

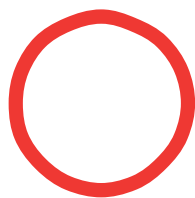
The link between the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Bulgaria and the migration

Monitoring Report 2020

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FACES OF MIGRATION

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CONTENTS

List of abbreviations 2

Executive summary 3

Introduction 4

Methodology 4

Monitoring on the progress..... 5

 Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all..... 7

 Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 16

 Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries..... 18

Annex 1. List of examined SDGs..... 35

Literature review..... 38

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CC – Constitutional Court

EA – Employment Agency

EC – European commission

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GMI – guaranteed minimum income

MES – Ministry of Education and Science

MLSP – Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

NDP 2030 – National Statistical Institute

NAVET – National Agency for Vocational Education and Training

NSRPPSI 2020 – National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion, 2020

NSI – National Statistical Institute

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SSA – Social Services Act

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are considered a long-term commitment of highest priority by the government of the Republic of Bulgaria.¹ It is duly reflected in the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 – a strategic framework document of the highest order in the hierarchy of the national programming documents, which determines the vision and the overall goals of development policies in all sectors of state governance, including their territorial dimensions. The document sets out three strategic goals which will be implemented by government policies, grouped into five development areas (axes) and puts forth 13 national priorities.²

The commitment to develop a national strategic document for the country's development in the medium and long term is enshrined³ in the Government's Programme for the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2017-2021. In preparing the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 special attention has been paid to the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development "Transforming our World" and to the 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals included therein. The Agenda and the Goals are regarded as a framework for the national development policies, while the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 itself – as the Government's response for their implementation. This is why the "leave no one behind" principle is embedded in the essence of the most important strategic documents directed towards the inclusion of people with disabilities, vulnerable groups, roma, youth, people living in mountainous regions, elderly people and disadvantaged children.

Against this backdrop of this commitment, Bulgaria's progress on all 17 SDGs has been increasingly monitored also on a European Union (EU) level because of the integration of the objectives of the SDGs in the European Semester. The latter provides a framework for the coordination of economic policies across the European Union. As seen in the broader European context Bulgaria reveals a significant potential for improvement and at the same time a clear necessity for catching up with the rest of EU's member states. What is more, when it comes to the extent the country reaches the SDGs' targets, Bulgaria ranked 26 out of 28 member states in 2019. This performance reflects also the progress on all SDGs that focus on migration in general and mobility in particular.

The global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and its implications on the local political and public agenda poses a threat on Bulgaria's capability to reach its targets. This necessitates an in-depth look into economic migration and mobility from the one hand side and their linkage to the respective

¹ Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Bulgaria of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

² National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030. Ministry of Finance, republic of Bulgaria

³ Measure 251 "Adoption of the National Development Strategy Bulgaria 2030" of Objective 68 "Ensuring conditions for high, sustainable, balanced and inclusive economic growth"

SDGs on the other hand side, thus providing an important benchmark on country's performance right before the outbreak of the pandemic, which will eventually allow for further monitoring and analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The current Monitoring report is an overview of the state and the progress in the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bulgaria with a focus on migration. This year's report focuses on economic migration and mobility on the one hand and their relation to the Sustainable Development Goals on the other. Thus the Monitoring report from 2019, which provides an overview of the institutional and legal framework in the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of migration, asylum and integration, is supplemented.

The Monitoring report gathers, summarizes and analyzes data that makes a connection between the current indicators for the migration processes in the country with the progress in the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These processes are characterized by clearly expressed emigration character and are an integral part of the labor mobility within the European Union, which is determined by a combination of economic and social factors and reveals significant seasonality in some geographical areas of the country. At the same time, the importance of the national policies and measures for social and economic integration of migrants, which Bulgaria as an EU member state should apply, is growing.

METHODOLOGY

The report aims at exploring the country's progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and their linkage with a number of socio-economic factors related to economic migration and mobility. The immediate tasks of the report are to present a snapshot of the progress under specific Sustainable Development Goals and to identify policies, strategic documents and measures undertaken in the Republic of Bulgaria in order to achieve 4, 8 and 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals and several specific targets related to them.

The report includes publicly available sources and statistical data available as of 30 August 2020.

On the basis of interdisciplinary approach, a normative, statistical and comparative analysis of the priorities and goals set in the **National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030⁴** was

⁴ <https://www.minfin.bg/bg/1394>

implemented. At the next stage, the national policies were analyzed, indicating a number of strategic national documents, the legal framework in the Republic of Bulgaria, national and European statistical databases that are directly related to the examined targets or provide sufficient grounds for expert assumptions.

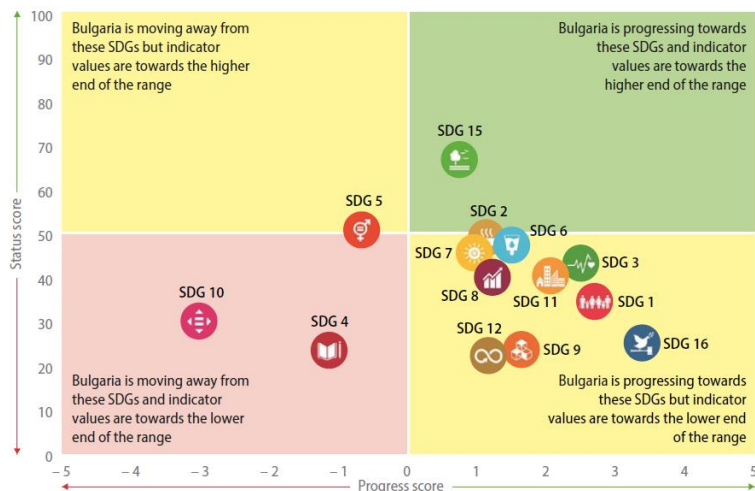
MONITORING ON THE PROGRESS

By 2019, with a score of 57.1 points on a scale from 1 to 100, Bulgaria ranks 26th out of 28 EU member states concerning the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030⁵. Regarding the specific goals under revision the country reports different stages of implementation. Referring to Goal 4 Bulgaria registers a standstill, for Goal 8 it is on the way to implement its commitments and concerning Goal 10 the country is facing serious difficulties. These conclusions are confirmed also by the **2020 Monitoring Report on Progress Towards the SDGs in an EU Context** (Chart 1).⁶ The country is moving away from the targets under Goal 4 and 10 as the values of the respective indicators are towards the lower end of the range, while referring to Goal 8 Bulgaria registers progress, even though the values of the indicators are also towards the lower end of the range.

⁵ 2019 Europe Sustainable Development Report

⁶ Sustainable Development in the European Union. Monitoring Report on Progress Towards the SDGs in an EU Context. 2020 Edition, Eurostat

Chart 1. Progress of Bulgaria on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2020



Source: Sustainable Development in the European Union. Monitoring Report on Progress Towards the SDGs in an EU Context. 2020 Edition, Eurostat

Similar conclusions can be found in a report, which was prepared by the European Commission (EC) in the framework of the European Semester, entitled **“2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) N° 1176/2011”** (Report on Bulgaria 2020). The inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals is part of the new elements in the European Semester. Each country report already contains a summarized assessment of the Member States' progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals implementation, as well as a specific annex, which points out the concrete member state's results on the SDGs and the trend over the last five years.

At national level the Sustainable Development Goals are addressed in the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 (NDP 2030), which is a strategic framework document of the highest order in the hierarchy of the national programming documents, which determines the vision and the overall goals of development policies in all sectors of state governance, including their territorial dimensions. The document sets out three strategic national goals - I) Accelerated Economic Development, II) Demographic Upswing and III) Reduction of Inequalities. The implementation of the strategic goals is envisaged through targeted policies and interventions, grouped into five interconnected and integrated development areas (axes). Within each axis, the respective national

priorities are identified and their relationship to the specific Sustainable Development Goals is indicated (Table 1).

Table 1. Relations between Sustainable Development Goals, development axes, priorities and national goals

Sustainable Development Goals	Development Axes	Priority	National Goal
4,8,9	1 Intelligent and Innovative Bulgaria	P1 Education and Skills P2 Science and Scientific Infrastructure P3 Smart Industry	I, III I I
2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	2. Green and Sustainable Bulgaria	P4 Circular and Low-Carbon Economy P5 Clean Air and Biodiversity P6 Sustainable Agriculture	I, II I, II III
2, 3, 6, 9, 11	3. Connected and Integrated Bulgaria	P7 Transport Connectivity P8 Digital Connectivity P9 Local Development	I, III I, III III
1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 16	4. Responsive and Just Bulgaria	P10 Institutional Framework P11 Social Inclusion	I II, III
3, 8, 11, 12	5. Spirited and Vital Bulgaria	P12 Health and Sport P13 Culture, Heritage and Tourism	II, III I, III

Source: National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030

GOAL 4. ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

In the framework of the monitoring on the progress under Goal 4, the focus of this report is on the national policies towards migrants, in particular:

- 1) access to quality education for children and young people from migrant families;
- 2) inclusion of young people and adults in lifelong learning.

In the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 "Education and skills" belong to priority 1 in development axis 1 "Intelligent and innovative Bulgaria". Compared to Goal 4, which focuses on access to quality education for all, the main goal of the national priority is to increase the quality of human capital through the formation of highly educated, innovative and active individuals⁷". The priority includes separate targets of Goal 4, the majority of which are the connection with lifelong learning and the acquisition of civic and professional competencies. In contrast to Goal 4 of the United Nations Program 2030, the access to quality education and the inclusion of vulnerable groups are not at the focus of the priority's main task, but they are included in the policies envisaged.

The educational policies within the priority can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Inclusion of children in pre-school and school education** and the right of every child to quality education. Here, the NDP 2030 focuses on children from vulnerable groups, prevention of early school leavers and increasing the share of high school graduates. Priority 4 covers also targets 4.1 and 4.2 of Goal 4 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Access to quality education.** The priority makes a connection between the quality improvement and acquisition of key competencies, including the formation of digital and civic ones. Here the priority corresponds to target 4.7 in its part for the human rights education and the skills for critical and creative thinking, embedded in the paradigms of education for sustainable development and global education. The formation of information and communication competencies is an indicator for achieving target 4.4 increase of young people and adults with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The second focus in the access to quality education is the increase in functional literacy, which is part of the indicator for achieving target 4.1 ensuring of free and equal access to primary and secondary education with effective results.
- **Vocational education and adjusting to the labor market needs.** To achieve target 4.4. it is envisaged the expansion of dual education and increasing the coherence between the

⁷ National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030, page 9

business and society's needs on the one hand and the vocational and university education on the other.

- **Providing opportunities for lifelong learning**, envisaged in target 4.3 tends to young people and adults, including also those who are long-term and structurally unemployed, as well as the low-skilled employees. The lifelong learning is also connected with some programs for qualification and retraining and with the acquisition of digital competencies. Lifelong learning is considered as a tool for social inclusion, which corresponds to the tasks of Goal 4 in the context of the Programme 2030.

In summary, Priority 1 "Education and Skills" of the NDP 2030 corresponds significantly to targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7. However, unlike Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, within the strategic document the focus on gender equality and women's and girls' access to education is missing. Although in the long-term strategy the improvement of the educational infrastructure and the building stock is envisaged, there is no commitment to provide an accessible and safe educational environment (physical and emotional) for all children, including those with special educational needs. Priority 1 also does not include an engagement of the country for participation in the international development policies – increasing scholarships for enrollment in university education and increasing the qualifications of teachers from developing and least developed countries.

The indicators set in the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 in the priority "Education and Skills" are part of the EU indicators for measuring progress under Goal 4 of the UN Program 2030 (Table 2).

Table 2. Indicators in priority "Education and Skills"

Indicator	Source	Baseline value	Target value	EU average
Share of early leavers from education and training	Eurostat	12,7	7,0	10,6
Population (25-64 years of age) involved in education and training	Eurostat	2,5	7,0	11,1
Share of low performers in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (average of the three subjects of the study)	OECD	46,0	25,0	23,0

Source: National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030

Children who dropped out of school due to going abroad

In the context of the connection between the economic migration and mobility on the one hand and the Sustainable Development Goals on the other, it is appropriate to trace the dynamics with regard to children who are leaving school due to going abroad. According to data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI) for the 2018-2019 school year, a total of 8 390⁸ children at school age from 1st to 12th grade left school due to the family's departure abroad (Table 3). The data are as of April 24, 2020. For the period 2016 – 2019 an average of 8 400 students went to another country. In the three years, the share of students in the primary school age is the highest and this trend continues also in the last three years. NSI does not maintain data on the host country.

Table 3. Children, leaving school due to going abroad

School Year	I-IV grade	V - VII grade	VIII-XII grade	Total
2016-2017	3 643	3 227	1 519	8 389
2017-2018	3 773	2 879	2 043	8 695
2018-2019	3 501	2 699	2 129	8 329

Source: National Statistical Institute

Since October 2019, the Ministry of Education and Science changed its methodology and it began to report the accumulation of those who left the education system due to going abroad. For this reason, the ministry cannot provide data for the 2018-2019 school year⁹. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Science in the period 2003-2020¹⁰ a total of 53 304 children from the compulsory pre-school and school age left the educational system due to the family's departure abroad. The Ministry of Education and Science maintains statistics by years until 2014. Between 2003-2006, most of the children leaving school, are going abroad. During this period, an average of 6 000 children drop out of school each year in order to move to another country with their families. Between 2006-2012, the number of those who are going abroad gradually decreased from 5,627 children (2007) to 3,012 (2012) per year. During the next two years, more than 1 000 households annually withdraw their children to the countries in which they live or to which they have moved. There is no data as of this period what is the proportion of students who are included in the educational system in the host countries.

There is still no system for tracking students and their share in the educational system of the host country. At this stage, a single mechanism for monitoring the scope of the educational system in the

⁸ National Statistical Institute <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/>

⁹ Decision №1103-153/26.06.2020 of the Ministry of Education and Science under Access to Public Information Act.

¹⁰ The accumulated data are actual as of 06.02.2020 (the beginning of the second term of the school year 2019-2020) and are provided to the Bulgarian Platform for International Development by the Ministry of Education and Science under the Access to Public Information Act.

European Union is not regulated. Neither the Ministry of Education and Science nor the National Statistical Institute maintains statistics on the migration countries.

Both institutions point out that data for previous periods are not comparable. Even though, in the last three years, the share of the children who left the country is the highest one since 2003.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the National Statistical Institute do not maintain data for the children and students with Bulgarian origin who have been transferred to the educational system in Bulgaria. The Ministry of Education and Science has not envisaged special measures for the students who have returned to the country due to the migration of their parents. The support for these children is carried out under the Regulation for inclusive education, which in article 27 envisages additional training for students who meet one of the following criteria: their mother language is not Bulgarian, they have a recommendation for additional support, they have difficulties in a specific subject or they have systemic omissions¹¹.

The students who have returned due to parental migration fall into the group of students at risk, for whom the Ministry implements the National Program "Support for Success". The measures envisaged under the program are additional training in Bulgarian language and mathematics at the primary school level and in the first stage of high school education training in natural sciences is also included. In the second stage of the high school education there is also an opportunity for catching up on the subjects of the vocational training. The ministry does not maintain data what is the percentage of the students covered by this program who have returned from abroad.

Share of students with results lower than the critical for PISA

For the progress under **target 4.4** (substantial increase by 2030 of the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship) can be included data from the last PISA assessment¹². In Bulgaria, the trend of increasing the share of students who do not cover basic competencies in reading, mathematics and science continues¹³. The number of students who do not cover basic reading skills has increased by almost 8 percent for the period from 2012 to 2018. Bulgaria is at one of the last places among the EU member states and candidate countries, followed by the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania with results of 55.1% and 52.2%. The lowest share is observed in Estonia, Ireland and Finland, respectively with 11.1%, 11.8% and 13.5%. The EU average is 22.5 percent.

For the reviewed period, the share of students who do not cover the basic competencies in mathematics also increase slightly. Bulgaria ranks last in EU with 44.4% of low-performing students,

¹¹ The criteria for the last two conditions are a term assessment "weak" 2, or three consecutive weak assessments, or a result below the set threshold of the National External Assessment.

¹² Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

¹³ Eurostat

followed by Romania with 46.6%.¹⁴ The EU average is 22.9%. The lowest share of students who do not meet the basic requirements in mathematics is in Estonia, Denmark and Ireland, respectively 10.2%, 14.6% and 15.7%.

The negative change is the strongest for the competencies in natural sciences, where the share of students below the basic requirements increased by almost 10% from 2012 to 2018¹⁵. Bulgaria is not the only country where the share of students with negative educational results is growing. The situation is similar in Ireland, Greece and Spain. However, the share in these countries increased by between 5-6 percent for the same period. The best indicators show the educational system in Estonia, where only 8.8% of the students do not meet the basic requirements for mathematics competencies, with an EU average of 22.3%.

Table 4. Share of 15-year-old students with lower than basic reading, mathematics and science skills according to PISA

Year	Reading	Mathematics	Natural Sciences
2012	39,4	43,8	36,9
2015	41,5	42,1	37,9
2018	47,1	44,4	46,5

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

At the same time, during this period the instruments provided by the Ministry of Education and Science for catching up the educational gaps are increasing. The main instruments are the national program "Caring for every student"¹⁶ and the program "Support for Success"¹⁷, which include students with educational gaps for additional training. According to the ministry data under the Access to Public Information Act, which are also published in the annual reports of the ministry, for the 2018-2019 school year the program covers a total of 56 880 students from first grade to the first year in the high school. In the second stage of high school education, 3 533 students were covered. For the 2019-2020 school year, their number increases to 67 500 students from first to tenth grade according to the ministry.

Bulgaria ranks fourth in the EU with 14% in terms of the share of graduates with lower degree of secondary education (first level at high school VIII-X grade) who are not included in another form of education¹⁸. The highest share is in Iceland – 18%, followed by Romania (15.4%), Malta (14.9%) and Spain (14.5%). The average value in the EU of graduates with the lowest level of

¹⁴ Eurostat

¹⁵ Eurostat

¹⁶ <https://mon.bg/bg/100437>

¹⁷ <https://mon.bg/bg/100736>

¹⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/>

secondary education and not covered in another form of education is 8.9% of the citizens at the age from 18 to 24. Regarding the girls early leaving the educational system Bulgaria is in third place with 13.3%, compared to the EU average of 8.4%. The indicator does not cover primary and lower education graduates.

Providing opportunities for lifelong learning and vocational education are part of the tasks of the National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030, as mentioned above.

Two main strategic documents have been adopted – Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training for the period 2014-2020 and the Strategy for the Development of Lifelong Learning 2014-2020.

The latest action plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training is as of 2017. Reports on the implementation of the action plans and the strategy have not been published on the websites of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). In December 2019, an Updated Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2019-2021 was adopted by a decision of the Management Board of NAVET¹⁹ 2019-2021.

The Lifelong Learning Development Strategy has annual action plans. The last published report on their implementation is from 2015 on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science²⁰. The main directions in the strategy are:

- Providing a system for lifelong learning, including updating and development of State educational standards (SES);
- Providing conditions for expanding the scope and improving the quality of preschool and school education;
- Applying a comprehensive approach for increasing educational achievements and reducing the share of early school leavers;
- Improving the quality of school education for the acquisition of key competencies and motivation for lifelong learning;
- Modernization of higher education.

The strategy for the development of vocational education sets the goals of the Europe 2020 program: 1) increasing the share of the population aged 30-34 who graduated higher or equivalent education from 31% to at least 40% by 2020. The achieved value for Bulgaria is 32.5%

¹⁹ <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/>

²⁰ Official website of the Ministry of Education and Science, section Strategic Documents, <https://mon.bg/bg/143>, accessible as of 28.07.2020

with a growth of 2.6% for the last five years; 2) reduction of the share of early school leavers from 15 to 10%. Concerning this indicator there is not any change in the last 5 years.

The main directions of interventions set in the strategy are:

- Development of dual education, which is included in the annual plans of the Ministry of Education and Science;
- Expanding the modular organization of vocational training, which includes the development of State educational standards and curricula;
- Improving the access to vocational education as the priority is focused on school education, including also the introduction of protected professions, regulating their education in school and career consultations.
- Improving access to vocational education in the context of lifelong learning - functioning of a system of validation of knowledge and competencies acquired through non-formal and independent learning.

To a large extent, the interventions of the two strategies overlap and the measures are directed to school education.

Share of adults participating in lifelong learning

NSI collects data on adults who participated in education/training in the section Education and lifelong learning in two categories: participation in formal education and training or non-formal education and participation in some kind of independent learning. The latest data published on the NSI's website refer to 2016²¹. Data for 2019 are not included also in the official announcement for the state of the education in 2019²².

The Eurostat data show that in the period 2013-2018 there is no significant change in the share of adults participating in lifelong learning in our country (Table 5). In the period 2008-2012, their share ranges from 1.6 to 1.8% of citizens in the age group of 25 to 64 years. In 2013, the share increases to 2.0% and varies in the range between 2.1 and 2.4 during the next years. In 2019 it returns to the level of 2013 – 2.0% of adults participate in forms of education and qualification. During the last 11 years their share is the highest in 2018, when it reaches 2.5%. For comparison, in Switzerland, Sweden and Finland, one third of adults participate in training, and in Sweden they are 38.8% in 2018.

In 2019, Bulgaria ranks on the last but one place in the share of adults participating in lifelong learning from the EU member countries, the European Economic Area, Switzerland and the candidate countries. The average for the EU is 10.8 % of the citizens aged 25-64 years. Romania ranks last with 1.3% of adults participating in any form of training and qualification in 2019.

²¹<https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/>

²²Education in the Republic of Bulgaria in the school year 2019-2020 <https://www.nsi.bg/sites/>

Table 5. Share of adults aged 25-64 years participating in formal and non-formal training

Gender	2017 r.	2018 r.	2019 r.
Female	2,4%	2,6%	2,1%
Male	2,2%	2,4%	1,8%
Total	2,3%	2,5%	2,0%

Source: Eurostat

In terms of the share of women increasing their qualification and education, Bulgaria ranks on the last but one place in 2019 with 2.1%. For comparison, in Turkey 5.7% of women between the ages of 25 and 64 improve their skills and participate in some form of training. The average for the EU is 11.9%. One third of women in Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland participate in lifelong learning, as their share in Sweden is 42.9%.

Bulgaria keeps its last but one place also in terms of the share of men between the ages of 25 and 64 who are increasing their qualification. The values for 2018, which are the highest for the last 12 years, are used as a base indicator in the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030.

Share of employees among graduates

According to Eurostat data, the share of the people employed at the age of 20-34 (in the period from 1 to 3 years after graduating their highest educational degree) is 80.8% in 2019 (Table 6). The value is close to the average (80.5%) for the EU countries as in the period 2017-2019 Bulgaria succeeded to catch up with the EU average.

Table 6. Employment among recent graduates aged 20-34 years

Gender	2017 r.	2018 r.	2019 r.
Male	77,9%	82,3%	86,0%
Female	77,5%	73,8%	76,3%
Total	77,7%	78,2%	80,8%

Source: Eurostat

However, almost a quarter (23.7%) is the share of women who remain outside the labor market after graduating their education, according to Eurostat data for 2019. The values are slightly above the EU average – 21.3%. The highest share of employment is among the graduated women in Malta, the Netherlands and Germany, respectively with 93.7%, 89.4% and 89.2%. The lowest

share of the employed women in the EU is observed in Italy (55.6%) and Greece (59.9%). In the last five years, the employment among the graduated men in Bulgaria has a steady trend of increasing. In 2018 and 2019, the value gets ahead of the EU average, respectively with 82.1% and 82.4%.

GOAL 8. PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

In the context of the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030, regarding the 8th Sustainable Development Goal, four development axes are indicated - 1. Innovative and Intelligent Bulgaria, 2. Green and Sustainable Bulgaria, 4. Responsive and Just Bulgaria and 5. Spirited and Vital Bulgaria. Thus, to one degree or another, the 8th SDG is connected also with the three national strategic goals – I) Accelerated Economic Development, II) Demographic Upswing and III) Reduction of Inequalities. In particular, the topic of migration and mobility in the Bulgarian context is reflected in target 8.6 Substantial reduction by 2020 of the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training.

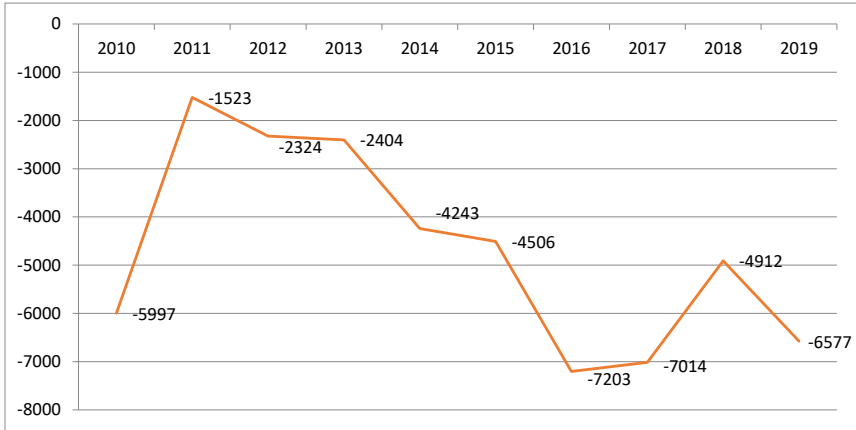
According to NSI data, as of 31.12.2019 people aged between 15 and 29 are 1 005 227, which represents 14.5% of the total population. According to Eurostat, a significant proportion of these young people are not in employment, education or training and form the so-called NEET group. In 2019, nearly 168 thousand young people or 16.7% of the young Bulgarian citizens aged 15-29 belong to this group, which reports the third lowest performance for the country in the EU after Greece (17.7 %) and Italy (22.2%), while the EU average is 12.6%. Understandably, in 2019 the percentage of inactive men (13.2%) is lower than that of the inactive women (20.3%), which is a lasting trend.

Although an improvement is registered since the highest reported value in 2013 (25.7%), the share of inactive young people remains high taking into consideration the registered unemployment among people aged 15-29. In 2019, the unemployment in this age group amounts to 3% compared to the EU average of 4.8%, which ranks Bulgaria as one of the leading EU countries, with only Germany and Estonia ahead of the country with lower youth unemployment rates.

It is noteworthy that this age group has witnessed negative mechanical growth as a result of international migration (Chart 3). In the recent years, the share of people aged between 15 and

29 who have left the country has traditionally been over 30% of all those who have declared to the administrative authorities a change of their current address from the country to abroad

Graphic 3. Increase of population aged 15-29 years as result from international migration



Source: National Statistical Institute

The issue concerning young people not engaged in employment, education or training is addressed by the NDP 2030 under Priority 1 **Education and Skills**, stating that the planned measures will have a special focus on young people, the unemployed, the economically inactive and the representatives of the disadvantaged groups, thus addressing not only the targeted economic effects, but also the social exclusion. Improving their skills and including them in employment will contribute to increasing the labor productivity in macroeconomic aspect, while also playing the role of a tool for social inclusion.

GOAL 10. REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES

Applicable to the implementation of Goal 10, target 10.2, of the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030 is Goal III: Reduction of Inequalities (Table 7). Regarding the achievement of Goal III in the NDP 2030 it is stated that: "the realized economic growth is not sufficiently inclusive to contribute to reduce social inequalities, and the relative share of people at risk of poverty is among the highest in the EU. Income inequality continues to increase, with social transfers showing only limited impact on poverty reduction and inequality."

Table 7. Indicators for measuring the progress in the implementation of Goal III of the NDP 2030

Indicator	Source	Baseline value for 2018	Target value by 2030	EU average for 2018
Gini coefficient, %	Eurostat	39,6	33,0	30,9
Population at risk of poverty, %	Eurostat	22,0	18,0	17,1
Variation in GDP per capita (in PPS) by region, %	Eurostat	37,5 (2017)	34,0	30,1 (2017)

Source: National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030

Moreover, within the **development axis 4. Responsive and Just Bulgaria** to Goal III, the national **priority 11. Social Inclusion** has been identified. (Table 8). The main purpose of the priority is to reduce social inequalities and contribute to active social inclusion of vulnerable groups by enhancing their ability to get a job, improving their skills, promoting their socio-economic integration, improving their access to quality social services and overcoming severe material deprivation and poor living conditions.

Table 8. Target values of indicators for measuring progress under priority 11 of the NDP 2030

Indicator	Source	Baseline value for 2018	Target value by 2030	EU average for 2018
Income ratio of the poorest and the richest 20% of households	Eurostat	7,7	5,5	5,2
Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, %	Eurostat	32,8	25,0	21,9

Source: National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030

According to the goals set in the NDP: Bulgaria 2030, providing of preconditions for inclusion in employment will be a key instrument of the policy for social inclusion of vulnerable groups. **The major factor increasing the risk of social exclusion** and falling into the poverty group for the majority of the population is their **economic activity** and participation in the labor market. For the whole period being observed by NSI²³, the relative share of the poor population is the highest among the unemployed, as it increase from 53.3% in 2015 to 58.9% in 2019. **Other factors for social exclusion include: low level of education, the difficult access of the groups at the highest risk of social exclusion to health services and quality social services.** Equally important for promoting the social inclusion of people with disabilities, children and other vulnerable groups are: **equal access to culture and sports, providing of an accessible physical environment, accessible transport, accessible public and financial services, providing housing for the homeless.** Ensuring access to information and communication is also significant factor for promoting social inclusion, especially for people with disabilities, vulnerable groups and those living in remote areas.

According to European Semester's Report on Bulgaria 2020, the low-qualified²⁴ people represent 17.4% of the population at working age (or 677 000 people), which is twice more than the available jobs for which only basic skills are required (357 000). Compared to the overall employment rate (72.4%), the employment rate (20-64 years) of low-qualified people is much more lower (46.0% in 2018).

At present, through the Employment Agency (EA) to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) throughout the country, and aiming to reduce structural inequalities at the labor market between the different administrative areas, 16 national programs and projects are being implemented (Table 9) in order to promote the employment of the most vulnerable groups at the labor market: including young people, people with disabilities, the unemployed and refugees.

²³ <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/>

²⁴ People having completed education grades including primary to junior high level of secondary education.

Table 9. National programs and projects for supporting the employment of unemployed people from vulnerable groups

Target group	Program name	Description
Youth	Program "Career Start"	The main goal of the program is to provide opportunities for gaining working experience for unemployed young people up to 29 years, who have completed secondary or higher education, in order to facilitate the transition between education and employment. Employers are public administrations.
Youth	Project "Ready for Work"	The main goal of the project is to stimulate the activity of young people up to 29 years of age, including those who are neither in education or training, nor in employment and are not registered as unemployed in the Directorates "Labor Office", as well as to improve their opportunities for finding a job and their professional realization at the labor market.
People with disabilities	National program for employment and training of permanently disabled people	The main goal of the program is to increase the adaptability for employment and to provide employment of unemployed people with permanent disabilities or those people at working age who have successfully undergone treatment for drug addiction, as a prerequisite for overcoming their social isolation and their full integration into society.
Unemployed	National program "Activating the inactive people"	The main goal of the program is to activate and include in the labor market the inactive people, including the discouraged persons and young people up to the age of 29 who neither work and study, nor are registered in the Labor Office Directorates and to motivate the unemployed persons of working age, who are receiving monthly social assistance, for employment, through the organization of their work through municipal programs for community service.
Unemployed	National program "Assistance for Retirement"	The main goal of the program is to support the transition from unemployment to employment and retirement of unemployed people over 58 who are actively looking for a job and are registered in the Labor Office Directorate.
Unemployed	National program "Melpomena"	The main goal of the program is to reduce unemployment by creating jobs to support the activities of theaters in Bulgaria.
Unemployed	National program "Social services in family environment"	The program aims at providing employment to unemployed persons as home assistants to provide personal care in the home environment to people with permanently reduced working capacity or a type and degree of disability with the right of additional assistance, as well as for people over 65 years of age unable to self-service.
Unemployed	Program for employment and training of refugees	The main goal of the program is to support the integration on the labor market of foreigners who received refugee or humanitarian status in the current year or in the previous two calendar years, by increasing their employability by including them in training for learning Bulgarian language or vocational training and providing employment.

Unemployed	Program for training and employment of long-term unemployed	The main goal of the program is to provide employment to the long-term unemployed registered at the Labor Offices. Increasing the employability of the persons, subject of the program, by including them in trainings, leading to increase of the knowledge and qualification.
Unemployed	Project "A new beginning for work"	<p>The project aims at providing training and employment to the following unemployed people: long-term unemployed persons; unemployed persons without professional qualification; unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; unemployed persons over 50 years of age; inactive persons wishing to work, incl. discouraged people.</p> <p>The overall goal of the project is to increase the level and quality of knowledge and skills of the unemployed through training in professional fields sought by employers, in order to achieve a balance between supply and demand in the labor market and ensure higher and quality employment.</p>
Unemployed	Project "Labor Activity"	The project aims at providing training and employment to the following unemployed persons: long-term unemployed persons; unemployed persons without professional qualification; unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; unemployed persons over 50 years of age; inactive persons wishing to work, incl. discouraged people. The project includes: vocational training of disadvantaged people at the labor market; providing employment in accordance with the qualifications of individuals and the needs of the business.
Unemployed	Project "Successful together - for a decent new education"	<p>The project is directed to the following target groups: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons without professional qualification or with professional qualification not in demand on the labor market; unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; unemployed over the age of 50; unemployed persons with permanent disabilities; inactive persons wishing to work, incl. discouraged people.</p> <p>The project focuses on providing opportunities for lifelong learning, increasing the level and quality of knowledge and skills of unemployed people from vulnerable groups at the labor market in order to find sustainable employment.</p>
Unemployed	Project "Horizons 4"	The project is directed to the following target groups: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons without professional qualification or with professional qualification that is not in demand on the labor market; unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; unemployed over the age of 50; unemployed persons with permanent disabilities; inactive persons wishing to work, incl. discouraged people. The overall goal of the project is to increase the competitiveness and improve the access to the labor market of unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups on the labor market and / or with low education and without qualification through the implementation of complex trainings on key competencies and vocational training.

Unemployed	Project "We can too-2"	The project is directed to the following target groups: long-term unemployed; unemployed persons without professional qualification or with professional qualification that is not in demand on the labor market; unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; unemployed over the age of 50; unemployed persons with permanent disabilities; inactive persons wishing to work, incl. discouraged people. The project aims at improving the access to the labor market for unemployed people from disadvantaged groups by providing a package of services, including improving the skills, competencies and qualifications of people in order to increase their suitability for further employment.
Unemployed	Project „Catalogues“	The project is aimed at: the long-term unemployed; unemployed persons without professional qualification or with professional qualification that is not in demand on the labor market (regardless of the age group); unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; unemployed over the age of 50; Roma; inactive persons wishing to work, incl. discouraged people. The project provides an opportunity for: inclusion in vocational training, providing the necessary and sought at the labor market professional theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, incl. participation in training and production practices at specific working places.
Unemployed	Project „Challenges“	The project is aimed at: the long-term unemployed; unemployed with low or not in demand on the labor market professional qualification and lack of key competencies, incl. unemployed with low education; unemployed over the age of 50; unemployed youth up to 29 years of age; persons outside the labor force wishing to work, incl. discouraged people. The project provides an opportunity for increasing and / or acquiring of professional qualification and key competencies and skills of unemployed / inactive people for the professions in demand at the labor market.

In addition, according to the Report on the Implementation²⁵ of the Action Plan for the period 2017-2018 to the **National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion, 2020**²⁶ (NSRPPSI 2020), adopted by Protocol № 5.1 of the Council of Ministers on 06.02.2013²⁷, in the period January 2017-October 2018 with funds from the state budget, through programs and incentive measures of the **Employment Promotion Act**²⁸ the employment of a total of 49 156 people was subsidized, and 21 114 unemployed and employed people were included in training. With the support of the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" 2014-2020, 30 832 people are included in employment, and 27 967 persons are included in training (including also employed persons). In 2017, 114 job fairs were organized, of which 62 specialized (32 for youth, 9 for unemployed and disadvantaged people, 4 for people from the Roma community, 9 focused on tourism, 3 on industry, 3 on agriculture, 1 in the field of electronics and 1 in the field of education). As a result of their participation in the job fairs, 13 382 people have started working, of which 8 258 are registered at the labor offices. In 2017, within the framework of the National Program "Activation of Inactive Persons"²⁹ the labor and social integration of 6 278 unemployed persons was supported, of which 1 315 young people under 29 and 3 136 long-term unemployed.

A National Program for Training and Employment of Refugees³⁰ has been developed and is being implemented. In addition, in the period 2017-2018, 1466 persons seeking international protection were included in classes in Bulgarian language, art, sports and cooking in the places for temporary accommodation of foreigners, under the project "Refugees"³¹, and 205 children seeking international protection are included in the Bulgarian educational system, and in some of the schools providing education for refugee children, tolerance classes³² have been held.

The immigration in the country is limited and it is determined by people coming from countries with lower economic and social development. After reaching a peak of 17 113 foreigners who entered the country in 2014, the incoming flow of immigrants without Bulgarian citizenship has stabilized at about 12 000 people per year. For some groups, immigration in the country is temporary and Bulgaria is perceived as a transit point and a place for preparation for the next emigration³³. Additional information on the immigrants who sought asylum in Bulgaria in the period 2014-2018

²⁵ <http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler>

²⁶ <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/>

²⁷ The Strategy includes also 3 Action Plans for the following periods: 2015-2016, 2017-2018 and 2019-2020

²⁸ <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/zakoni/>

²⁹ <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/>

³⁰ <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/>

³¹ <http://refugeeproject.eu/>

³² <http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=17213>

³³ NDP 2030. Part 1. Analysis of the socio-economic development of the country after its accession to the EU.

is published on the website of the project “Protection”³⁴ by the Institute for Public Environment Development³⁵.

Despite the implemented programs and the undertaken measures for reducing unemployment, **European Semester’s Report on Bulgaria 2020 also reports that the labor market integration of vulnerable groups continues to be weak.** It is pointed out in the report that in the third quarter of 2019 the overall level of economic inactivity in Bulgaria fell to the EU average (25.8%), but among young people aged between 20 and 24, Roma and people living in rural areas, levels of economic inactivity are much higher. Although the **overall unemployment rate among Roma is 55%**, it is even higher (65%) among young Roma between the ages of 16 and 24³⁶. **The employment rate of people with disabilities** remains one of the lowest in the EU (39.5%) compared to the EU average of 50.7%), and the difference is very big compared to people without disabilities (34.2% compared to EU average of 24.2%).

In the Report on the Implementation³⁷ of the Action Plan for the period 2017-2018 at the NSRPPSI 2020, the Bulgarian government reports that significant results have been achieved in the implementation of the **European Youth Guarantee (EYG)**³⁸ and there is a reduction of **youth unemployment**, especially by the group of the inactive youth, as it has adopted and is implementing the **National Plan for implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-2020**³⁹. The **National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria envisages** that every young person at the age from 15 to 24 will receive a good quality offer of employment, continuing of education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of either losing his/her job or leaving the formal educational system.

At the same time, in the **Report for Bulgaria for 2019**⁴⁰, the European Commission states that the number of young people (aged 15-29) who do not participate in any form of employment, education or training remains high, but constantly decreases. In 2017, their percentage dropped to 18.9% (from 25.7% in 2013), but it is still well above the EU average of 13.4%. The educational degree is the major factor when determining the employment perspectives for the young people. The unemployment rate among low-qualified young people (24.8%) is almost three times higher than that of those with secondary qualifications (8.7%) and this difference increases in the period 2017-2019.

In addition, according to the detailed assessment of the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee (Youth Guarantee country by country. Country fiche for Bulgaria 2020), published on

³⁴ <https://zakrila.info/>

³⁵ <https://iped.bg/bg>

³⁶ Report on the implementation of national strategies for Roma integration, European Commission (2019). FRA, 2016.

³⁷ <http://www.strategy.bg/>

³⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/>

³⁹ <http://www.strategy.bg/>

⁴⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/>

the EC website⁴¹, 40.1% of the young people registered in the program in 2018 have waited more than four months a job offer (compared to 48.6% EU average). At the same time, only one of ten (10.6%) of the young people falling into the target group of EYG in 2018 was included in the program in Bulgaria (a decrease with 2.4% from 2017). This unsatisfactory coverage of the EYG in Bulgaria is partly due to the low percentage of registered unemployed among the target group, 80% of which is inactive (not looking for a job or a training) and it remains uncovered by the program, as well as due to problems with the quality of data in Bulgaria (in 2018, the number of young people with unclear status was 41.7%).

The Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth: Europe 2020 (Europe 2020 Strategy)⁴², adopted in 2010, envisages targeted measures by the EU countries to reduce poverty in the Community and support the maintaining of the European standard of living by creating an economy based on knowledge, innovations and sustainable development. **One of the main goals of the "Europe 2020" Strategy is to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU by 20 million people.**

The indicators for poverty and social inclusion are part of the European Community's common indicators for monitoring countries' progress in combating poverty and social exclusion. The main source of statistical data for calculating the indicators is the annual survey "Statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC)"⁴³.

In the context of "Europe 2020" Strategy and taking into account the registered higher levels of poverty among certain groups of the population, the Bulgarian government has adopted a national target for reducing the number of people living in poverty by 260 000 by 2020 (compared to 2008) in NSRPPSI 2020.

In 2019, the poverty line for the country as a whole is 413.04 BGN per month for a household member. With this size of the poverty line were 1 586.2 thousand people, or 22.6% of the country's population⁴⁴.

Here some of the used indicators for measuring inequalities, showing the poverty level and social inclusion in society and their respective values for Bulgaria and the EU (28) are represented:

- **"Ratio between the income of the richest 20% to the poorest 20% of households".** The increasing values of the indicator show that this inequality is growing. According to Eurostat data, this indicator for Bulgaria in 2019 has a coefficient of 8.10⁴⁵, compared to 5.86 in 2010, and since 2016 the income inequality between the richest and the poorest in Bulgaria is the largest within the EU;

⁴¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/>

⁴² <http://www.strategy.bg/Publications/>

⁴³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/8252/>

⁴⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/>

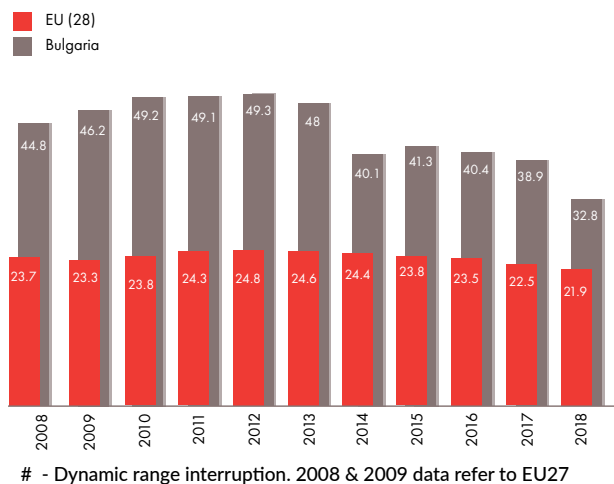
- **"% of people aged 18 and over at risk of poverty after social transfers"** - this indicator for Bulgaria in 2018 is 20.9% compared to an EU (28) average of 15.5% and continues to grow in 2019 (21.6%)⁴⁶. The situation is similar with the combined indicator **"% of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion"**, for which the values for Bulgaria in 2018 are 32.8% compared to 21.8% for the EU (28)⁴⁷ (Chart 3) and it is the lowest in the whole EU in the last 3 years (2017-2019).
- **"Gini coefficient"**⁴⁸ - the value of the indicator is 39.6 in 2018 compared to the EU (28) average of 30.8, which ranks us last among the EU member states in terms of income inequality of the population. According to the data published by Eurostat for 2019, the value of the coefficient for Bulgaria becomes 40.8, i.e income inequality is deepening;
- **"Income share of the poorest 40% of the population"** - used to monitor the progress of EU Member States (MS) towards the SDGs 10. According to Eurostat data, this share for Bulgaria has been declining since 2010, when it reached its highest level (19.5%), to 16.4% in 2019. In the last 3 years (2017, 2018 and 2019) this percentage for Bulgaria is the lowest compared to other MS, i.e. income inequality in the country is deepening.

⁴⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/>

⁴⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/>

⁴⁸ The Gini coefficient measures to what extent the distribution of incomes in an economy deviates from the perfect one. The value of the coefficient varies from 0 to 100. If the coefficient is equal to 100, it would mean that one person receives 100% of the income (maximum inequality). If the coefficient is equal to 0, it would mean that everyone in the economy receives equal income (perfect equality). Therefore, the lower the value of the Gini Coefficient, the more evenly is distributed the income in the economy.

Chart 3. Population at risk of poverty and social exclusion (combined indicator)



Source: National Statistical Institute

Table 10 clearly shows different indicators for measuring poverty, as the trend is after a slight decline in 2018, inequality between the poorest and richest people in the country to increase since 2015. And although compared to the previous year, in 2019 the average monthly amount in BGN of the poverty line increased by 17.6%, at the same time the relative share of the poor population increased by 0.6 percentage points.

Table 10. Main indicators of poverty – Bulgaria

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Poverty line - average monthly amount - BGN	325,8	308,2	351,1	351,1	413,0
People below the poverty line – thousand	1586	1639	1665	1551	1586
Relative share of the poor -% of the population	22,0	22,9	23,4	22,0	22,6
Relative share of the poor before receiving social transfers -% of the population	42,9	45,5	44,8	45,2	42,2
Relative share of the poor before receiving social transfers, including pensions -% of the population	28,4	27,9	29,2	29,5	29,6
Ratio between the income of the poorest and the richest 20% of the population (S80/20)	7,1	7,7	8,2	7,7	8,1
Gini coefficient	37,0	37,7	40,2	39,6	40,8

Source: NSI

Inequality in the society in Bulgaria is also reported through the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index⁴⁹ of the UN Program for Development. The Human Development Index calculated for 2018 for our country, after taking into account the inequality, is 0.713 compared to the average level of 0.816 for the EU (28) (the index decreases when the inequality increases). This puts our country on the 46th place among the 150 countries for which this index is calculated, but at the same time this value ranks us last among the EU member states.

In confirmation of the above conclusion, European Semester's Report on Bulgaria 2020 also reports that **the share of the population living at risk of poverty or social exclusion continues to be very high**. Although their share is declining (from 41.3% in 2015 to 32.8% in 2018), about 2.3 million Bulgarians are still at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and the share of the total population, which still cannot afford basic goods or services has fallen to just 20.9%, as it remains almost four times higher the EU average, and the monetary poverty remains unchanged. The situation is very different in the separate regions of the country. For example, the percentage of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the North-West region (44.4%) is almost twice higher than the percentage in the South-West region (23.0%).

⁴⁹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/inequality-adjusted-human-development-index-ihdi>

The European Fund for Assistance to the Most Deprived (with a budget of over € 3.8 billion euro for the period 2014-2020)¹ continues to be one of the most important tools for reducing extreme poverty by providing food, clothing and other essentials for personal use. In 2018, the Fund provided support in Bulgaria (through the Social Assistance Agency and the Operational Program for Food²) to nearly 540 000 people, including nearly 140 000 children, 135 000 people with disabilities, 130 000 people over 65, etc. in the form of individual food packages and providing hot lunch in over 200 Bulgarian municipalities.

Target 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

Bulgarian legislation is fully harmonized with that of the European Union in terms of prevention of discrimination based on sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, social and economic status or other characteristics.

In this direction is also the adopted Law on Protection against Discrimination³ (Promulgated SN No. 86 of September 30, 2003), which prohibits any direct or indirect discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, human genome, citizenship, origin, religion or belief, education, beliefs, political affiliation, personal or social status, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, property status or other characteristics. The law provides a number of administrative and penal measures for non-compliance. Control over the application of the law is exercised by the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD)⁴ and its 23 regional offices. The CPD is an independent specialized state body for prevention of discrimination, protection from discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunities.

Target 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

Applicable to the implementation of the SDGs 10, target 10.4 is Goal I. Accelerated economic development by NDP 2030.

For the incomes' amount and their increase, the measures of the government for setting a minimum wage and a differentiated minimum income are significant. The measures for increasing pensions are important, which are this important part of social transfers that reduce poverty and inequality.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089&langId=bg>

² <https://asp.government.bg/bg/>

³ <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135472223>

⁴ <https://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/>

According to NSI data on the income of the population in the country for 2019⁵⁴, the annual total income per household member is BGN 6,592 and it increases by 9.6% compared to 2018. For the last ten years (2010-2019) the total income per person per household has increased 1.8 times. During the period 2010-2019, the following major changes were registered in terms of sources of total income on average per household member:

- The salary income in 2019 is 3 731 BGN and increases by 11.8% compared to 2018, and its increase compared to 2010 is 2 times;
- The income from pensions for the last year is 1 801 BGN. They increase by 9.5% compared to 2018 and by 59.7% compared to 2010;
- The income from self-employment in 2019 is 421 BGN, or almost unchanged compared to 2018, and increased by 84.6% compared to 2010;
- The income from additional employment except the salary for the last year is 56 BGN and it decreases compared to 2018 by 20.0%, and compared to 2010 the decrease is 28.2%;
- The income from other social transfers (unemployment benefits, family allowances for children and other social benefits and allowances) in 2019 is 194 BGN. They increase by 24.4% compared to 2018 and by 57.7% compared to 2010.

The income from all social transfers (pensions, unemployment benefits, family allowances for children and other social benefits) forms 30.2% of the total household income in 2019. Among the received social transfers with the highest relative share in the total income of households is the income from pensions - 27.3%, which is unchanged compared to 2018 and by 3.6 percentage points less than in 2010. The income from other social transfers and benefits (other than pensions) is 2.9 % for 2019 and by 0.4% less compared to 2010. The salary income is 56.6% of total household income for 2019, increasing by nearly 6% compared to 2010.

The financing of social protection in Bulgaria is carried out through social security contributions on the principle of solidarity or through direct financing from the state budget. In 2017, the revenues reported in the European System of integrated Social PROtection Statistics (ESSPROS⁵⁵) for financing the Social Protection System in the country amounted to 18 756.5 million BGN, which is 12% more than in 2016. At the same time, in 2017 the expenditures for social protection are 17 195.7 million BGN, which represents about 17.0% of the gross domestic product of the country for the same year. Compared to the previous 2016, the total social protection expenditures increased by at about 4.5%, but their share in the gross domestic product decreased by 0.5 percentage points. The average level of social protection expenditure in the EU (28) is 27.9%⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/>

⁵⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/social-protection>

⁵⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/igm/>

According to the **Report for Bulgaria of the EU Energy Poverty Observatory**⁵⁷ from 2019, the energy poverty continues to be a widespread problem in Bulgaria, in most regions and in different demographic groups, although with the changes in the criteria for access to heating aid made in 2019, and with the increase of 24.5% in the amounts, the recipients of this aid increased by 21% compared to 2018.⁵⁸

Although their share has been gradually declining since 2011⁵⁹, in 2017 36.5% of the households were not able to keep their homes sufficiently heated, and 31.1% had overdue bills for utilities, which puts Bulgaria among the Member States with the highest levels of energy poverty in the EU. The problem is exacerbated by the relatively low coverage of social benefits and low energy efficiency. The energy poverty policies are focused mainly on financial assistance or the rehabilitation and modernization of residential buildings.

According to European Semester's Report on Bulgaria 2020, the income inequality in Bulgaria has started to decline, but it is still high. In 2018, the share of income of the richest 20% of the population was almost eight times higher than the income share of the poorest 20%, and this difference is the largest in the EU, where the average ratio is 5.17. For this result contribute also the still low levels of the minimum income and the pensions. The capacity of the tax system and the social security system to reduce income inequality is one of the weakest in the EU, as the taxes reduce the income inequality only by 4% (compared to an EU average of 13%) and the benefits for social security by 28% (compared to an average of 35% in the EU).

According to an analysis of the **Social Protection Committee**⁶⁰ of the Council of the EU, **the overall adequacy and coverage⁶¹ of the minimum income scheme in Bulgaria remains weak and no indexation is envisaged.** The Bulgarian system for supporting people with minimum incomes is based on the monthly social assistance and the heating allowances. The eligibility criteria for both aids are based on the official guaranteed minimum income (GMI). After the administrative increase of GMD in 2018 from 65 BGN (33.32 EUR) to 75 BGN (38.35 EUR), no updates have been made and no objective criteria for indexation are envisaged. Since January 2020, the poverty line is used to determine monthly benefits only for people with disabilities. In 2019, the number of registered beneficiaries of monthly social assistance continued to decline, reaching 26 000 people, according to government data (i.e. approximately 2% of the group at risk of poverty). This type of support is ineffective and unattractive due to its overall small size, relatively restrictive eligibility

⁵⁷ European Commission (2019). Report for Bulgaria of the EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV)

⁵⁸ The total amount of heating aid is 93.18 BGN (46 EUR) per month, or 465.90 BGN (233 EUR) per heating season.

⁵⁹ <https://www.energy-poverty.eu/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

⁶¹ Framework for comparative analysis of minimum incomes, which is used by the Social Protection Committee of the EC. For more details, see The proposal for a joint report on employment for 2020.

criteria and the lack of mechanisms for a smooth transition from social assistance to employment, with an appropriate combination of active employment policies and support services.

In terms of reducing inequality between the different groups in the society, the most important are the measures for increasing and improving the social services. The **Social Services Act**⁶² (SSA) adopted in 2019 regulates assistant support as a social service. After several postponements, the law came into force on 01.07.2020, but on 14.07.2020 the Constitutional Court (CC) declared 3 provisions of the SSA⁶³ as unconstitutional. In January 2018, **an Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Long-Term Care (2018-2021)**⁶⁴ was adopted, which envisages integrated measures for providing quality services for long-term care of vulnerable people, as well as a new infrastructure.

In the European Semester's Report on Bulgaria 2020 it is pointed out that the reform of the social services is being carried out at a slow pace, which has slowed down even more. The postponed entry into force of the new SSA and the pronouncement of the Constitutional Court on the legality of some of its provisions creates additional uncertainty. The new provisions in the law envisage measures to address chronically insufficient funding by introducing rules for more precise definition of the standards for financing social services. **The national map of social services**⁶⁵, which will be prepared jointly with the municipalities, will aim at overcoming the uneven territorial distribution and the insufficient coverage and quality of services. The creation of new agency (Agency for the Quality of Social Services), which will have control functions, is envisaged.

Among the reasons for the growing inequality are the low expenditures for social protection⁶⁶, **as well as the relatively low efficiency**⁶⁷ **of social transfers in reducing poverty and inequality.** The Social Assistance System in Bulgaria is the third most inefficient⁶⁸ in the EU in terms of poverty reduction results⁶⁹.

The Report on the Implementation⁷⁰ of the Action Plan for the period 2017-2018 at the NSRPPI 2020 points out that as of the end of November 2018 the social services for children, old people and people with disabilities, financed from the state budget are a total of 1 152, which provides possibility for support of more than 23,955 consumers. Although the funds for their financing from the state budget are increasing, as in 2018 they have increased by 19.5 million BGN compared to those in 2017 and their total amount is 230.9 million BGN, the government expenditures for

⁶² <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2137191914>

⁶³ <https://news.lex.bg/>

⁶⁴ <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/>

⁶⁵ <https://nmd.bg/>

⁶⁶ NDP 2030. Part 1. Analysis of the socio-economic development of the country after its accession to the EU.

⁶⁷ Measured as the decrease in the relative share of the population at risk of poverty as a result of social transfers.

⁶⁸ Pensions are not included in the analysis of social transfers; when included, the system was rated as the sixth most inefficient within the EU, ahead of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta.

⁶⁹ Only Greece and Romania have a more unsatisfactory performance in the EU.

⁷⁰ <http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=17213>

social protection are at the amount of only 12.4% of GDP as average over the last ten years (compared to EU average of 18.9% of GDP), which ranks the country 26th in the EU⁷¹. According to the EC, the scope and adequacy of the social benefits remain low. Despite the increase in the guaranteed minimum income in 2018, it is still among the most insufficient in the EU and significantly below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. The same applies to a large extent also to the scope and duration of unemployment benefits⁷².

Other problems in providing social services include **high turnover of the staff, difficult working conditions and wages close to the minimum wage.**

The share of the people living in poor housing conditions is very high, which additionally hinders social inclusion. In 2018, the share of people living in houses with extremely poor conditions was 10 times higher than the EU average, and 50% of Bulgarians, who are at risk of poverty, live in households with excessive housing costs. The social housing policies are decentralized, there is no strategic framework, and housing benefits are an insignificant part of the total social benefits. There are no specific measures to prevent homelessness, nor is a special attention paid to the social reintegration of homeless people, with the exception of the temporary accommodation centers and the shelters, which capacity run out during the winter season⁷³. It is expected that within the new SSA the issue of homelessness will be addressed with a new service from 2021 onwards.

It is still difficult for the people with disabilities to live independently. In 2018, the share of the people with disabilities at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 49.5%, or 19.5 percentage points higher than those without disabilities and 20.7 percentage points above the EU average. The new legislation seeks to improve the scope and adequacy of assistance⁷⁴ according to the degree of disability and individual needs. The Bulgarian authorities report that since the introduction of the new methodology for determining and updating the monthly benefits⁷⁵, the number of the people who received this aid has increased by 30%. Moreover, a new state agency will be established in 2021, which will coordinate the policy for the people with disabilities based on individual assessments and assistance. Meeting the different needs for help and providing alternatives, as well as an accessible environment will allow the people with disabilities to participate in the community.

⁷¹ Social protection expenditures in the period under review were lower only in Latvia (11.6% of GDP) and Romania (11.9% of GDP).

⁷² Report for Bulgaria for 2018, including an in-depth review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, EC <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-bulgaria-bg.pdf>

⁷³ Report of the European Network for Social Policy on Homelessness: there are 13 temporary accommodation centers and 2 shelters in the country with a capacity of 617 and 70 beds respectively. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=21594&langId=en>

⁷⁴ The Law on People with Disabilities and the Law on Personal Assistance, adopted in December 2018.

⁷⁵ Depending on the degree of disability, the monthly allowance varies from 7% to 57% of the poverty line, which was set at 348 BGN in 2019.

The demand for long-term care services is increasing and new infrastructures and services are being developed. In 2016, the reported percentage of unmet home care needs was the highest in the EU with 65.1%, and the number of people providing long-term home care services was far below the EU average⁷⁶. The government has adopted a National Strategy for long-term care and an action plan for the period 2018-2021, which main goal is to develop long-term care services for people with disabilities and the elderly. However, the process of reforming the system and transforming and closing the existing 161 specialized institutions caring for 11 000 adults is in its initial phase and it is scheduled to continue until 2034⁷⁷. Through the European Structural Funds it is provided support for the reforms of these institutions, the creation of an infrastructure map and the development of new services, such as the provided in the community support in the day care centers and integrated mobile services for health and social assistance at home.

⁷⁶ OECD (2019). Ensuring an adequate LTC workforce (Ensuring an adequate workforce in the field of long - term social care).

⁷⁷ Only five homes for adults with mental disorders and five homes for adults with mental retardation have been prepared for closure.

ANNEX 1. LIST OF EXAMINED SDGS

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries

8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors

8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

8.10 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

8.a Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries

8.b By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average

10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations

10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice of developing countries in decision making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions

10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

10.a Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements

10.b Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes

10.c By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent

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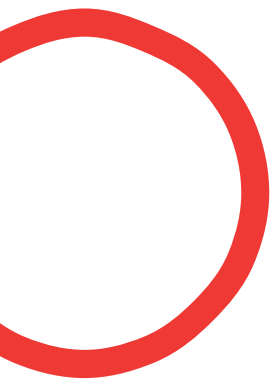
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