

# Sexuality Education in the WHO European Region

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## BULGARIA

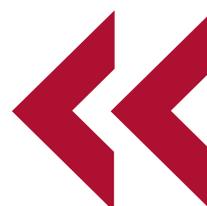


# BULGARIA



## Status of sexuality education

In 2016, the Bulgarian parliament adopted the Law on School and Preschool Education, which also covers sexuality education. Currently, a new educational curriculum is in development, with the participation of multiple stakeholders. However, because of the political instability in the country, it is uncertain whether the new sexuality-education curriculum will soon become part of the school curriculum.





## Laws and policies

Development of a new draft of the Law on School and Preschool Education<sup>1</sup> started in 2014 and was approved by Parliament in 2016. The Law includes educational standards, though the practical plans are still to be developed. Standards have been developed for the subject 'Civil, Intercultural, Health and Environmental Education' including sexuality education. Local governments will play a crucial role in the implementation of sexuality education, as they have to allocate a budget to schools for the implementation of the course on health and sexuality education, which will require more advocacy efforts.

## Implementation of sexuality education

The course on sexuality education is directed toward secondary school learners<sup>2</sup> from the age of 12 years. The draft for the course curriculum is presently under development. It is being prepared by a ministerial commission, which includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs), health-care professionals, teachers, universities and other stakeholders. The *Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe (2010)*<sup>3</sup> are being used in this process, both for advocacy purposes and for curriculum development. As per January 2017, the draft curriculum covers a number of topics in detail, e.g. biological aspects, contraception, HIV and sexually transmitted infections, love, marriage and partnership, access to safe abortion, sexual violence and mutual consent to sexual activity.

NGOs, peer educators and other partners are conducting sexuality-education sessions in schools. They also provide information on available sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Some schools deliver sexuality-education elements quite extensively, other schools hardly or not at all, depending on the school administration and on the level of preparation and competencies of school authorities and teachers.

## Training of teachers on sexuality education

Some teachers have already been trained as part of ongoing pilot programmes, implemented by the United Nations organisations and NGOs. Training and teaching materials were developed in the context of these pilot programmes, but their use is not yet mandatory. These materials reflect a comprehensive approach and participatory teaching methods.

## Sexuality education outside the formal school setting

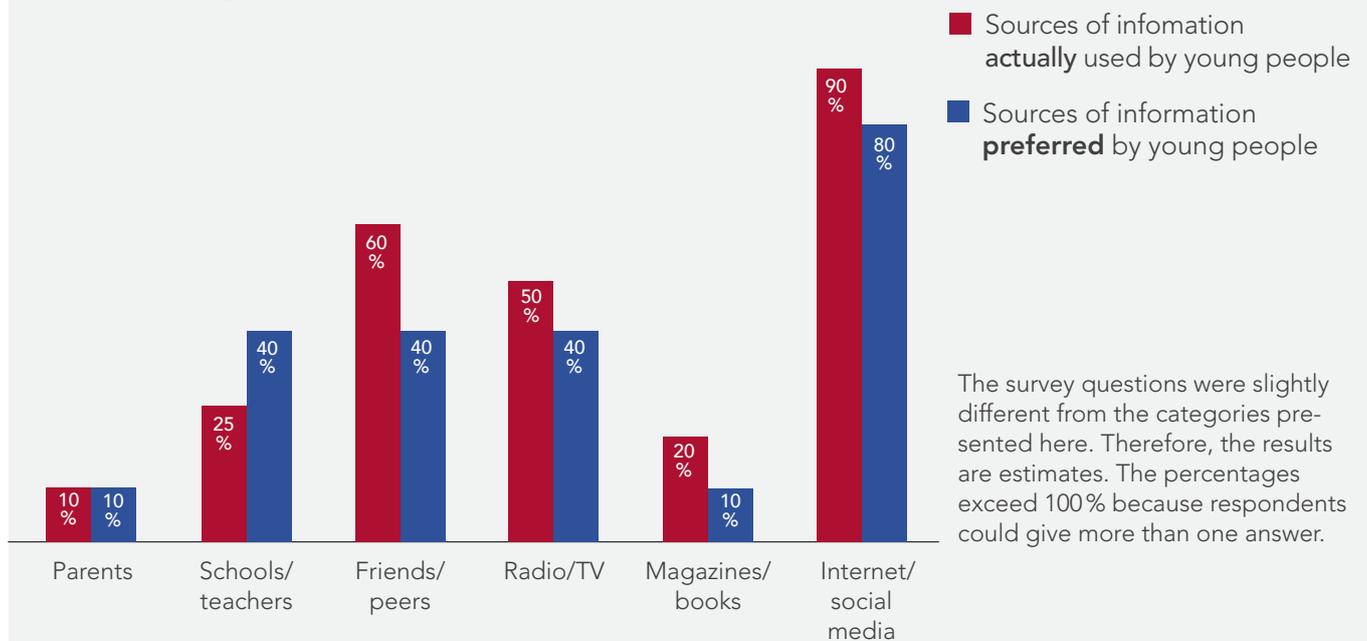
Several organisations are involved in providing sexuality education outside the school setting. The Red Cross and Y-PEER organise sessions on sexual and reproductive health. The Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association (BFPA; IPPF member association) also provides lessons on general SRH issues. The Bulgarian Centre for Women focusses on gender issues. There are websites with SRH information, such as the platform [loveguide.bg](http://loveguide.bg) and the BFPA website [safesex.bg](http://safesex.bg). Furthermore, attention is paid to the educational needs of various underserved and at-risk groups of young people. The BFPA developed educational guidelines on sexuality education for young people with disabilities. As part of a programme funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, BFPA and the National Network of Health Mediators developed educational guidelines for Roma youth, injecting drug-users and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.



## Challenges

There has been strong opposition to sexuality education from religious organisations, the Orthodox Church and conservative organisations. In addition, because of the political instability in the country, it is not clear whether the new sexuality-education curriculum will become part of the school curriculum.

### Actual and preferred sources of information for young people on sexuality-related issues<sup>4</sup>



Data collection year: 2011, age group: 14 – 29 years

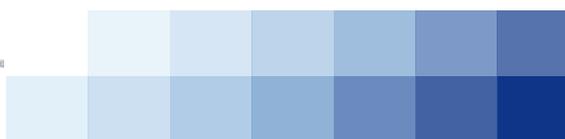
# Country facts



Bulgaria

Total population <sup>5</sup>	7 246 000
Population aged 15–19 years (% of 15–19-year-olds in total population) <sup>5</sup>	319 000 (4.4 %)
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) <sup>6</sup>	3.5
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24 years) <sup>7</sup>	22.2
Gender Inequality Index rating <sup>8</sup>	0.223
Births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years <sup>9</sup>	37
% of 15-year-olds who have had sexual intercourse <sup>10</sup>	boys: 40 % girls: 21 %
Average age of mother at birth of first child <sup>11</sup>	25.7

For references go to last page



## References / Definitions

- 1 Закон за Предучилищното и Училищното Образование [Law on School and Preschool Education] <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/ZAKON-ZA-PREDUCHILISHTNOTO-I-UCHILISHTNOTO-OBRAZOVANIE.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 2 **Learner**: a child or young person who is enrolled or attends classes in school, including primary (basic/elementary), secondary (middle) and high school.
- 3 Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe. Cologne: WHO Regional Office for Europe/BZgA; 2010.
- 4 Grekova M. Репродуктивни нагласи и поведение в България [Reproductive attitudes and behaviour in Bulgaria]. Sofia: BFPA/United Nations Population Fund; 2012 ([http://www.safesex.bg/images/PDF/reprod\\_resum.pdf](http://www.safesex.bg/images/PDF/reprod_resum.pdf), accessed 25 March 2017).
- 5 Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 2016 [online database]. New York: United Nations Statistics Division; 2017 (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A22>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 6 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Government expenditure on education**: current, capital and transfer spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Range in the region is approx. 2.0–8.5.
- 7 Human development data, 2015 [online database]. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2017 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Youth unemployment rate**: percentage of the labour force population aged 15–24 years that is not in paid employment or self-employed, but is available for work and has taken steps to seek paid employment or self-employment.
- 8 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Gender Inequality Index**: a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It varies between zero (when women and men fare equally) and one (when men or women fare poorly compared with the other in all dimensions).
- 9 Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15–19). Washington (DC): World Bank; 2016 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 10 Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC 2016 study report (2013/2014 survey). Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/growing-up-unequal.-hbcs-2016-study-20132014-survey>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 11 Women in the EU gave birth to their first child at almost 29 years of age on average. Luxembourg: Eurostat; 2015 [2013 data] (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/f7e9007fb-3ca9-445f-96eb-fd75d6792965>, accessed 25 March 2017).