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 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 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), healthcare professionals, teachers, universities and other stakeholders. The Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe (2010) 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 and the BFPA website 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

The survey questions were slightly different from the categories presented here. Therefore, the results are estimates. The percentages exceed 100% because respondents could give more than one answer.

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

**Bulgaria**

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

For references go to last page
This fact sheet is based upon a joint research project of the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN) and the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), a WHO Collaborating Centre for Sexual and Reproductive Health. The data of this research were collected between October 2016 and July 2017 by means of written expert interviews with representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations in 25 countries and collection of available data from international information sources.

More information is available on http://www.bzga-whocc.de/en/home/

**References / Definitions**


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.


**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.


**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).


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.