of those projects have focused on activities categorised as strategic partnerships for training and education. By contrast, most youth mobility projects, for instance, have received between 43 000 - 83 000 EUR. Nonetheless, this disparity may be explained by the types of activities supported as initiatives aimed at developing strategic partnerships tend to support activities which require more substantial funding, such as involvement of highly qualified human resources, ICT development and entrepreneurship assistance. In general, it is not possible to determine the level of impact and sustainability of the actions as not all of them have indicated the number of their beneficiaries. What is more, the proportionality of the financial scope of the initiatives appears to be underemphasised in evaluations which is detrimental to accountability.

5. Implementation of initiatives and programmes

5.1 Project implementers

All national programmes and initiatives of relevance to NEETs which are included in the National Employment Action Plan have had as their managing authority the MLSP. The implementer is typically the MLSP's subsidiary, the Employment Agency. There appears to be a satisfactory level of inter- and intra-institutional cooperation in relation to most interventions. For example, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture have been involved in the implementation of certain initiatives and programmes when their respective functions have been relevant to the type(s) of supported activities. Furthermore, the different branches of the Employment Agency – the Regional Employment Service Directorates and the Labour Office Directorates – have played a key role in the local implementation of national programmes and initiatives.

Most initiatives and programmes have been implemented in collaboration with partner entities, more specifically educational and vocational institutions and organisations, employers' organisations, employee organisations, and NGOs. Business organisations have contributed to implementation both in their capacity as employers and as service providers. The implementation of a number of interventions has been carried out in cooperation with some of the major employers' organisations and associations in the country, such as the Bulgarian Industrial Association, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Union for Private Economic Enterprise. In the context of programmes and initiatives focusing on training activities, as implementing partners have been involved various vocational training centres, including state-owned (e.g., the Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre State Enterprise), private (e.g., 'Brand' Professional Training Centre), and other (e.g., the Vocational Training Centre of the Bulgarian Industrial Association). One of the largest recurring national programmes ('Melpomena'), due to its particular thematic focus, has been implemented with the support of the creative employee organisation, the Bulgarian Artists' Association. While it ought to be acknowledged that national programmes and initiatives are collaboratively implemented together with a range of partners, there is a need for further diversification in this regard so as to include a greater number of private-sector, nongovernmental and state-owned organisations.

The type of entities which have been involved in the implementation of international projects funded under the Erasmus + Programme range from state and public institutions, such as universities, secondary schools, ministries, and regional or national public offices of education, culture, and sports, to non-profit organizations and private companies working in the fields of education, training, entrepreneurship, innovation and ICT. It appears quite common for educational organisations to participate in strategic partnerships, while public and private cultural organisations tend to take part in youth mobility projects.

It is also observed that youth associations have focused more on labour market issues, while organisations working in education and training - on innovative solutions to specific problems in those two areas. However, a number of key players remain absent from the consortia, such as the banking and financial sector, highly productive industrial corporations, high-tech companies which design and produce goods and content specially for young people, as well as the media.

Table 3: Overview of entities involved in the implementation of national programmes and initiatives of relevance to NEETs included in the annual National Employment Action Plan (2007-present)¹³

| Title of initiative/ programme | Name of implementer | No of implemented projects | Degree of reflection of NEETs | Period of implementation |
|---|--|----------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Two-year Training Plan in the State Enterprise 'Bulgarian-German Center for Professional Training | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre State Enterprise | n.a. | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons of any age. | 2022-2023 |
| Training and Employment Programme for Long-term Unemployed | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | n.a. | While the target group are long-term unemployed persons, young people up to 29 are one among three priority groups. | 2021-2023 |
| 'Beautiful Bulgaria' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Insufficient information. The programme targets all unemployed persons of any age. | 2007-present |
| 'Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age' | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | This programme focuses solely on unemployed persons up to 29. | 2007-present |
| 'Career Start' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | One per year | This programme focuses solely on unemployed youth. It targets two subgroups: 1) | 2003-present |

¹³ This table does not include all national programmes and initiatives. The entries have been selected with a view to presenting a well-rounded picture of the diversity of implementers.

| | | | | |
|--|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | | | young persons up to 24 and 2) young persons up to 29. | |
| 'Melpomena' National Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Ministry of Culture, Artists' Association of Bulgaria | One per year | Insufficient information. The programme targets all unemployed persons (with the appropriate education). | 2007-present |
| National Programme for Employment and Training of People with Disabilities | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Insufficient information. The programme targets people with permanent disabilities and persons who have successfully completed a programme to overcome addictions. | 2007-present |
| 'Activation of Inactive Persons' National Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Unemployed young persons up to 29 are one of the priority target groups. | 2008-present |
| Regional Employment Programmes | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | One of the target groups are unemployed youth up to 29 (a subgroup is unemployed youth up to 25 are neither in employment nor in training). | 2008-present |
| 'Ready for Work' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Economically inactive young people aged 15 to 29 who are not in education, training or employment and have not been registered with the Labour Office. | 2017-2023 |
| 'Workforce Adaptation' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed youth up to 29, including NEETs, are one of the target groups. | 2022 |
| 'Knowledge and Skills for Work' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | While the project targets all unemployed persons, special priority is given to NEETs under 29. | 2022 |

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| 'Opportunity for Employment and Self-Employment' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Union for Private Economic Enterprise | One | While all registered unemployed are eligible, NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 2022 |
| 'Stimulus' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | While the project targets unemployed persons with more than 6 months of registration at the Labour Office, NEET youth are one among several priority groups. | 2022 |
| 'Successful Together' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | NEET youth are one among several target groups. | 2022 |
| 'A New Beginning in Employment' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Unemployed persons up to 29 are one among several target groups. | 2019-2021 |
| 'Adaptation to New Conditions' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | While the project targets all unemployed persons, it makes a specific mention of NEETS. | 2021 |
| 'An Alternative for You' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed persons up to 29 are one among several target groups. | 2021 |
| 'Opportunity for Realisation' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Union for Private Economic Enterprise | One | All registered unemployed are eligible but NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 2021 |
| 'Speed' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | While the project targets all unemployed, persons belonging to groups that are in a disadvantaged position | 2021 |

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| | | | in the labour market are one among several priority groups. The project gives no definition of the term 'groups that are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market'. However, in the context of active labour market policies, NEETs up to 29 are generally deemed to belong to this group. | |
| 'Provision of Care in a Domestic Environment' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | n.a. | The programme targets all unemployed, in particular unemployed persons belonging to groups that are at a disadvantaged position in the labour market, including unemployed youth up to 29 (also a subgroup of unemployed youth up to 25). | 2020 |
| 'Classic-PRO' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry | One | While the project targets all unemployed persons, it makes a specific mention of NEETs (under 29). | 2020 |
| 'Prosperity' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Union for Private Economic Enterprise | One | While all registered unemployed are eligible, NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 2020 |
| 'Workforce Development' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | While the project targets all people who are excluded from the labour market, it puts an emphasis on NEETs as one among several disadvantaged groups. | 2020 |
| 'Successful Together – for | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, | One | NEET youth (under 29) is one among several target groups. | 2019 |

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| Proper New Education' Project | Employment Agency, Union for Private Economic Enterprise | | | |
| 'Labour Activity' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed people. | 2019 |
| 'Catalogues' Project | Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry | One | NEET youth is one among several target groups. | 2019 |
| 'Challenges' Project | Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Insufficient information. The project has four target groups: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons with low or unsought in the labour market qualifications; unemployed persons aged 50+; and discouraged workers. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2019 |
| 'We Are Also Able' Project | Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Insufficient information. The project has three target groups: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons aged 50+; and unemployed persons with permanent disabilities. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2018-2019 |
| 'Growing Through New Opportunities for Education and | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Union for | One | While all registered unemployed are eligible, NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 2018 |

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| Employment' Project | Private Economic Enterprise | | | |
| 'Training for Employment' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons. | 2018 |
| 'Restart' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed people, while according priority to those who belong to vulnerable groups or are long-term unemployed. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2018 |
| 'Complex Framework Training, Self-employment – Business Initiative (CROS-B)' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed, with a focus on vulnerable groups. However, it makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2017-2018 |
| 'Working Chance' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Unemployed youth up to 29 is one among several target groups. | 2012-2017 |
| 'Qualified Workers for Business' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons. | 2017 |
| 'Step Forward' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons. | 2017 |
| 'New Perspective' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Union for | Two – one in 2017 and one in 2012 | Insufficient information. | 2017, 2012 |

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| | Private Economic Enterprise | | | |
| 'Qualification, Personal Integration and Professional Assistance' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed youth up to 29 (including a subgroup of youth up to 25) who are neither in training nor in employment are one among several target groups. | 2016 |
| 'Quality Workforce – Stable Labour Market' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons. | 2016 |
| 'Security' National Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | n.a. | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons. | 2015 |
| 'Study and Succeed in Bulgaria' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Insufficient information. The project targets all unemployed persons. | 2015 |
| 'From Social Welfare Payments to Employment Provision' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | While the project targets all unemployed persons who are registered at the Labour Office and receive monthly social welfare payments, unemployed young people up to 29 who receive monthly social welfare payments are one among several priority groups. | 2003-2015 |
| 'Directions' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed youth up to 29 are one among several target groups. | 2015 |
| 'Professional training for everybody – a chance for a successful | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian-German Vocational | One | The project targets unemployed persons registered at the Labour Office belonging to groups that are at a disadvantaged | 2015 |

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| transition into employment (PRO-CHANCE) Project | Training Centre State Enterprise | | position in the labour market, including unemployed youth up to 29 (priority is given to unemployed youth up to 25, including persons leaving institutions for children deprived of parental care after having turned 18). | |
| 'From Professional Training to Effective Employment' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency Bulgarian Industrial Association | One | While the project targets all unemployed, it specifically highlights 'unemployed youths up until 29, with a subgroup of under 25, NEETs' as one of the target groups. | 2015 |
| 'New Opportunity for Employment' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Insufficient information. The project targets persons registered at the Labour Office who have been laid off as a result of the economic crisis and/or restructuring of production. | 2009-2014 |
| 'Professional Training and Motivation for Learning and Work Aimed at Accomplishing Fitness for Work' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre State Enterprise | One | The project targets unemployed persons registered at the Labour Office belonging to groups that are at a disadvantaged position in the labour market, including unemployed youth up to 29 (priority is given to unemployed youth up to 25, including persons leaving institutions for children deprived of parental care after having turned 18). | 2014 |
| 'Compass' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed youth up to 29 (with a subgroup of unemployed youth up to 25) are one among several target groups. | 2014 |

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| 'From Training to Employment' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed youth with no qualifications and work experience and a low level of work motivation are one among several target groups. | 2014 |
| 'Professional' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | One | While the project targets unemployed persons with secondary or higher education, priority is given to several groups, including young people up to 29 with a low level of motivation for work or with no work experience. In addition, one of the main goals of the initiative is defined as 'provision of support for active labour market inclusion of young people up to 29 and other target groups'. | 2013 |
| 'Increasing Unemployed Persons' Fitness for Employment Through Improved Professional and Key Competences' | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | The project targets unemployed persons registered at the Labour Office who belong to groups that are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market, including young people up to 29 (priority is given to young persons leaving institutions for children deprived of parental care after turning 18 and young Roma). | 2013 |
| 'Self-realisation' Project | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One | Unemployed youth up to 29 are one of two target groups. | 2011-2012 |
| 'Increasing Unemployed Persons' | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, | One | Unemployed youth up to 29 are one among several target groups. | 2012 |

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| Employment Opportunities Through Quality Professional Training' | Employment Agency | | | |
| 'Teachers for Extracurricular Activities and Vacations' | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Insufficient information. The programme targets unemployed persons with a teaching background/education. | 2007-2009 |
| 'Renewal and Preservation of the Bulgarian Forest' Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | One per year | Insufficient information. The programme targets all unemployed persons registered at the Labour Office. It makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2008-2009 |
| 'Social Services in a Domestic Environment' National Programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency | n.a. | Insufficient information. The programme targets all unemployed persons registered at the Labour Office. It makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2009 |

Table 4: Overview of entities involved in the implementation of initiatives of relevance to NEETs in Bulgaria which have been funded under the Erasmus + Programme of the European Commission¹⁴

| Title of initiative/ programme | Name of implementer (Coordinator and Partners) | | No of implemented projects | Degree of reflection of NEETs | Period of implementation |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Quality of Youth Career Guidance and Nowadays Media Literacy | Student Computer Art Society | National Student Information and Career Center (Bulgaria), Österreichisches Institut Für Bildungsforschung Der Wirtschaft (Austria), Viesoji Istaiga Jaunimo Karjeros Centras | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2014 End date: 31-08-2016 |

¹⁴ This table contains information about all 45 initiatives.

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| | | (Lithuania), Ankara University Center for the Study of Human Resources and Career Counselling (Turkey), Vocational School 'General Vladimir Zaimov' (Bulgaria) | | | |
| Job Toolkit | Anatolia Consult Ltd | Infonet Ekpaideytikos Organismos Monoprosopi Epe (Greece), Aristi Eood (Bulgaria), Annie (Netherlands) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-10-2019 End date: 14-08-2021 |
| Open Mind - Gamified Platform and Open Online Course in Social Entrepreneur ship for Female Learners and Students from Diverse Fields of Study | Higher Institute of Insurance and Finance | D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (Bulgaria), University of Sheffield (Uk), Uniwersytet Lodzki (Poland), Business Foundation for Education (Bulgaria), Institute of Entrepreneurship Development (Greece), Universitatea Titu Maiorescu (Romania) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-11-2016 End date: 31-10-2018 |
| Leisure Time as a Positivist Youth Peer Pedagogy | University of Plovdiv 'Paisiy Hilendarski' | Phoenixkm Bvba (Belgium), Beogradska Otvorena Skola (Serbia), National Association of Professionals Working with People with Disabilities (Bulgaria), Vienna Association of Education Volunteers (Austria), Voluntary | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2017 End date: 31-08-2019 |

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| | | Unit Plovdiv 112 (Bulgaria) | | | |
| Interactive Education in 360° | Interactive Bulgaria Foundation | Mane - Cz S.R.O. (Czechia), Acton Exchange Ltd (Uk), Associazione Di Promozione Sociale Young Effect (Italy), New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria), 119 Secondary School 'Academician Mihail Arnaudov' (Bulgaria), Fsn Association, Z.S. (Czechia) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2016 End date: 28-02-2019 |
| First Steps | Professional High-School of Clothing 'Docho Mihaylov' | Asociación Jóvenes Solidarios (Spain), Academy for Peace and Development (Georgia), Graduates Association of Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences (Armenia), Jaunatne Par (Latvia), Kindergarten 'Detelina' (Bulgaria), Youth Association Droni (Georgia), Cemea Franche Comte (France) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2016 End date: 31-08-2017 |

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|---|--|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| Mobile Games in Youth Work | National Student Information and Career Center | Student Computer Art Society (Bulgaria), Orientare Associazione Culturale (Italy), Kulturno Izobrazevalno Drustvo Kibla (Slovenia), Stowarzyszenie Manko (Poland), Arbeitskreis Ostviertel E.V. (Germany) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2015 End date: 31-12-2015 |
| Codependency - Unlimited Devotion | Center for Psychological Support 'Harmony' | 'Multy Ethno Forum' Association (Bulgaria), Asociatia Tinerii 3 D (Romania), Fsn Association, Z.S. (Czechia), Turorein - Verein Zur Förderung Transnationaler Jugendinitiativen (Austria), Mediterrart Aps (Italy), Acton Exchange Ltd (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2019 End date: 31-12-2021 |
| Mentoring Programme for Young People at Risk for Labour Force Entry | Higher Institute of Insurance and Finance | Emina Pályaorientációs Alapítvány (Hungary), Law and Internet Foundation (Bulgaria), Tdm 2000 (Italy), Celjski Mladinski Center, Javni Zavod Za Mladinsko Kulturo, Izobrazevanje, Informiranje In Sport (Slovenia), Yasar Universitesi (Turkey) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2019 End date: 30-09-2021 |

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|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| Blended Virtual Internships in the Field of Business and Entrepreneurship | Agricultural University of Povdiv | Interprojects (Bulgaria), Phoenixkm Bvba (Belgium), Kartalte (Turkey) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-11-2019 End date: 14-11-2021 |
| Creating Employment Opportunities Through Digital Competence | Education 21st Century Foundation | Greek Youth Mobility - Gym (Greece), Asociatia Tinerilor Cu Initiativa Civica (Romania), Stowarzyszenie Sztukater Azerbaijan Modern Youth Public Union (Poland), NGO 'Step. Forward' (Ukraine), Education Nation (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 03-02-2020 End date: 02-02-2022 |
| New Digital Skills for Work with Young People - a Training Course for Youth Workers | Cultural Heritage Institute | Ogres Tehnikums (Latvia), Brainlog (Denmark), Education 21st Century Foundation (Bulgaria), Regional Advocacy Center (Macedonia), Seiklejate Vennaskond (Estonia), Social Youth Development Civil Nonprofit Society (Greece), Cozumun Parcasiyiz - Part of the Solution (Turkey), Hrforum Personnel Management Association (Ukraine), Bué Fixe- Associação De Jovens (Portugal), Junge Europäische | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2021 End date: 30-09-2021 |

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| | | <p>Föderalisten - Landesverband Steiermark (Austria), United in Diversity (Bulgaria), Asociatia Tinerilor Cu Initiativa Civica (Romania), Fundacja Rozwoju Miedzykulturowego Ebu (Poland), Szociális Innováció Alapítvány A Kelet-Európai Térség Fejlesztéséért (Hungary), Tiber Umbria Comett Education Programme (Italy), Umbrella (Georgia), Asociación Juvenil 'Jarrón Club' (Spain), European Association World-Our Home (Latvia), Viesoji Istaiga Vilniaus Jeruzales Darbo Rinkos Mokymo Centras (Vjdrmc) (Lithuania), Get Involved (Bulgaria)</p> | | | |
| Strengthening Youth in Time of Crisis | Cultural Heritage Institute | <p>Asociación Juvenil 'Jarrón Club' (Spain), Tiber Umbria Comett Education Programme (Italy), Aegee-Niš (Serbia), Regional Advocacy Center (Macedonia), Get Involved (Bulgaria)</p> | 1 | Insufficient information | <p>Start date: 01-01-2021 End date: 30-08-2021</p> |

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|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| Art for Discussion and Inclusion | Association Rasmah | Aktive Kosmos (Spain), Asu International Student Club (Turkey), Roes Cooperativa (Greece), Oriel Ets (Italy), Bulgarian Foundation for Research, Education and Entrepreneurship (Bfree) (Bulgaria), Asociatia Tinerilor Cu Initiativa Civica (Romania) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 05-05-2020 End date: 04-10-2021 |
| Nowadays Digital Media Literacy, Artificial Intelligence and Youth Career Development | Student Computer Art Society (Scas) | Professional High-School of Tourism 'Aleksandar Paskalev' (Bulgaria), Association 'National Student Information and Career Centre' (Bulgaria), Mesleki Egitim Ve Kucuk Sanayi Destekleme Vakfi (Turkey), Česká Zemědělská Univerzita V Praze (Czechia), Viesoji Istaiga Jaunimo Karjeros Centras (Lithuania) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2019 End date: 31-05-2021 |
| Ecvet Based Further Vet Training to Support the Enhancement of Entrepreneurship Skills of Young People and Micro-Smes Via | D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics | Zgura- M Eood (Bulgaria), Phoenixkm Bvba (Belgium), K Pouloupoulos Pc (Greece) Gazi Universitesi (Turkey) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 17-12-2018 End date: 16-06-2021 |

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| Management Accounting | | | | | |
| Media Platform 'Vocational Guidance' | Institute for European Civil Society Development | Fsn Association, Z.S. (Czechia), Asociatia Tinerii 3 D (Romania), Secondary School 'Konstantin Velichkov' (Bulgaria), 'Multy Ethno Forum' Association (Bulgaria), Mane - Cz S.R.O. (Czechia) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2017 End date: 31-08-2020 |
| Youth Digital Skills for Better Activity and Literacy | Cultural Heritage Institute | Szociális Innováció Alapítvány A Kelet-Európai Térség Fejlesztéséért (Hungary), Ekonomska Skola Pirot (Russia), Umbrella (Germany), Liceul Tehnologic 'Valeriu Braniste' (Romania), Regional Advocacy Center (Macedonia) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-02-2020 End date: 30-11-2020 |
| National Meeting 'Youth Work From a to Z' | Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, Yspdb | National Youth Forum Bulgaria (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2020 End date: 30-06-2022 |
| From Inclusive Education to Real Scale Transfer | Teach for Bulgaria Foundation | Ministry of Education and Science (Bulgaria), Huddinge Kommun (Sweden), Asociatia Teach for Romania (Romania), Teach for All Network (UK), Sihtasutus Noored Kooli (Estonia), New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-01-2018 End date: 30-04-2021 |

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| Adult Training Course for Small Farmers on Ecological and Urban Agriculture | Agricultural University of Plovdiv | Ekologijakm Ood (Bulgaria), Eufora Perivalontiki Chiou Meletonkai Ipiresion Monoprosopi Eteria Idiotiki Kefaleouxikis Eterias (Greece), Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Universitesi (Turkey) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 03-12-2018 End date: 02-06-2021 |
| Free Platform for Training Search Unem | Centre for Professional Training 'Development' | Anatolia Consult Ltd (Bulgaria), Infonet Ekpaideytikos Organismos Monoprosopi Epe (Greece), Aplicaproposta Lda (Portugal), | 1 | The whole programme | Start date: 15-10-2018 End date: 14-01-2021 |
| Re: Integrative Re: Action | Association Confederation of Labour 'Support' | National Organization Little Bulgarian People (Bulgaria), Economic Research Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Bulgaria), C A I - Conversas Associacao Internacional (Portugal), Academy of Strategic Knowledge Cic (Uk) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019 |

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| <p>The Good Youth Worker = Successful Young People</p> | <p>Inspiration</p> | <p>Urbana Mladez (Hungary), Asociatia Centrul De Excelenta In Dezvoltare Personala Solomon (Romania), Soroptimist Business and Professional Women Club Yalova Association (Turkey), Municipal Youth House (Bulgaria), You in Europe (Greece), Onda Verde- Associação Juvenil De Ambiente E Aventura (Portugal), Proatlântico - Associação Juvenil (Portugal) Eduera (Slovakia) Asociacion Juvenil Intercambia (Spain), Consejo De La Juventud De Ciudad Real (Spain), Comitato D'intesa Tra Le Associazioni Volontaristiche Della Provincia Di Belluno (Italy)</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>Insufficient information</p> | <p>Start date: 01-08-2019 End date: 31-01-2020</p> |
| <p>Civic Education - AI Tool for Active Society</p> | <p>National Youth Forum Bulgaria</p> | <p>Conselho Nacional De Juventude Associacao (Portugal), Consejo De La Juventud De Espana (Spain), NGO Youth Voice – Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Forum Nazionale Dei Giovani Associazione (Italy)</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>Insufficient information</p> | <p>Start date: 01-01-2016 End date: 31-12-2017</p> |

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| Self-Awareness and Entrepreneurship of Youth in Risk | National Association of Resource Teachers Bulgaria (NART) | Igdir Il Milli Egitim Mudurlugu (Italy) Martijn Meima Coaching (Netherlands), Backslash (Spain), Future for Us All (Bulgaria), Celjski Mladinski Center, Javni Zavod Za Mladinsko Kulturo, Izobrazevanje, Informiranje In Sport (Slovenia) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019 |
| Pave The Way to a Social Entrepreneurship | Gis-Transfercenter Foundation | Fundacio Privada Trinijove (Spain), Technical Training Bulgaria Ltd (Bulgaria), Comite Europeen De Coordination (Belgium), Fondazione Luigi Clerici (Italy), Federation Des Initiatives Et Actions Sociales-Action Coordonnee De Formation Et D'insertion (Belgium) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019 |
| Promoting Social Change Through Entrepreneurship | Economic Development Union | NGO 'Non-Formal Education for Youth' (Ukraine), Can You (Bulgaria), Zift Organization (Turkey), Association for Development, Education and Social Involvement (Georgia), Modern Youth Public Union (Azerbaijan), Asset Based Community Development Innovation Center | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-06-2018 End date: 31-10-2018 |

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| | | (Armenia), Czech Youth Association Z.S. (Czechia), The Rising Stars (Italy), Unique Projects (Lithuania), Danube Volunteer Centre (Romania), Asociacion Cultural Somos Europa (Spain) | | | |
| Digital Orientation Competences : Continuation of My Professional Studies | Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski | Cascaid Limited (UK), Fundatia Satean (Romania), Universita Degli Studi Di Camerino (Italy), Secondary School 'Panayot Volov' (Bulgaria), Centro Studi Pluriversum Srl (Italy), Dep Institut SI (Spain), National Agency for Professional Education and Training (Bulgaria), National Vocational Secondary School of Computer Technologies and Systems (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2016 End date: 31-12-2017 |
| Volunteerism – a Factor for Career Success | National Alliance for Volunteer Action (Nava) | Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski (Bulgaria), Centro Per Lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci (Italy), Industry Watch Group Llc (Bulgaria), Cardo - Narodne Dobrovolnicke Centrum (Slovakia) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 02-02-2015 End date: 01-09-2016 |
| Eqavet System for Recognition, Validation | Zgura-M Eood | Jugend Am Werk Steiermark Gmbh (Austria), National Federation of | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2014 End date: 31-08-2017 |

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| and Accreditation of Skills, Knowledge and Competencies of Supported Employment Providers for People with Disabilities | | Employers of Disabled People (Bulgaria), National Agency for Professional Education and Training (Bulgaria), Uluslarasi Bilim, Inovasyon, Teknoloji Ve Egitimi Destekleme Dernegi (Turkey), Interprojects (Bulgaria), Fundación Pascual Tomás (Spain) | | | |
| Culinary Arts Education in Support of Youth Employment and Social Inclusion | Kolez International | Marijampoles College (Lithuania), Culinary Arts and Hospitality Association (Bulgaria), Biedriba Eurofortis (Latvia), Younet (Italy), Formacion Y Asesores En Seleccion Y Empleo SI (Spain), Zaposlitveni Center Gea, Zavod Za Usposabljanje in Zaposlovanje Invalidov (Slovenia) | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2015 End date: 31-08-2017 |
| Prepare! Varna – European Youth Capital 2017! | Association for You | Interregional Youth Social Movement of Support of Voluntary Initiatives Sfera (Russia), Associacao Mais Cidadania (Portugal), Varna University of Economics (Bulgaria), Association 'Varna - European Youth Capital' (Bulgaria), Alternative Space (Bulgaria), Fédération Départementale Des | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2015 End date: 31-08-2017 |

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| | | <p>Mjc-Mpt De L'aube (France), Foundation 'Sos Families In A Risk' (Bulgaria), Neolea Gia Antalagi Kai Katanoisi (Cyprus), Alliance Française Varna (Bulgaria), Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju I Integracji Mlodziezy (Poland), Via E.V. - Verein Für Internationalen Und Interkulturellen Austausch (Germany), NGO 'Actio Catholica Patria' (Lithuania), Saint-Petersburg Charity Public Organization for Children and Adults With Disabilities 'Shag Navstrechu' (Russia), All-Ukrainian Association for Youth Co-Operation Alternative-V (Ukraine), Centre Regional D'information Jeunesse Nouvelle-Aquitaine (France)</p> | | | |
| <p>'Informal Learning – Expanding the Horizon for the Future Generation'</p> | <p>European Association for Audiovisual Communication</p> | <p>Vsi Jaunimo Centras Omnia (Lithuania), Asociatia Edulifelong (Romania), Czech Youth Association Z.S. (Czechia), Seiklejate Vennaskond (Estonia), Association for Development,</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>Insufficient information</p> | <p>Start date: 07-01-2018 End date: 06-06-2018</p> |

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| | | Education and Social Involvement (Georgia), Center for Education and Development (Macedonia), Lamek NGO (Armenia), NGO Ne Zupinaysia (Ukraine), Cultural Heritage Institute (Bulgaria), Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Universitesi (Turkey) | | | |
| Volunteer Wave | Association for You | Associazione Agrado (Italy), Association L'escale/Maison De L'europe (France), Centre Régional Information Jeunesse Champagne-Ardenne (France), Comune Di Cremona (Italy), Fundación Paideia Galiza (Spain), Esi Labs! (Latvia), Foundation 'Sos Families in Risk' (Bulgaria), NGO 'Actio Catholica Patria' (Lithuania), Idea (Bulgaria), Jovenes Hacia La Solidaridad Y El Desarrollo (Spain), Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju I Integracji Młodzieży (Poland), Kinisi Ethelonton Service Civil International Ellas | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-07-2015 End date: 31-01-2017 |

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| | | (Greece), Varna University of Economics | | | |
| Together for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovations | Economic Development Union | Coda Di Lupo (Italy), Centre for Training and Conseling for Women-Era (Macedonia), Asociacion Building Bridges (Spain), Sorgun Genclik Dernegi (Turkey), Unique Projects (Lithuania), Youth for Equality (Slovakia), New Opportunities (Bulgaria), Associação Novo Mundo Azul (Portugal), Asociatia Centrul De Excelenta in Dezvoltare Personala Solomon (Romania), Lamek NGO (Armenia), | 1 | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-06-2017 End date: 14-11-2017 |
| 'Youth Workers – the Engine of Social Change in Marginalized Communities' | New Opportunities | Votsis Youth in Action Club (Greece), Svetlo Utro Association (Bulgaria), Associação Novo Mundo Azul (Portugal), Kuzmanov Foundation (Bulgaria), Eurocircle (France), Sorgun Genclik Dernegi (Turkey), Asociacija Apkabink Europa (Lithuania), Prism - Promozione Internazionale Sicilia – Mondo (Italy), Asociacion Projuven (Estonia), Municipality Of Alba Iulia (Romania), | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 15-01-2017 End Date: 14-06-2017 |

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| | | Students & Youth Development Centre (UK), Future in Our Hands (Armenia), A.D.E.L. - Association for Development, Education and Labour (Slovakia) | | | |
| Volunteerism in Varna | Association for You | Ajgastagus - Associação Juvenil Grupo De Accção Social Do Tagus (Portugal), Fundación Paideia Galiza (Spain), University of Economics-Varna (Bulgaria), Awo Kreisverband (Germany) | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 01-08-2014 End Date: 31-12-2014 |
| Be Unique, Intelligent, Lucrative, Diligent - Build | Youth Association for Education | Aim (Bulgaria) Koinonikh Synetairestikh Prasines Diadromes (Greece), Katilimci Genclik Dernegi (Turkey), Mladinski Senat Strumica (Macedonia), Europejska Fundacja Edukacyjno-Sportowa (Poland), Asociacija 'Aktyvus Jaunimas' (Lithuania), Cercul Excelentei (Romania), Associação Spin Para O Intercâmbio, Formação E Cooperação Entre Os Povos (Portugal), Asociacija Za Internacionalnu | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 01-11-2015 End Date: 31-10-2016 |

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| | | Mobilnost Hrvatska (Hungary) | | | |
| Varna – a City of Volunteers | Association for You | Asociacion Juvenil Intercambia (Spain), Foundation ‘Sos Families in A Risk’ (Bulgaria), Klubs Maja - Jaunatne Vienotai Eiropai (Latvia), Volonterski Centar Zagreb Udruga (Hungary), Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju I Integracji Mlodziezy (Poland), Fundación Paideia Galiza (Spain), Association L'escale/Maison De L'europe (France), Centrum Volneho Casu (Slovakia) Diputacion De Almeria (Spain), Varna University of Economics (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 17-06-2014 End Date: 16-02-2016 |
| From an Opportunity to a Resource | Association ‘Blyan Za Romantika, Cvetya I Kosmos’ | Stowarzyszenie Iodziezowych Inicjatyw Tworczych ‘Creator’ (Poland), Centro Social De Palmela (Portugal), Autonomia E Descoberta, Crl (Portugal), National Community Cultural Center ‘Holy Gabrovian Saints Damaskin and Onufrii’ (Portugal), Vicolocorto (Italy), | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 01-08-2014 End Date: 31-12-2014 |

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| | | Excmo. Ayuntamiento (Spain) | | | |
| Evergreen in the Evergreen: When Tradition Inspires Innovation | Education 21st Century Foundation | Zdruzenie Na Mladi Kreaktiv Skopje (Macedonia), Organization for Promotion of European Issues (Cyprus), Sustainable Society Association (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 01-04-2015 End Date: 31-08-2015 |
| National Meeting 'Young Employee' | Yspdb | The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award – Bulgaria (Bulgaria), National Youth Forum Bulgaria (Bulgaria) | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 01-05-2015 End Date: 31-07-2015 |
| Enterprise Goes Green | Aim | Association 'Professional Forum For Education' (Bulgaria), Centar Za Studije Socijalne Demokratije (Russia), Association For Non-Formal Education European Cultural Epicenter Bitola HU Dotis Informal Group (Macedonia), Coalition Of Youth Organizations Sega (Macedonia), Infnit (Kosovo), Unique Junior Enterprise (Albania), Youth Support Alliance (Serbia), Associazione Giosef-Unito (Italy), Bugun Icin Genclik Dernegi (Turkey), Europejska Fundacja | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 01-08-2014 End Date: 28-02-2015 |

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|---|-------------------|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| | | Edukacji I Rozwoju (Poland), Udruga Inspire (Hungary), Eurosud (Italy) | | | |
| 'The Young Entrepreneurs of Today – Active European Citizens of Tomorrow' | Evropa V Dvijenje | Erasmus Student Network Italia (Italy), Erasmus Student Network Portugal (Portugal), Asociació Erasmus Student Network Upc Escola Tècnica Superior D'enginyeria Industrial De Barcelona (Spain), Erasmus Student Network – Bulgaria (Bulgaria), Erasmus Student Network Nancy (France), Erasmus Student Network Sverige (Slovenia), Erasmus Student Network (Belgium), Asociatia Erasmus Student Network (Esn) Romania (Romania), Esn Denmark (Denmark), Balkanidea Novi Sad (Serbia), Mittetulundusühing Erasmus Student Network Estonia (Estonia), HR Erasmus Studentska Mreza Zagreb (Croatia), Stowarzyszenie Esn Polska (Poland), Esn Reykjavik (Iceland), International Exchange | 1 | Insufficient Information | Start Date: 17-06-2014 End Date: 30-11-2014 |

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| | | Erasmus Student Network France (France), ESN-Riga (Latvia), Erasmus Student Network Slovakia (Slovakia), ESN Kapa Athens (Greece), Erasmus Studentu Tinklas ESN Lietuva (Lithuania), Erasmus Student Network Bristol (UK) | | | |
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5.2 Target groups of NEETs

When it comes to the national programmes and initiatives which have been implemented as measures related to active labour market policies, there have been only several interventions that have been specially tailored to unemployed youth/NEETs. The larger of these are: ‘Career Start’ Programme; ‘Ready for Work’ Project; ‘Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age’ Programme; ‘Encouraging Employers to Provide Internship Opportunities for Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age’ Programme; and ‘Programme for Provision of Employment for Young People in the Sphere of Culture’. It is important that the government reconsider its approach of trying to address the problem of NEETs through general labour market policies and instead prioritise the design of programmes and initiatives which focus exclusively on NEETs as a target group.

The majority of national interventions relevant to NEETs have targeted all unemployed persons, while highlighting unemployed youth (up to 29 years of age) as one among several priority groups. In the context of those programmes and initiatives, unemployed young persons have oftentimes been defined as a group which is ‘in a disadvantaged position in the labour market’. This special focus on NEETs as a priority target group of active labour market policies has been introduced by the National European Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (2014-2020) (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 10, 45). There is also a considerable number of initiatives which target several specific subgroups of unemployed people, including unemployed young persons (up to 29 years of age) (without giving priority to any of those). In many programmes and initiatives, which have either accorded priority to or defined unemployed youth up to 29 as one among several target groups, an emphasis has been placed on subgroups which are perceived as especially vulnerable, such as youth up to 25, young persons leaving institutions for children deprived of parental care after having turned 18, and youth with a low level of work motivation or no work experience. There have also been a significant number of interventions

which have had as their target group all unemployed persons and have made no specific mention of unemployed youth/NEETs.

A significant shortcoming in the way unemployed youth have been approached as a target group of national programmes and initiatives has been the selected age span. The singular focus of active labour market policies on youth aged 15-29 may be explained by the fact that 25-29 has tended to be the predominant age group of NEETs in most of the country's regions. For example, a 2017 SILC estimation (cited in Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 25-26) regarding the number of NEETs aged 15-34 by region and age group shows that 25-29 is the main age group in the NEETs category in three of the country's six regions (Southern Central, South-eastern and Northern Central). However, the same study also demonstrates that 30-34 has been the predominant age group in two regions (Southwestern and North-eastern) and that in the Northern Central region the shares of NEETs in the two age groups, 25-29 and 30-34, are very close to being equal (ibid). Thus, by leaving the age group 30-34 completely out of the scope of national programmes and initiatives, the government has not been able to employ the main instrument for socio-economic inclusion and reintegration of inactive youth - active labour market policies - for the benefit of NEETs aged 30-34. What is more, experts emphasise the need to design policy measures in such a way so as to address the specificities of NEETs in each region including such that may relate to age (for example, a preference for reintegration either in education or the labour market) (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 26). There is also a gender dimension to the policy omission of not targeting NEETs aged 30-34. Not only are the majority of NEETs aged 30-34 women but the disparity between the shares of female and male NEETs is, in fact, the largest in relation to this particular age group (SILC, 2017, cited in Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 27).

Another aspect of the scope of national interventions in terms of target group, which would be critical to improve, is the insufficient focus on vulnerable groups of unemployed youth/NEETs. As the majority of NEETs in the country are of the Roma ethnicity (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, pp. 9-10), it would be essential to address Roma youth as a specific vulnerable subgroup of NEETs. In the definition of the target group of some programmes and initiatives, the importance of paying special attention to persons belonging to the Roma minority has been highlighted. However, very few interventions have referred to young Roma as a vulnerable subgroup of unemployed youth (e.g., one such initiative has been 'Increasing Unemployed Persons' Fitness for Employment Through Improved Professional and Key Competences'). In nearly all programmes and initiatives which have specifically emphasised Roma people, this special focus on Roma has concerned only those aspects of the action which target unemployed persons of all ages (rather than unemployed youth) or a specific category of unemployed people, such as people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, and unemployed persons with low or unsought in the labour market qualifications or a low education level. Furthermore, programmes and initiatives designed to support unemployed youth have made no mention of other vulnerable groups of

NEETs which in reality make up a large share of NEETs in the country, such as young women, rural youth, long-term unemployed young persons, and young persons who are discouraged workers. There has been only one programme which has focused on youth with disabilities (as one among several target groups).

Nearly all projects funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus + Programme which have been listed in this country report have not explicitly defined NEETs as their target group. Not more than three initiatives have directly mentioned NEETs as part of their target group or group of final beneficiaries. The majority of actions (around 44%) have been intended for young people in general, while in some cases they have highlighted vulnerable groups, including unemployed youth, rural youth, young people with disabilities, young females, youth with limited opportunities, and young persons who are at risk of social exclusion. There have also been some initiatives which have sought to involve other categories of young people, such as youth leaders and young NGO employees. As the target groups of the projects have been broadly formulated, it is not possible to determine the degree of reflection of NEETs of any given intervention. What is more, none of the initiatives have been exclusively designed for NEETs or have had components intended only for the benefit of NEETs. About 30% of the projects have sought to involve different types of experts who could provide assistance to young persons, including pedagogical consultants, educators, training providers, entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Table 5: Overview of the target groups of key national programmes and initiatives of relevance to NEETs which have been included in the annual National Employment Action Plan (2007-present)¹⁵

| Title of initiative/ programme | Type of target group | No of supported persons in the target group | Degree of reflection of NEETs | The period of implemen tation |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Two-year Training Plan in the State Enterprise 'Bulgarian-German Center for Professional Training | The project targets all unemployed persons of any age. | n.a. | Insufficient information | 2022-2023 |
| Training and Employment Programme for Long-term Unemployed | The target group are long-term unemployed persons. | 2021: 4 158 Target for 2022: a minimum of 779 | Young people up to 29 are one among three priority groups. | 2021-2023 |

¹⁵ This table does not include all national programmes and initiatives. The entries have been selected with a view to presenting a well-rounded picture of the diversity of target group formulations.

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| 'Beautiful Bulgaria' Programme | The programme targets all unemployed persons of any age. | 2011: 855 2013: 450 2015: 550 2017: 500 2019: 200 2020: 230 2021: 250 2022: 600 | Insufficient information. | 2007-present |
| 'Encouraging Employers to Hire Unemployed Persons up to 29 Years of Age' | The target group are unemployed persons up to 29. | 2011: 1 417 2013: 2 823 2015: 711 2017: 1 296 2019: 251 2020: 104 2021: 296 2022: 356 | This programme focuses solely on unemployed persons up to 29. | 2007-present |
| 'Career Start' Programme | The target group is unemployed youth. It includes two subgroups: 1) young persons up to 24 and 2) young persons up to 29. | 2011: 1 851 2013: 2 712 2015: 1 124 2017: 1 370 2019: 760 2020: 511 2021: 915 2022: 1 258 | This programme focuses solely on unemployed youth. | 2003-present |
| 'Melpomena' National Programme | The programme targets all unemployed persons (with the appropriate education). | 2011: 100 2013: 100 2015: 200 2017: 202 2019: 220 2020: 230 2021: 260 2022: 260 | Insufficient information. | 2007-present |
| National Programme for Employment and Training of People with Disabilities | The programme targets people with permanent disabilities and persons who have successfully completed a programme to overcome addictions. | 2011: 2 427 2013: 2 665 2015: 1 746 2017: 1 889 2019: 1 344 2020: 1 172 2021: 1 209 2022: 1 349 | Insufficient information. | 2007-present |

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| <p>'Activation of Inactive Persons' National Programme</p> | <p>The target group is all unemployed persons.</p> | <p>2011: 95 2013: 127 2015: 221 2017: 262 2019: 462 2020: 419 2021: 440 2022: 439</p> | <p>Unemployed young persons up to 29 are one of several priority groups.</p> | <p>2008-present</p> |
| <p>Regional Employment Programmes</p> | <p>The target group includes: unemployed youth up to 29; unemployed persons aged 50+; unemployed persons with low or unsought in the labour market qualifications, including with a low level of education (also Roma); people with disabilities; long-term unemployed persons outside the labour force who wish to work (i.e., discouraged workers)</p> | <p>2011: 2 092 2013: 2 278 2015: 2 800 2017: 1 159 2019: 2 000 2020: 1 000 2021: 2 500 2022: 9 150</p> | <p>One of the target groups are unemployed youth up to 29 (a subgroup are unemployed youth up to 25 are neither in employment nor in training).</p> | <p>2008-present</p> |
| <p>'Ready for Work' Project</p> | <p>The target group are economically inactive young people aged 15 to 29 who are not in education, training or employment and have not been registered with the Labour Office.</p> | <p>n.a.</p> | <p>The project focuses solely on NEETs aged 15-29.</p> | <p>2017-2023</p> |
| <p>'Workforce Adaptation' Project</p> | <p>The target group includes: unemployed persons laid off as a result of the epidemic situation; long-term unemployed persons; unemployed persons without professional</p> | <p>540 -involved in training activities aimed at building key competences; 883 -involved in training activities for</p> | <p>Unemployed youth up to 29, including NEETs, are one of the target groups.</p> | <p>2022</p> |

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| | <p>qualifications; unemployed youth up to 29, including NEETs; unemployed persons aged 50+; inactive persons willing to work, i.e., discouraged workers; unemployed persons with a registration at the Labour Office of 6 to 12 months</p> | <p>acquisition of professional qualifications/a professional degree.</p> | | |
| <p>'Knowledge and Skills for Work' Project</p> | <p>While the project targets all unemployed persons, it gives special priority to NEETs under 29.</p> | <p>920</p> | <p>Special priority is given to NEETs under 29.</p> | <p>2022</p> |
| <p>'Opportunity for Employment and Self-Employment' Project</p> | <p>While all registered unemployed are eligible, NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly.</p> | <p>286 - newly employed; 817 - participated in education</p> | <p>NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly.</p> | <p>2022</p> |
| <p>'Stimulus' Project</p> | <p>The target group is unemployed persons with more than 6 months of registration at the Labour Office. An emphasis is put on unemployed persons in the labour market who belong to disadvantaged groups, and priority is given to NEETs and unemployed persons without professional qualification.</p> | <p>303 – employed; 865 - trained</p> | <p>NEET youth are one among several priority groups.</p> | <p>2022</p> |
| <p>'Successful Together' Project</p> | <p>The target group includes: unemployed persons who have been registered at the</p> | <p>310 – employed; 872 - trained</p> | <p>NEET youth are one among several target groups.</p> | <p>2022</p> |

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| | Labour Office for a period longer than 6 months; persons who have been laid off as a result of the epidemic situation; unemployed persons without professional qualifications; NEETs; unemployed persons aged 50+; unemployed persons who wish to work (i.e., discouraged workers). | | | |
| 'Adaptation to New Conditions' Project | While the project targets all unemployed persons, it makes a specific mention of NEETs. | 376 - newly employed; 983 - participated in training | NEETs are specifically mentioned. | 2021 |
| 'Opportunity for Realisation' Project | All registered unemployed are eligible but NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 259 - newly employed; 739 - participated in education | NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 2021 |
| 'Speed' Project | The target group are all unemployed persons. Priority is given to: persons who have been laid off as a result of the epidemic situation; unemployed persons belonging to groups that are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market; economically inactive persons who wish to work (i.e., discouraged workers). | 357 – employed; 1007 - trained | The project gives no definition of the term 'groups that are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market'. However, in the context of active labour market policies, NEETs up to 29 are | 2021 |

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| | | | generally deemed to belong to this group. | |
| 'Provision of Care in a Domestic Environment' Programme | The target group are unemployed persons, in particular belonging to groups that are at a disadvantaged position in the labour market: unemployed youth up to 29; unemployed persons aged 50+; unemployed persons with disabilities; long-term unemployed; unemployed persons with no qualifications; unemployed persons with a low level of education. | 2 400 | Unemployed youth up to 29 (also a subgroup of unemployed youth up to 25) are particularly highlighted. | 2020 |
| 'Classic-PRO' Project | While the project targets all unemployed persons, it makes a specific mention of NEETs (under 29). | 432 – employed; 1 080 - participated in training | The project makes a specific mention of NEETs (under 29). | 2020 |
| 'Prosperity' Project | While all registered unemployed are eligible, NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 321 – employed; 810 - participated in education | NEETS (under 29) are noted particularly. | 2020 |
| 'Workforce Development' Project | While the project targets all people who are excluded from the labour market, it puts an emphasis on several disadvantaged groups, including NEETS. | 424 – employed; 1 060 - participated in training | The project puts an emphasis on NEETS as one among several disadvantaged groups. | 2020 |

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| 'Labour Activity' Project | The project targets all unemployed people. | 544 – employed; 1 186 - participated in training | Insufficient information. | 2019 |
| 'Catalogues' Project | The project targets all registered unemployed persons, including NEETs. | 512 – employed; 1 280 - participated in training | NEET youth is one among several target groups. | 2019 |
| 'Challenges' Project | The target group includes: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons with low or unsought in the labour market qualifications, including with a low level of education; unemployed persons aged 50+; persons outside the labour force who wish to work (i.e., discouraged workers). | 500 –employed; 1 250 - trained | Insufficient information. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2019 |
| 'We Are Also Able' Project | The target group includes: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons aged 50+; and unemployed persons with permanent disabilities. | 2018: 531 – employed; 1 325 - trained 2019: 650 – employed; 1 168 – trained | Insufficient information. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2018-2019 |
| 'Restart' Project | The project targets all unemployed people, while according priority to those who belong to vulnerable groups or are long-term unemployed. | 631 – employed; 1577 -involved in training | Insufficient information. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2018 |

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| <p>'Complex Framework Training, Self-employment – Business Initiative (CROS-B)' Project</p> | <p>The project targets all unemployed, with a focus on vulnerable groups. However, it makes no specific mention of NEETs.</p> | <p>2017: 378 - employed; 944 - engaged in training 2018: 517 - employed; 1292 - engaged in training</p> | <p>Insufficient information. The project makes no specific mention of NEETs.</p> | <p>2017-2018</p> |
| <p>'Working Chance' Programme</p> | <p>The project targets: unemployed persons; unemployed youth up to 29; unemployed persons aged 50+; unemployed persons with disabilities; unemployed Roma.</p> | <p>2013: 856 - employed; 1100 - trained 2015: 893 – employed; 2 233 - trained 2016: 740 – employed; 1850 - trained 2017: 636 – employed; 1550 - trained</p> | <p>Unemployed youth up to 29 is one among several target groups.</p> | <p>2012-2017</p> |
| <p>'Qualified Workers for Business' Project</p> | <p>The project targets all unemployed persons.</p> | <p>702 – employed; 1755 -participated in training</p> | <p>Insufficient information.</p> | <p>2017</p> |
| <p>'Step Forward' Project</p> | <p>The project targets all unemployed persons.</p> | <p>738 -employed; 1845 - participated in training</p> | <p>Insufficient information.</p> | <p>2017</p> |
| <p>'Qualification, Personal Integration and Professional Assistance' Project</p> | <p>The project targets: unemployed youth up to 29; unemployed persons aged 50+; long-term unemployed, including Roma; unemployed persons with low or unsought in the labour market qualifications, including with a low level of education;</p> | <p>580 - employed; 1 450 – trained</p> | <p>Unemployed youth up to 29 (including a subgroup of youth up to 25) who are neither in training nor in employment are one among several target groups.</p> | <p>2016</p> |

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| | unemployed persons outside the labour force who wish to work. | | | |
| 'Quality Workforce – Stable Labour Market' Project | The project targets all unemployed persons. | 524 – employed; 1 310 - participated in training | Insufficient information. | 2016 |
| 'Security' National Programme | The project targets all unemployed persons. | 4 680 | Insufficient information. | 2015 |
| 'From Social Welfare Payments to Employment Provision' Programme | The programme targets unemployed persons who receive monthly social welfare payments. Priority is given to: long-term unemployed; members of families with children in which both parents are unemployed; unemployed single parents/adopters; unemployed young people up to 29. | 2011: 9 100 2013: 10 924 2014: 2 000 2015: 6 000 | Unemployed young people up to 29 who receive monthly social welfare payments are one among several priority groups. | 2003-2015 |
| 'Professional training for everybody – a chance for a successful transition into employment (PRO-CHANCE)' Project | The project targets unemployed persons registered at the Labour Office belonging to groups that are at a disadvantaged position in the labour market, including unemployed youth up to 29. | 2 004 | Unemployed youth up to 29 are included in the target group (priority is given to unemployed youth up to 25, including persons leaving institutions for children deprived of | 2015 |

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| | | | parental care after having turned 18). | |
| 'From Professional Training to Effective Employment' Project | The project targets all unemployed persons. | 317 – employed; 792 - participated in training | The project specifically highlights 'unemployed youth up to 29, with a subgroup of youth under 25, NEETs' as one of the target groups. | 2015 |
| 'New Opportunity for Employment' Programme | The project targets persons registered at the Labour Office who have been laid off as a result of the economic crisis and/or restructuring of production. | 2012: 1 608 – employed; 300 - trained 2013: 2 100 – employed; zero - trained 2014: 1 057 – employed; zero - trained | Insufficient information. | 2009-2014 |
| 'Professional Training and Motivation for Learning and Work Aimed at Accomplishing Fitness for Work' Project | The project targets registered unemployed persons belonging to groups that are at a disadvantaged position in the labour market, including unemployed youth up to 29. | 1 550 | The target group includes unemployed youth up to 29 (priority is given to unemployed youth up to 25, including persons leaving institutions for children deprived of parental care after having turned 18). | 2014 |

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| <p>'From Training to Employment' Project</p> | <p>The project targets: unemployed persons; unemployed youth with no qualifications and work experience and a low level of work motivation; unemployed persons aged 50+ who have no qualifications; long-term unemployed.</p> | <p>826 – employed; 1880 - trained</p> | <p>Unemployed youth with no qualifications and work experience and a low level of work motivation are one among several target groups.</p> | <p>2014</p> |
| <p>'Professional' Project</p> | <p>The project targets unemployed persons with secondary or higher education. Priority is given to: young people up to 29; people with disabilities; unemployed women aged 50+.</p> | <p>2 000 – trained; 1 000 – employed</p> | <p>Young people up to 29 with a low level of motivation for work or with no work experience are one among several groups that are given priority. In addition, one of the main goals of the initiative is defined as 'provision of support for active labour market inclusion of young people up to 29 and other target groups'.</p> | <p>2013</p> |
| <p>'Self-realisation' Project</p> | <p>The project targets: unemployed youth up to 29; and economically inactive</p> | <p>2011: 730 2012: 1 800</p> | <p>Unemployed youth up to 29 are one of two target groups.</p> | <p>2011-2012</p> |

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| | <p>persons who wish to work (i.e., discouraged workers). As a cross-cutting consideration, unemployed women and unemployed persons who are not registered at the Labour Office are given priority.</p> | | | |
| <p>'Increasing Unemployed Persons' Employment Opportunities Through Quality Professional Training'</p> | <p>The project targets registered unemployed persons who belong to groups that are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market: young people up to 29; unemployed persons aged 50+; unemployed persons with low or unsought in the labour market qualifications, including with a low education level (also Roma); persons with disabilities.</p> | <p>2013: 1796</p> | <p>Unemployed youth up to 29 are one among several target groups.</p> | <p>2012</p> |
| <p>'Teachers for Extracurricular Activities and Vacations'</p> | <p>The programme targets unemployed persons with a teaching background/ education.</p> | <p>2007: n.a. 2008: n.a. 2009: 340</p> | <p>Insufficient information.</p> | <p>2007-2009</p> |
| <p>'Renewal and Preservation of the Bulgarian Forest' Programme</p> | <p>The programme targets all registered unemployed persons.</p> | <p>2008: 3 073 2009: 1 447</p> | <p>Insufficient information. The programme makes no specific</p> | <p>2008-2009</p> |

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|--|---|-------|---|------|
| | | | mention of NEETs. | |
| 'Social Services in a Domestic Environment' National Programme | The programme targets registered unemployed persons. Priority is given to persons with a relevant educational background or persons aged 50+. | 3 000 | Insufficient information. The programme makes no specific mention of NEETs. | 2009 |

Table 6: Overview of the target groups of initiatives of relevance to NEETs in Bulgaria which have been funded under the Erasmus + Programme of the European Commission¹⁶

| Title of initiative/ programme | Type of target group | No of supported persons in the target group | Degree of reflection of NEETs | Period of implementation |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Quality of youth career guidance and nowadays media literacy | Potential users: students from the universities; young people just entering the labour market; young people with fewer opportunities; students in their final years in high school | 320 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2014 End date: 31-08-2016 |
| Job ToolKit | Working people and those who will join the labor market for the first time. | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-10-2019 End date: 14-08-2021 |
| OPEN MIND - gamified platform and open online course in Social Entrepreneurship for female learners and | Female learners and students from all studies | 1100 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-11-2016 End date: 31-10-2018 |

¹⁶ This table contains information about all 45 initiatives.

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|---|--|-----|--------------------------|--|
| students from diverse fields of study | | | | |
| Leisure time as a positivist youth peer pedagogy | Youth workers, youth leaders and youth NGO members. Youth with and without disabilities (and their representative youth organisations) | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2017 End date: 31-08-2019 |
| Interactive Education in 360° | People interested in vocational training or corporate training | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2016 End date: 28-02-2019 |
| First steps | Young people of minority origin at school 'Docho Mihailov' and young people from the town of Tervel and the municipality | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2016 End date: 31-08-2017 |
| Mobile games in youth work | Youth workers and trainers. Youngsters and youth organizations | 220 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2015 End date: 31-12-2015 |
| Codependency - Unlimited Devotion | Codependent people | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2019 End date: 31-12-2021 |
| mEntoring prograMme for young People at risk for Labour fOrce entrY | Young people with fewer opportunities, NEETS, economically disadvantaged people, and young migrants | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2019 End date: 30-09-2021 |
| Blended virtual internships in the field of business and entrepreneurship | Young people who are between their studies (VET students in agriculture and eco-farming sectors and first job opportunities | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-11-2019 End date: 14-11-2021 |
| Creating Employment Opportunities Through | Young people aged 16 to 29 at risk of unemployment or social exclusion | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 03-02-2020 End date: 02-02-2022 |

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|---|---|--|--------------------------|--|
| Digital Competence | | | | |
| New digital skills for work with young people - a training course for youth workers | Youth workers | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2021 End date: 30-09-2021 |
| Strengthening youth in time of crisis | Young participants must be between 13 and 30 years old | 33 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2021 End date: 30-08-2021 |
| Art for Discussion and Inclusion | Youth workers in Social Art. The project is addressed to the young people from marginalized groups who are excluded from the society and often are in a passive position. | 204 | Insufficient information | Start date: 05-05-2020 End date: 04-10-2021 |
| Nowadays Digital Media Literacy, Artificial Intelligence and Youth Career Development | Pedagogical consultants who provide career orientation services to learners in VET schools; Career consultants working in different career centers; Pedagogical assistants in VET schools and career counselors; VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings; VET teachers/trainers engaged in the corresponding field; | Directly involved participants: 218 Indirectly involved: 1210 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2019 End date: 31-05-2021 |
| ECVET based further VET training to support the enhancement of entrepreneurship skills of young | Unemployed/uneducated aspiring entrepreneurs, people with refugee/immigrant background and especially people with socially disadvantaged | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 17-12-2018 End date: 16-06-2021 |

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|---|--|-----|--------------------------|--|
| people and micro-SMEs via management accounting | background, with a special attention also for female entrepreneurs | | | |
| Media platform 'Vocational Guidance' | Students in VET institutions up to 18 years; EU NEETs up to 29 years; teachers in EU in the field of VET, training professionals; VET formal/informal networks | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2017 End date: 31-08-2020 |
| Youth digital skills for better activity and literacy | Young people with fewer opportunities are an important element of the project. The age of participants is 13 to 30 years. | 41 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-02-2020 End date: 30-11-2020 |
| National Meeting 'Youth Work from A to Z' | Young people, youth workers and representatives of youth organizations, youth houses, youth centers, youth centers, representatives of local and national authorities, experts at national and European level and other interested parties | 120 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2020 End date: 30-06-2022 |
| From Inclusive Education to Real Scale Transfer | NEETs are pointed out as beneficiaries but the project focuses on inclusive education in general. Teachers; school leaders; and representatives of education authorities, unions, and institutions engaged in teacher training and certification | 561 | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-01-2018 End date: 30-04-2021 |

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|---|---|------|--------------------------|--|
| Adult training course for small farmers on ecological and urban agriculture | Adults (low skilled, low qualified, NEET, people with disabilities); Existing urban agriculture small farmers; Adult educators; Adult training centers; Lifelong learning centers | 1295 | Insufficient information | Start date: 03-12-2018 End date: 02-06-2021 |
| Free platform for training search UNEM | Low-qualified unemployed people | 307 | The whole programme | Start date: 15-10-2018 End date: 14-01-2021 |
| RE: INTEGRATIVE RE: ACTION | Adults socially excluded and discriminated; remote, temporary and home workers; freelancers, etc. | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019 |
| The good youth worker = Successful young people | Youth workers +18 preferably without experience | 31 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2019 End date: 31-01-2020 |
| Civic education - a tool for active society | Youth workers in the field of civic education, expanded its potential and opportunities to work with a larger group of young people | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2016 End date: 31-12-2017 |
| Self-Awareness and Entrepreneurship of Youth in Risk | Youth workers providing training for young people at risk (16-18) are the target group. | 11 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019 |
| Pave the Way to a Social Entrepreneurship | Young people; adults; people with disabilities; unemployed; workers; | 160 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-10-2017 End date: 30-09-2019 |
| Promoting Social Change Through Entrepreneurship | Young people and adults | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-06-2018 End date: 31-10-2018 |
| Digital Orientation Competences: | Young people | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-01-2016 |

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|--|--|-----|--------------------------|--|
| continuation of my professional studies | | | | End date: 31-12-2017 |
| Volunteerism as a factor for career success | Young people | 200 | Insufficient information | Start date: 02-02-2015 End date: 01-09-2016 |
| EQAVET System for Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Skills, Knowledge and Competencies of Supported Employment Providers for People With Disabilities | Supported employment providers; VET training providers / VET centres – responsible bodies for the VET training of Supported employment providers; Non-profit establishments working with people with disabilities; Employers; Governmental bodies; EU level institutions responsible for the Supported employment implementation (such as EUSE, EASPD etc.). | 170 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2014 End date: 31-08-2017 |
| Culinary Arts Education in Support of Youth Employment and Social Inclusion | The project was aimed to support young people (including NEETs) | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2015 End date: 31-08-2017 |
| Prepare! Varna European Youth Capital 2017! | Mobility abroad and non-formal education, young people can get an irreplaceable opportunity to gain experience, knowledge and skills, that can support their future career. | 12 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-09-2015 End date: 31-08-2017 |
| 'Informal learning – expanding the horizon for the future generation' | Educators in the informal education. | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 07-01-2018 End date: 06-06-2018 |

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|---|---|-----|--------------------------|--|
| Volunteer wave | 13 foreign youngsters. All of them were graduates or were at the end of their formal education | 13 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-07-2015 End date: 31-01-2017 |
| Together for social entrepreneurship and social innovation | Youth and social workers, leaders and mentors | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-06-2017 End date: 14-11-2017 |
| 'Youth workers – the engine of social change in marginalized communities' | Youth worker to show personal interest in working with young people from minority or marginalized groups and disadvantaged people | 48 | Insufficient information | Start date: 15-01-2017 End date: 14-06-2017 |
| Volunteerism in Varna | Young people, not specified | 6 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2014 End date: 31-12-2014 |
| Be Unique, Intelligent, Lucrative, Diligent - BUILD | Youth workers, staff from youth centers, help and information centers, youth councils | 40 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-11-2015 End date: 31-10-2016 |
| Varna – a city of volunteers | Young people, not specified | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 17-06-2014 End date: 16-02-2016 |
| From opportunity to a resource | Young people | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2014 End date: 31-12-2014 |
| Evergreen in the Evergreen: When Tradition Inspires Innovation | Young people from rural areas | n/a | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-04-2015 End date: 31-08-2015 |

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|---|--|-----|--------------------------|--|
| National network 'Young employee' | The participants are youth workers and active young people, representatives of youth NGOs aged from 18 to 30 years old and policy makers from all over the country, as well as decision-makers | 150 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-05-2015 End date: 31-07-2015 |
| Enterprise goes green | Young people | 36 | Insufficient information | Start date: 01-08-2014 End date: 28-02-2015 |
| 'The young entrepreneurs of today – active European citizens of tomorrow' | Young people | 44 | Insufficient information | Start date: 17-06-2014 End date: 30-11-2014 |

6. Conclusions

In the world of today, youth populations are confronted with high-pressure standards and expectations regarding social status, career, productivity, political participation, and so forth. At the same time, young people around the globe, including in Europe, are one of the social groups most at risk when it comes to unemployment, exclusion, uncertainty, misinformation, and lack of opportunities for education, training, and work. In Bulgaria, despite a notable long-term drop, the NEET rate has remained high relative to other EU Member States. The government bears a responsibility to dedicate more systematic efforts to ensuring the effective socio-economic inclusion of young people who find themselves outside the education system and the labour market. Against the background of a disconcerting demographic decline (Judah, 2020) and record-high shortages of labour, unemployed youth are a valuable cohort of available human resources that ought to be tapped (Institute for Market Economics, 2019, p. 12).

The findings of this country report point to the conclusion that various types of interventions of relevance to NEETs over 25 years of age have been implemented in Bulgaria. The vast majority of those are programmes and initiatives which have been implemented as part of national active labour market policies or within the framework of EU programmes, such as the HRD OP, the Erasmus + Programme, the Justice Programme, and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. Those interventions have made a significant contribution to increasing the rate, quality and sustainability of inclusion and reintegration

of NEETs into the education system and the labour market. However, the initiatives and programmes directly addressing NEETS aged 25+ are few and have been led primarily by state institutions. Other major deficiencies at the level of policy are the near absence of interventions exclusively designed to improve the situation of NEETs as well as the non-inclusion of the age group 30-34 in the target group of unemployed youth. Lastly, there is a pressing need to ensure the timely and effective evaluation of relevant actions and create a dedicated unified system for identifying and mapping NEETs.

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