

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Bulgaria

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Introduction

The **Ministry of Education and Science** (Министерство на образованието и науката) and the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** (Министерство на труда и социалната политика) are responsible for developing policies for career guidance in education and employment. The term career guidance is often used interchangeably with terms such as vocational guidance, employment advice and mediation. Based on a review of the previous lifelong learning strategy (see also Evidence, monitoring and assessment of effectiveness), a new framework has been developed. The new Strategic Framework for development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030) (<https://mon.bg/bg/143>) includes specific objectives and a set of measures and activities regarding:

1. providing a system of affordable and quality services for systematic career guidance from early childhood and at school for success in the labour market;
2. systematic career guidance and counselling of students at each stage of training to discover their professional interests;
3. creation of an integrated system for career guidance and vocational education and training for students and adults as a part of measures to expand lifelong learning opportunities

The Employment Promotion Act, chapter 7, ensures legal entitlement to career guidance for adults. According to the Regulation for the implementation of the Employment Promotion Act, career guidance can be conducted in public labour offices and centres licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) for information and vocational guidance.

Sources

- Ministry of Education and Science. <https://www.mon.bg/en/>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/eng>
- Ministry of Education and Science. Strategic Framework for development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030) Стратегическа рамка за образованието, обучението и ученето в Република България) (2021-2030) at: <https://mon.bg/bg/143>
- The Employment Promotion Act. <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/zakoni/>

Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

The cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders are defined according to the aim of the regulations provided. The Ministry of Education and Science and its subsidiary institutions (regional directorates of education) are involved mainly with career guidance in schools and vocational education, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy oversees career guidance for adults or people already on the labour market.

The **National Agency for Vocational Education and Training** (Национална агенция за професионално образование и обучение) is responsible for the system of vocational education and the centres of information and vocational guidance (CIVGs). NAVET issues licences for the establishment of CIVGs and monitors their activities (further information can be found [here](#)). Further, NAVET was a partner and national coordinator for the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

In the employment sector, the **Employment Agency** (Агенция по заетостта) is responsible for delivering guidance services to both employed and unemployed adults through a network of 107 labour office directorates and their 146 branches across the country.

The Ministry of Education and Science and municipalities are responsible for 27 personal development support centres for career guidance and counselling (центрове за подкрепа за личностно развитие за кариерно ориентиране и консултиране) nationwide. The network centres deliver career guidance to students in the school education system (ISCED level 1 to 5).

Sources

- Ministry of Education and Science (n.d.). <https://www.mon.bg/en/100000>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (n.d.). Employment Agency. <https://www.az.government.bg/>
- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (2015). Licensed as CIVGs. <https://www.navet.government.bg/en/register-civg/>

Access to guidance

All individuals can access guidance services according to their different contexts, as well as both individual and group counselling. There is no charge for services for the unemployed, pupils and students. There are several main providers of career guidance.

1. 27 personal development support centres for career guidance and counselling (центрове за подкрепа за личностно развитие за кариерно ориентиране и консултиране) for the school education sector, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipalities. The centres are established in the country's main regional centres. They provide in situ visits to schools for promoting career guidance and also essential services of individual and group counselling, delivered at the centres. A total of 122 career counsellors work in these centres.
2. 49 university career centres (Университетски центрове за кариерно ориентиране) provide guidance focused on organising work placements and internships for students.
3. 253 labour offices of the Employment Agency (Бюро по труда към Агенция по заетостта) provide employment-related guidance to both employed and unemployed individuals, including those with disabilities.
4. 38 Centres for information and vocational guidance (CIVGs) (центрове за информация и професионално ориентиране) licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training. CIVGs provide vocational guidance for students, school pupils and adults.
5. 8 career centres (Центрове за кариерно ориентиране) under the auspices of the Regional Employment Services Departments within the national Employment Agency.

In 2021, individual professional orientation of 119211 unemployed people and group orientation of 21234 people was carried out in the divisions of the Employment Agency.

In 2021, in the eight career centres of the Employment Agency, in Burgas, Varna, Haskovo, Lovech, Montana, Plovdiv, Ruse and Blagoevgrad, the following services were provided:

1. individually consulted people – 2856;
2. groups for professional guidance – 156 groups;
3. job search workshops – 246 workshops.

Projects of the operational programmes “Human resources development” and “Science and education for smart growth” provide access to career counselling and vocational guidance for people from vulnerable groups (See [Ministry of labour and social policy, July 2021](#)).

There is low awareness of career guidance services among the target groups, based on actual use of services as well as according to service providers.

Support through funding for career guidance services for adults in Bulgaria was last provided in 2014-2015. The average estimated cost of CIVG services is EUR 65, much higher than in 2020 (EUR 25) and 2019 (EUR 35).

Data from the 2021 and 2020 annual reports of the CIVG show a decrease in the number of clients. Consulted persons with Bulgarian citizenship have decreased by 100, clients from the EU by 51 and clients from other countries from 26 to 10. Reported data for 2021 show an increase in the number of unemployed clients of the CIVG from 511 to 610, a huge fall in the number of employed clients from 434 to 173, and an increase in the number of students who have benefited from the services offered by the CIVG from 49 to 123. The average age of users of CIVG services was 31 years in 2021, the same as in 2020 (https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/god.inf._cpo-i-cipo.pdf).

The National Strategy for lifelong learning (2014-2020), defined and endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science, had a number of objectives, including those that pertain to improving access to lifelong guidance and the development of career management skills.

The impact assessment of public policies in the adult learning sector (National Strategy for lifelong learning 2014-2020), developed in 2021 in the framework of the project No 614188-EPP-1-2019-1-EN-EPPKA3-AL-AGENDA [National Coordinators for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning](#) draws the following main conclusions for career guidance services (also see [Evidence, monitoring and assessment](#)).

1. Career counselling and career guidance is provided by various institutions, lacking a clear systematic approach and the necessary publicity to motivate citizens about the benefits of these tools. There is no comprehensive system approach based on a one-stop shop for citizens to receive these services, whether they are in the education and training system, employed or unemployed.
2. There is a lack of both planning and implementation of tasks, as a result of which the conclusion is that the level of implementation of the activity for development of career guidance services is ‘non-executed’.

The new Strategic Framework for development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030) includes specific objectives and a set of measures and activities regarding:

1. providing a system of affordable and quality services for systematic career guidance from early childhood and at school for successful progress in the labour market;
2. systematic career guidance and counselling of students at each stage of training to discover their professional interests;
3. creation of an integrated system for career guidance and vocational education and training for students and adults as a part of measures to expand lifelong learning opportunities.

Sources

- Board of Directors of NAPOO (2022). Анализ на дейността на центровете за професионално обучение и центровете за информация и професионално ориентиране през 2021 г. (Activity analysis at the centers for professionally training and the centers for information and professionally orientation in 2021) Adopted by the Protocol No. 3 of 29.06.2022. https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/god.inf._cpo-i-cipo.pdf
- Ministry of Education and Science (2017). НАРЕДБА ЗА ПРИОБЩАВАЩОТО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ ОТ 2016 Г. (Regulation on general Education of 2016). <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136927891>
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- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (July, 2021). Над 5000 души в неравностойно положение ще бъдат интегрирани на пазара на труда и включени в образование (Over 5000 disadvantaged people will be integrated into the labour market and involved in education). <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/eng/nad-5000-dushi-v-neravnostoyno-polozhenie-shche-bdat-integrirani-na-pazara-na-truda-i-vklyucheni-v-obrazovanie>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (n.d.). Employment Agency. <https://www.az.government.bg/en/pages/za-nas/>
- National Portal for Career Guidance of Students (n.d.). <https://orientirane.mon.bg/>
- Ministry of Education and Science. Strategic Framework for development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030). Стратегическа рамка за образованието, обучението и ученето в Република България (2021-2030) at <https://mon.bg/bg/143>

Quality assurance

In the [Ministry of Education and Science](#), two directorates are responsible for quality assurance of guidance services in the education sector:

1. The Inclusive Education Directorate organises activities relating to the provision of general and additional support for personal development of children and students;
2. the Higher Education Directorate monitors the work of university career centres.

Until 2020 career guidance was monitored and provided by the Vocational Education and Training Directorate of the Ministry of Education. Responsibility for this has since been transferred to the Inclusive Education Directorate in the same ministry.

The main standard for the career counsellor profession, along with a relevant higher education degree in the social sciences (e.g. psychology, social work), is the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) certificate. This is a licence proving that the holder has undergone specific training and possesses the 12 competences accredited by the [Centre for Credentialing and Education \(CCE\)](#). The representative of the GCDF certification programme in Bulgaria is the [Business Foundation for Education](#), which also represents the [National Board for Certified Counsellors in Bulgaria](#), a prominent US-based organisation for training and credentialing professionals in career guidance and mental health, giving them the accreditation to certify career counsellors under the GCDF programme.

Besides the GCDF certificate, specialised training for career counsellors is available at postgraduate level (see section [Training and qualifications](#)). The leading master’s degrees are:

1. master programme Career education in non-formal education institutions and networks, at Sofia University;
2. [master degree in Career development and entrepreneurship](#), at South-West University Neofit Rilski.

Career guidance is recognised as a separate occupation, which is included in the National system of professions and occupations. To work as a career consultant, higher education is required.

Sources

- Business Foundation for Education (n.d.). <https://www.fbo.bg/en/>
- Centre of Credentialing and Education (CCE) (n.d.). <http://www.cce-global.org/>
- Master’s programme Career development and entrepreneurship. (2022). https://www.swu.bg/bg/?option=com_content&view=article&id=621:mengbg&catid=212:2022-01-11-14-18-06&lang=bg-BG
- Master’s programme Career education in non-formal education institutions and networks. (2012). https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/universitet_t/fakulteti/fakultet_po_pedagogika/uchebna_dejnost_bakalavri_magistri_doktoranti_sdk/magist_rski_programi/fakulte
- Ministry of Education and Science. Inclusive Education Directorate. <https://mon.bg/en/308>
- Ministry of Education and Science (n.d.). Vocational Education and Training Directorate. <https://www.mon.bg/en/318>
- Ministry of Education and Science (n.d.). <https://www.mon.bg/en/>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (n.d.). Employment Agency. <https://www.az.government.bg/en/pages/za-nas/>

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- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (n.d.). <http://seconomy.misp.government.bg/en/index.php>
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- National classification of professions and occupations(n.d.). <https://nsi.bg/bg/content/261/>

Career management skills

The existing strategic and national documents listed below, highlight the importance of transversal competences, or skills for life. Career management skills (CMS) are implicitly embedded in this group of competences.

The Education Programme 2021-2027 (approved by the European Commission on 8 August 2022) envisages specific measures and activities to promote career guidance for each level of the education system.

From October 2012 to the end of 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science implemented the project Career Guidance System in School Education, funded by the Operational programme Science and education for smart growth, co-financed by the European Union through the European Structural and Investment funds. After its completion, the 28 career guidance centres created were restructured as 27 personal development support centres for career guidance and counselling. Responsibility and funding for the new centres are shared between the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipalities.

From 2020 the personal development support centres for career guidance and counselling are beneficiaries of the National programme Providing modern working conditions for children and students in personal development support centres. The aim of the programme is to provide conditions for career guidance and counselling of all students in the district, as well as to involve parents in this process.

In 2021 the centres for support of personal development for career guidance and counselling are included in the implementation of activities under the National programme Providing modern conditions for support for personal development of children and students in institutions in the system of preschool and school education. The programme creates conditions for joint activities in career guidance and counselling of the centres for support of personal development and schools, as well as for equipment and provision of consumables and materials. While the programme focuses mainly on equipment, online staff training in digital tools for pedagogical specialists for career guidance and counselling in the schools have been also included.

Key activities of Euroguidance Bulgaria in 2020 and 2021 included:

1. supporting the national network of career guidance practitioners by organising training, seminars and webinars on topical issues;
2. promoting cooperation between different stakeholders in career guidance and education;
3. developing the European dimension of the guidance system at national level;
4. disseminating information on international mobility opportunities, training and coaching, working methods and good practices in the field of career guidance and counselling;
5. developing and preparing new interactive guidance and counselling tools based on non-formal education and responding to the specific needs of the different target groups;
6. participating in various online career forums and consolidating the key role of Euroguidance in enhancing the quality of services provided in the field;
7. participating in joint appearances and events with other Erasmus+ accompanying activities such as Europass, eTwinning, Eurodesk, ECVET, Eurydice, etc.

In 2021 Euroguidance Bulgaria organised a competition on good practices to support career counselling and guidance during the pandemic.

The competition aimed to collect, award and promote successful practices (methodologies, guides, interactive games, etc) used in different forms of career counselling in educational institutions, career centres and information and guidance centres in pandemic conditions. A total of 19 proposals were received, of which nine were given awards and prizes. Euroguidance Bulgaria is currently compiling a compendium of excellent practices, which will be published on the network's website: <http://euroguidance.hrdc.bg/>.

Many useful and interactive practices from all over Europe, including Bulgaria, are published on the central website of the network: <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems-and-practice/good-practices/my-career-path>.

Sources

- Ministry of Education and Science (n.d.). National Strategy for lifelong learning (2014-20). http://mon.bg/upload/6561/strategy_LLL_2014_2020.pdf
- Human resource development centre (Център за развитие на човешките ресурси). <http://euroguidance.hrdc.bg/>

Evidence, monitoring and assessment

Career guidance policy is embedded in several strategic documents related to lifelong learning development, promoting employment, tackling early school-leaving, inclusive education, etc.

Under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Employment Agency (Агенция по заетостта) ensures the quality of guidance services provided within the labour offices. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (Национална агенция за професионално образование и обучение) (NAVET) guarantees the quality of information and guidance centres through a licensing mechanism and three evaluation measures:

1. Ongoing evaluation: this is done by NAVET staff during the centre's activities and can be planned and/or at the request of a third party.
2. Ex post evaluation: NAVET assesses how well recommendations have been implemented or violations eliminated, as well as their consequences.
3. Self-assessment (internal evaluation): each centre assesses its activities continuously, following its internal procedures. At the end of the calendar year, the centre must send to NAVET a completed form outlining the self-assessment of its activities. Based on this, NAVET can update its annual plan for ongoing monitoring.

The network of Centres for information and vocational guidance (Центрове за информация и професионално ориентиране) (CIVGs) under the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) provided guidance services to 923 people in 2021 (1 133 in 2020), most of whom had been reported as unemployed at the time of first screening and consultation. In 2022 the criteria for self-assessment for CIVGs will be updated.

The impact assessment of public policies in the adult learning sector (National Strategy for lifelong learning 2014-2020), developed in 2021 within the framework of the project No 614188-EPP-1-2019-1-EN-EPPKA3-AL-AGENDA National coordinators for the implementation of the European agenda for adult learning, drew the following main conclusions for career guidance services, as input to the next strategic development.

1. Career counselling and career guidance is provided by various institutions, lacking a clear systematic approach and the necessary publicity to motivate citizens about the benefits of these tools. There is no comprehensive system approach based on a one-stop shop for citizens to receive these services, whether they are in the education and training system, employed or unemployed.
2. There is a lack of both planning and implementation of tasks, as a result of which the conclusion is that the level of implementation of the activity for development of career guidance services is 'non-executed'.

This information was used as background to develop the current strategy in the new Strategic Framework for development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030), <https://mon.bg/bg/143>.

Sources

- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (n.d.). Centres for information and vocational guidance. <https://www.navet.government.bg/en/licensed-as-civgs/>
- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training. <https://www.navet.government.bg/en/>

Career information, ICT in guidance

The current 'leader' among national institutions promoting the integration of digital technologies for guidance and, specifically, career information provision, is the [Ministry of Education and Science](#). Using structural funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), the ministry set up the first [national portal](#) for career guidance.

The portal, [orientirane.mon](#), provides information on education and training programmes along with a series of guidance and inspiration tools to support individuals and career counsellors in choosing education and career paths. It also serves as a national knowledge resource for professionals in the education and guidance sector, as well as an online gateway for the 'e-guidance-for-all' service.

In 2021, under the Career Skills Project initiative, coordinated by the Business Foundation for Education, a career skills platform, <https://app.career-skills.eu/bg>, was established. Aimed at career advisers and people of all ages, it contains a catalogue of 12 key career skills, a digital assessment tool and an online career skills course.

In addition, the platform enables career counsellors to register on the career services map and thus be found more easily by potential clients. Visitors can search for services by different criteria: geographical proximity, skills they want to develop (e.g. self-knowledge, resilience, leadership, creativity), type of provider and target group (e.g. services for students, unemployed, employed).

Sources

- Ministry of Education and Science (n.d.). <https://www.mon.bg/en/>
- National Portal for Career Guidance of Students (n.d.). <https://orientirane.mon.bg/>
- Business Foundation for Education (n.d.). <https://fbo.bg/en/>

Training and qualifications

The main training programme (both initial and continuous) for career counselling is the Global career development facilitator (GCDF) licensing framework, which is also embedded in relevant master's degree programmes (see section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#)). The main providers of specialised academic training (master's degree, postgraduate courses) are:

1. Sofia St Kliment Ohridski University, Faculty of Pedagogy: Master programme in [career education](#) – 2 semesters for specialists, 3 semesters for non-specialists;
2. South-West University Neofit Rilski: master programme in [career development and entrepreneurship](#) – 2 semesters for specialists, 4 semesters for non-specialists,.

The public employment service provides counselling staff with mandatory specialised training, including continuous training in ICT.

The Euroguidance network supports career guidance practitioners by organising training, seminars and webinars on topical issues. In 2020 and 2021 Euroguidance Bulgaria organised a national training of career guidance professionals. Given the COVID-19 risks, the trainings were conducted online. Each training course was attended by 80 participants, selected after pre-registration.

Sources

- Master programme in career development and entrepreneurship (2022) https://www.swu.bg/bg/?option=com_content&view=article&id=621:mengbg&catid=212:2022-01-11-14-18-06&lang=bg-BG
- Master programme in career education (2022). https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/universitet_t/fakulteti/fakultet_po_pedagogika/uchebna_dejnost_bakalavri_magistri_doktoranti_sdk/magist_rski_programi/fakulte
- Human resource development centre (Център за развитие на човешките ресурси) (2021). <http://euroguidance.hrdc.bg/news/natsionalno-obuchenie-na-karierni-konsultanti-09-10-12-2021-g/>

Funding career guidance

The sources of funding for training as a career counsellor can be grouped in two categories.

1. Self-paid: those who wish to receive the services of a counsellor or aspire to become a counsellor invest their own funds.
2. Subsidised: the costs for career counsellor training are covered within projects funded by the European Social Fund, such as the [System for career guidance](#) in school education projects. Training is also paid for by employers where career counsellors are posted.

Sources

- Ministry of Education and Science (n.d.). <https://www.mon.bg/en/>
- National Portal for Career Guidance of Students (n.d.). <https://orientirane.mon.bg/>

Guidance for VET participants

The new Strategic Framework for development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030) (<https://mon.bg/bg/143>) includes specific objectives and a set of measures and activities regarding:

1. providing a system of affordable and quality services for systematic career guidance from early childhood and at school for success in the labour market;
2. systematic career guidance and counselling of students at any stage of training to discover their professional interests;
3. creation of an integrated system for career guidance and vocational education and training for students and adults as a part of measures to expand lifelong learning opportunities.

The [National Agency for Vocational Education and Training](#) (Национална агенция за професионално образование и обучение) is responsible for the system of vocational education and the centres of information and vocational guidance (CIVGs). NAVET issues licences for the establishment of CIVGs and monitors their activities (further information can be found [here](#)). The CIVGs can also provide guidance for adults.

Up to 31 December 2020, 40 centres Centres for information and vocational guidance (CIVGs) (центрове за информация и професионално ориентиране) licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training. CIVGs provide vocational guidance for students, school pupils and adults (Cedefop and National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, 2022).

The network of [Centres for information and vocational guidance](#) (Центрове за информация и професионално ориентиране) (CIVGs) under the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) provided guidance services to 1423 people in 2022 (923 in 2021 and 1 133 in 2020), most of whom had been reported as unemployed at the time of first screening and consultation. In 2022 the criteria for self-assessment for CIVGs will be updated ([National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, 2015](#)).

You can find more information on Bulgarian VET system in the [VET in Europe database](#).

Sources

- Cedefop; National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (2022). Vocational education and training in Europe - Bulgaria: system description [Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Bulgaria](#)

[From Cedefop; ReferNet. Vocational education and training in Europe database]. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-inf1/europe/systems/bulgaria-u2>

- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) (n.d.) About NAVET. <https://www.navet.government.bg/en/>
- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) (2015) Licensed as CIVGs <https://www.navet.government.bg/en/licensed-as-civgs/>

Guidance for higher education students

The intensification of dialogue between educational and business institutions in Bulgaria is also supported by career guidance and development centres, which operate in 49 out of 52 higher-education institutions. They play a strong role in modern education and training and are an essential means of overcoming barriers in communication between business, academia and students. Their main function, together with student guidance and preparation, is providing support in student selection processes for internships and jobs, as well as feedback between stakeholders. Every year the Ministry of Education and Science collects aggregated information for reporting the activities of career centres according to indicators approved by the minister.

The first Centre for Career Development was established in 1994 at the American University in Bulgaria in Blagoevgrad. In 1999 at Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski a career centre was established under a project with financial assistance from the Employment Agency and the British embassy. The other career development centres were established in the period 2002 to 2010. Today, career centres are among the most important university structures and are included in accreditation and quality-assessment procedures.

The activities of the career development centres are oriented mainly in two directions: to students and to employers. Those aimed at students are mainly related to providing information about jobs, consulting and assistance in the preparation of CVs and motivational letters, consultations for preparing for an interview, interviewing students on various issues, collecting information about the professional realisation of graduate students, maintaining information boards and websites with up-to-date materials for students such as job advertisements, advertisements for events related to professional realisation, scholarships for training abroad, and training seminars in the country and abroad.

An important strand in the activities of career development centres is cooperation with employers, including holding company presentations, conducting internships, maintaining relationships with employers wishing to use the services of career centres, etc.

The main activities of the career development centres are:

1. registration of students and graduates in career development centres in order to find suitable positions for learning practices and work and to track the professional realisation of the graduates;
2. meetings between users of staff organised by career development centres such as State institutions, companies and non-governmental organisations;
3. company presentations to students about educational and working positions;
4. organisation and conduct of student internships and practices;
5. participation in national and international fora;
6. seminars with students on preparing CVs and cover letters, etc.

Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski offers a mentoring programme (EURAXESS Mentoring Programme) especially for students in the final year of their master's programme, PhD students and postdoctoral students. The aim is to coordinate the efforts of the university's academic staff in supporting researchers early in their careers to achieve faster and more effective results in terms of:

1. orientation in the scientific environment;
2. planning a scientific career;
3. creating and developing a network of scientific contacts;
4. mastering and/or improving teaching competences.

Sources

- Ministry of Education and Science, Higher Education Directorate (Министерство на образованието и науката, Дирекция Висше образование). (n.d.) <https://mon.bg/bg/312>
- Sofia University Mentoring Programme for students in the final year of their master's programme, PhD students and postdoctoral students. (n.d.) <https://mentoring.euraxess.bg/node/37>

Guidance for unemployed adults

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** implements the Programmes for training and employment of long-term unemployed. The **Employment Agency**, the regional employment service directorates and the Labour Office directorates across the country are key partners. The main objective is to provide employment to the long-term unemployed of working age registered in the labour offices and to increase their employability by placing them in training that leads to acquisition and enhancement of skills and qualifications. The principal activities of one such programme are as follows:

1. Labour Office experts provide information and guidance to unemployed people about the opportunities for inclusion in the programme.
2. The Labour Office directorates provide specialised mediation services, including activities to prepare an individual action plan and to determine the profile of each person in order to select the appropriate form of support.
3. Support services, such as psychological assistance, career counselling, vocational guidance and mediation in order to solve complex problems, are provided by case managers and psychologists at the labour offices.
4. Participants are motivated for active labour market behaviour, to acquire knowledge and develop skills for job search and successful self-presentation in a job interview.
5. Subsidised full-time or part-time employment for up to 12 months in the private or public sector is organised.
6. Training is provided to acquire a professional qualification from a training organisation (as indicated by the employer), followed by subsidised or non-subsidised employment.

By order of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the National Programme for employment and training of people with permanent disabilities has been extended from April 2022. It includes vocational guidance, information, and counselling to help the target groups into employment. Measures are planned to encourage employers to consult persons with disabilities in their company at least once a year when drawing up a career plan for their development (<https://www.az.government.bg/pages/nacionalna-programa-zohtu/>).

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Guidance for early leavers

The project Support for success, launched in 2019, includes the activity Implementation of general support through career guidance in order to prepare for the transition to the next degree, to motivate for further education, to participate in the labour market, career orientation for students from the lower secondary stage of education (5th to 7th grade) through the centres for support of personal development, including the STEM training system, where applicable, etc. The aim is to motivate and direct to the system of vocational education students at risk of dropping out, which in turn contributes to reducing the number of early school-leavers.

To support the activities of career counsellors, teachers and pedagogical advisors under the project, Guidelines for career guidance work with students of 5th, 6th and 7th grades who are at risk of leaving the education system prematurely have been developed. This manual provides information on and [Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Bulgaria](#)

resources for working with this target group of students.

A toolkit has been developed that includes two tests for career guidance of students from 5th, 6th and 7th grade at risk of leaving the education system prematurely. The two tests are:

1. a 'picture test' for early career guidance of students in 5th and 6th grade and a situational questionnaire for students in 7th grade;
2. a situation questionnaire for career guidance of 7th grade students who are at risk of leaving the education system prematurely.

In 2021 the authors of the tests conducted training for career counsellors from the personal development support centres to gain competence in working with the two tests. The tests are integrated into the national career guidance portal, <https://orientirane.mon.bg/>

Sources

- European Commission (2015). Education & Training 2020: Schools policy. A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving. https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/early-leaving-policy_en.pdf
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Guidance for NEET

In 2015, a network of youth mediators was put in place to reach out to non-registered NEETs in their environment and to activate them. Youth mediators act as intermediaries with public institutions that provide social, health, educational and other services under the national plan of the European Youth Guarantee 2014-20. No changes have been reported (2022).

The national programme Activation of inactive persons demonstrates that the [Ministry of Labour and Social Policy](#) supports youth employment. The main objective of the programme is the activation and inclusion of inactive people (including discouraged and unemployed people) in the labour market, achieved through different administrative tools and services; the ultimate goal is to attract and motivate them to register in the labour offices and encourage their involvement in training and/or employment. Inactive young people are part of the target group of the programme, and activities have been introduced for them through youth mediators who have been working since 2015 in the municipalities with the highest number of inactive young people. With the spread of COVID-19, in 2020 the Employment Agency began providing six electronic services: Acceptance of applications and registration of jobseekers, Acceptance of applications from employers for vacancies, Issuance of a decision for termination of registration, Issuance of a decision for restoration of the registration of jobseekers, Inclusion in adult training, and Issuance of an official note for registration of a jobseeker. Jobseekers, including young people from the NEET group, were able to use the services without having to visit employment offices. Each service has direct access to the relevant electronic forms and can submit forms to the relevant directorate at the Employment Agency through a secure electronic service.

Also, through the website of the Employment Agency (<https://www.az.government.bg/>), jobseekers, including NEETs, can use the information provided in the section 'Jobseekers' and 'E-labour exchange' to get acquainted with the announced vacancies in the national labour offices, as well as the web application 'Personal profile of a jobseeker' to develop skills and competences for employment.

The Employment Agency, through its website, as well as through the activities of labour offices, carries out active outreach activities under programmes and measures for employment and training, European funds and international projects.

Social media channels are also used; these are sought after and preferred by young people, especially the economically inactive ones who may also be outside education, some of whom avoid formal contact with institutions. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Employment Agency publish information and answers to visitor enquiries on their Facebook pages.

The Employment Agency's Facebook page and LinkedIn profile, its main communication channels on social networks, include information on its activities, and visitors are responded to. Its YouTube channel includes videos about its activities and those of partner projects. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy information campaign Stop looping (Спри да циклиш), aimed at economically inactive young people, was also promoted through social media, including YouTube and electronic media. On its [YouTube channel](#), the ministry also publishes short films presenting young people who have managed to find work through youth employment programmes implemented by the Employment Agency.

For those living in remote regions, with a weak active economy or specific personal barriers to employment, specialised services are provided:

1. Mobile labour office: This service is aimed at unemployed and economically inactive people and employers from small settlements, to increase opportunities for meeting the supply and demand of the labour market and to reduce the number of discouraged people through a quality and comprehensive on-site service (informing about the opportunities provided by the labour offices for finding staff and providing employment; motivating inactive people; registration; providing employment mediation).
2. Outsourced jobs: In addition to the mobile labour offices, in order to raise the awareness of the unemployed, the inactive, students, retirees and other jobseekers and employers, and to bring services closer to clients, information and counselling is provided at outsourced workplaces where employees of the labour office work on a schedule in settlements far from where the labour office is located. The service is popular in remote settlements; information about the outsourced jobs is published in the relevant labour office, as well as in a prominent place in the respective settlement.
3. Direct negotiation between jobseekers and employers through the organisation of labour exchanges and 'employers' days' also contributes to overcoming the barriers to employment of inactive and unemployed people from vulnerable groups. These are both information events and a meeting place for jobseekers, inactive people and employers. The lack of preliminary commitments motivates the inactive people to participate. Information about the events is published in a prominent place in the labour offices and on the website of the Employment Agency.

Youth mediators working in the municipalities with the highest number of inactive young people, through their informal work with young people in informal settings, also promote services and measures for inactive young people, in accessible and youth-friendly language. In addition, youth mediators work actively through social networks.

Through the Job Search Atelier service, the unemployed acquire basic skills for job search and presentation to an employer. As of September 2021, some of the themes provided in the workshops are also available online, in the form of animated films that are available (including to NEETs) on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRxVXdsH9WL2zfez8cmQxjQ>).

The videos, prepared under the Job Toolkit project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme, are subtitled in English, Bulgarian, Greek, and Dutch, and cover the following topics: Ways to look for work; Cover letter; How to write a successful CV; Applying, getting acquainted with the vacancy; Job interview; A job overseas; Long-term unemployment.

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