

**ASSESSING THE ACCESS TO
AND TAKEUP OF THE YOUTH
GUARANTEE MEASURES
BY ROMA YOUTH IN BULGARIA**

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**CENTER FOR
THE STUDY OF
DEMOCRACY**

The 2008 global financial crisis resulted in economic challenges in the EU, one of which was a boom of youth unemployment. In response to the increase of youth unemployment, the EU designed the Youth Guarantee (YG), a scheme guaranteeing that every EU citizen between the ages of 15-24 who is out of employment, training and education, would receive support in finding temporary work, continuing education and practical training. With the initiation of the YG, the EU set expectations that every EU member state would implement the YG by introducing respective measures. In Bulgaria, a great portion of the YG target group are Roma youth. This publication reports on the results of research assessing the uptake of the YG among Roma youth in Bulgaria and offers recommendations to relevant stakeholders for the enhancement of such uptake.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
METHODOLOGY	11
I. THE YOUTH GUARANTEE	13
1. Youth employment and NEET rates at peak of economic crisis.....	13
2. Youth Guarantee goals	14
3. Youth Guarantee as partnership scheme	15
4. Impacts at EU level.....	16
5. The Youth Guarantee context in Bulgaria.....	18
6. Youth Guarantee measures in Bulgaria	19
7. Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria as partnership-based	21
8. Youth Guarantee impacts in Bulgaria.....	22
II. THE YOUTH GUARANTEE AND ROMA YOUTH IN BULGARIA	27
1. Youth Guarantee indicators pertaining to Roma in Bulgaria.....	30
2. Need for more data on YG uptake among Roma in Bulgaria.....	31
3. Characteristics of uptake by Roma youth in Bulgaria.....	32
3.1. Lack of knowledge about the YG	32
3.2. YG as valuable in the face of challenges.....	32
3.3. YG uptake contingent on Roma-specific trends.....	33
3.3.1. Education, employment and skill dynamics interacting with family dynamics and expectations about employment.....	33
3.3.2. YG in the context of Roma youth migration.....	35
3.4. Little NGO involvement in YG measures.....	36
3.5. Similar YG trends across regions	37
4. Good practices in YG uptake among Roma youth	38
4.1. Resources offered to targeted NEETs	38
4.2. Institutional partnerships	39
5. Challenges in Roma YG uptake.....	40
5.1. Challenges faced by PES offices.....	40
5.2. Challenges associated with business.....	42
5.3. Challenges of structural nature	43
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	45
IV. LIMITATIONS	51

APPENDIX	53
Annex 1. YG implementing institutions, reforms, interventions and activation – Bulgaria	53
Annex 2. Statistics on national NEET youth	60
Annex 3. YG planned budget allocation.....	67
Annex 4. Fieldwork location selection	73
Annex 5. Coefficients of economic activity by region	80
Annex 6. Focus group demographics.....	81
Annex 7. Expert interview details	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
NEET	Youth Not in Employment, Education and Training
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PES	Public Employment Service
YEI	Youth Economic Initiative
YG	Youth Guarantee

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Youth employment rate in % (age group 15-24 years)	13
Figure 2.	Youth unemployment rate in % (15-24 years).....	14
Figure 3.	Youth employment rate in %, Bulgaria (age group 15-24, 2008 – 2017)	18
Figure 4.	Youth unemployment rate in %, Bulgaria (age group 15-24, 2008 – 2017)	19
Figure 5.	Bulgaria NEET rate in % (ages 15-24), 2008 – 2017	19
Figure 6.	NEET rates (% population, 15-24)	22
Figure 7.	NEET rate by labour market status (% population, 15-24)	23
Figure 8.	Proportion of unemployed youth not in education or training, Bulgaria (% 15-24).....	23
Figure 9.	Share of young people (aged 20-34) neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, 2017	60
Figure 10.	Young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) (20-34), by educational attainment level, 2017.....	62
Figure 11.	Unemployment rate and rate of unemployed Roma youth (15-32), % in 2017	74
Figure 12.	Employment coefficient 2016, 15-24.....	75
Figure 13.	Employment coefficient 2016, 25-34	75
Figure 14.	Percentage Roma per region, 2011	76
Figure 15.	Coefficient of economic activity in %, 2016	80
Figure 16.	Employment coefficient in %, 2016.....	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table	1.	YG verified funds relative to the negotiated funds for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).....	25
Table	2.	Education level and ethnic group affiliation of individuals up to 32 registered for PES services, 2014 – 2017	29
Table	3.	YG implementing institutions in Bulgaria	53
Table	4.	Planned reforms for early intervention and activation.....	54
Table	5.	Planned initiatives for early intervention and activation.....	56
Table	6.	Reforms and initiatives for integration in the labour market.....	57
Table	7.	Planned activities for YEI support, Bulgaria	59
Table	8.	Activity status of young people neither in employment nor in education and training, by age and sex, 2017	60
Table	9.	Evaluation of YG according to evaluation criteria set in National Plan	62
Table	10.	YG planned budget allocation.....	67
Table	11.	Fieldwork locations, descriptive statistics	77
Table	12.	Focus group demographics.....	81
Table	13.	Expert interview details	82

INTRODUCTION

“I cannot and will not accept that Europe is the continent of youth unemployment,” stated incumbent EU Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, in a major speech in early 2018. Eleven years after the 2008 economic crisis, these words remind of the great economic challenges of the EU in the context of the crisis and its negative effects, with some EU states such as Greece and Spain reaching youth unemployment rates of more than 50 percent among some age groups.¹ In the second quarter of 2018, close to 3.4 million, out of the total of about 57 million youth between the ages of 15-24 were unemployed in the EU.² Such realities were and continue to be alarming in some member states as unemployment has adverse effects not only on young people’s financial situation in the present, but also on their long-term well-being, job satisfaction and health status.³ In response to the 2008 financial crisis and its consequences, in 2013, the EU designed the Youth Guarantee (YG), a scheme guaranteeing that every EU citizen between the ages of 15-24 (though in some EU countries the upper limit would be 29-30) who is out of employment, training and education (or the so-called NEET group of youth), would receive support in acquiring experience through subsidy for temporary work, continuing education and practical training. With this measure, the EU set expectations that every EU member state design a country-specific plan for the implementation of the YG and introduce the respective YG measures. In some countries, including Bulgaria, where a great number of Roma reside, Roma youth are a major target group of YG measures.

In Bulgaria, although, the YG has been in active implementation since 2014, little data exist on the extent to which Roma youth access and take up the YG. Such an assessment is important considering that Roma youth could benefit greatly from the YG as a main target subgroup of the scheme. Furthermore, having knowledge of how the scheme is taken up by this specific group could provide ideas for sustainable use of YG funds, as well as ways in which the YG can be redesigned (if needed) for more optimal use by the implementing institutions and Roma youth as a main subgroup within the target population.

In recognition of the importance of making such an assessment, the Center for the Study of Democracy and World Without Borders conducted a study on the uptake of the Youth Guarantee by Roma youth in Bulgaria. The study reports on data from desk research and field-

¹ V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, ‘The European Youth Guarantee: A Systematic Review of Its Implementation Across Countries’, International Labour Office, 2017, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_572465.pdf (accessed 9 May, 2018).

² M. Caliendo, J. Kluge, J. Stöterau and S. Tübbicke, ‘Study on the Youth Guarantee in Light of Changes in the World of Work’, European Commission, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9295&furtherNews=yes> (accessed 13 February, 2019).

³ EU Commission, ‘The Youth Guarantee Making It Happen, para. 1.

work in 10 locations across 9 different regions in Bulgaria. This publication presents the results from this research by outlining findings about the overall dynamics of the YG at the EU and Bulgaria levels (in Part I), and specifically analysing the YG trends among Roma youth in Bulgaria (Part II). The results description is followed by recommendations to relevant policy stakeholders (Part III) and a section on the limitations of this report (Part IV).

METHODOLOGY

The results provided in this report were generated during a two-part research process consisting of: a desk research component and a fieldwork component. The purpose of the desk research was to provide basic knowledge about the YG, major trends related to its implementation in Bulgaria as well as trends related to the YG uptake among Roma youth. For a more in-depth look into the implementation of the YG among this target group, desk research was followed by a fieldwork study conducted in 10 locations in 9 different regions across Bulgaria. The fieldwork sites were selected during the process of desk research. Included in the fieldwork were: City of Lom (Montana Region), City of Vidin (Vidin Region), City of Samokov (Sofia Region), Town of Nikolaevo (Stara Zagora Region), City of Stara Zagora (Stara Zagora Region), City of Smolyan (Smolyan Region), City of Sofia (Sofia Region), City of Kyustendil (Kyustendil Region), City of Yambol (Yambol Region), City of Sliven (Sliven Region). To select the ten locations, the research team relied on available statistical and administrative data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria and the National Employment Agency of Bulgaria. Examples of analysed data include: numbers of unemployed youth in Bulgaria according to various attributes (e.g., age, region, ethnicity, education level), regional employment coefficients/regional employment rates for Bulgarians between 15-24 years of age and between 25-34 years of age, regional employment and unemployment coefficients, regional economic activity coefficients, regional income rates. The criteria for fieldwork site selection which were taken into consideration include: (1) the overall unemployment rate of regions, (2) the overall unemployment rate among Roma youth in regions, (3) overall employment coefficients among youth in regions for 2017, and (4) percentage of Roma regionally, as well as absolute Roma population numbers for certain locations (see more in Annex 4). The main source of analysis were data provided by the National Employment Agency of Bulgaria about unemployed youth per region in the period since the beginning of the YG in Bulgaria and 2017 (i.e., 2014 – 2017). In the review of existing data, certain indicators were selected and taken into consideration in choosing the ten research sites. For more details on the specific site selection, refer to Annex 4 of the Appendix section.

The fieldwork research was guided by three main themes: (1) characteristics of the outreach and uptake of the YG scheme by Roma youth in Bulgaria; (2) good practices in this uptake; (3) challenges to the successful uptake of the YG among this target group. Based on the desk research, the research team pinpointed several YG stakeholders to be included as participants in (1) expert interviews and (2) focus groups. Expert interviews were conducted with representatives of municipalities, members of Public Employment Service (PES) offices in all locations (e.g., case managers, Roma labour mediators, psychologists), local businesses taking part in the YG, Roma NGOs or NGOs working with Roma as

a target group. Focus groups were conducted with Roma NEET youth in each of the ten research sites. The desk research component took place between April 2018 – June 2018. Fieldwork occurred between June 2018 – August 2018, and resulted in 32 expert interviews and 11 focus groups with Roma NEET youth.

In conducting the expert interviews and focus groups, the research team prepared specific questions depending on the profile of the individuals who participated. For each expert interview, the researchers prepared an interview questionnaire depending on the specific expert type of the interviewee (i.e., there were specific questions for municipal officers, PES officers, etc.). Focus groups followed a scenario and question format (e.g., the participants were asked to discuss hypothetical scenarios related to the YG and how they would react to these scenarios). The goal of the focus groups was to interview Roma NEET youth from the Roma communities/neighborhoods of the 10 locations (for demographic details of the focus groups, please refer to Annex 6 in the Appendix section). In some cases, the researchers did the focus groups in the Roma communities, while in others they selected a public location to conduct the groups. Expert interviews lasted between 10 minutes and 1.5 hours. Focus groups lasted between 20 minutes and 1.5 hours.

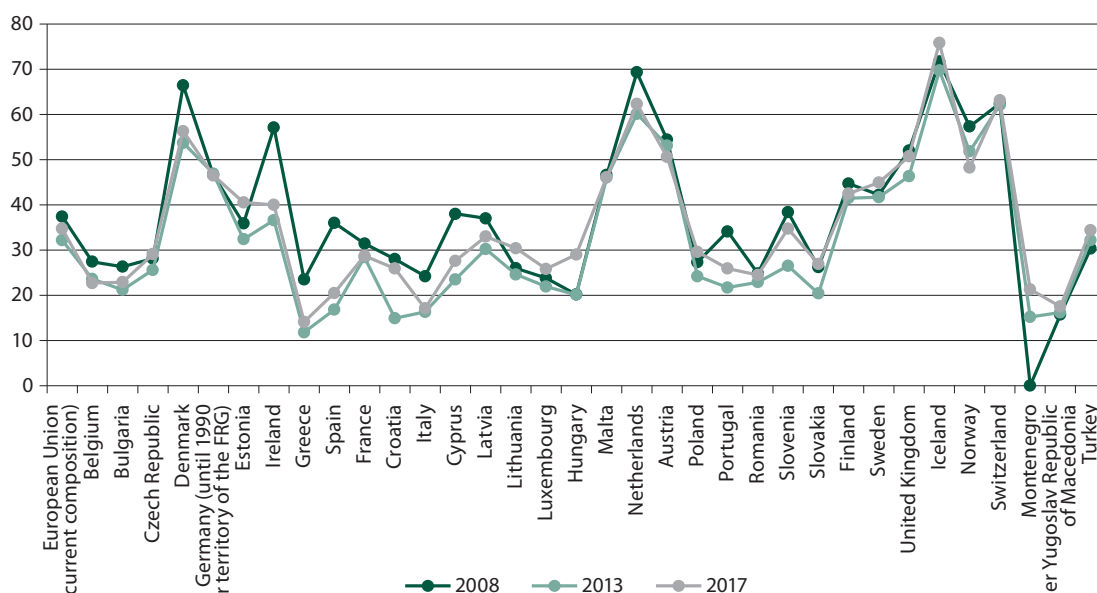
I. THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

1. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND NEET RATES AT PEAK OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

As one of the groups most affected by the 2008 global financial crisis, EU youth in the 15-24 age group have experienced an increased unemployment rate (15.6 percent at the peak of the crisis). In the subsequent years, this group's unemployment rate has been on the rise reaching to 23.7 percent in 2013 when YG schemes were designed (see Figure 2). Although this group's unemployment rate has been gradually declining since the introduction of the YG plans, as of 2017 this decline has still not led to an unemployment rate lower than that of 2008 (see Figure 2 below).

In terms of its employment rate, as of 2017 this age group has still not reached its 2008 employment rate of 37.4 percent (its 2017 employment rate was 34.7 percent) (see Figure 1).

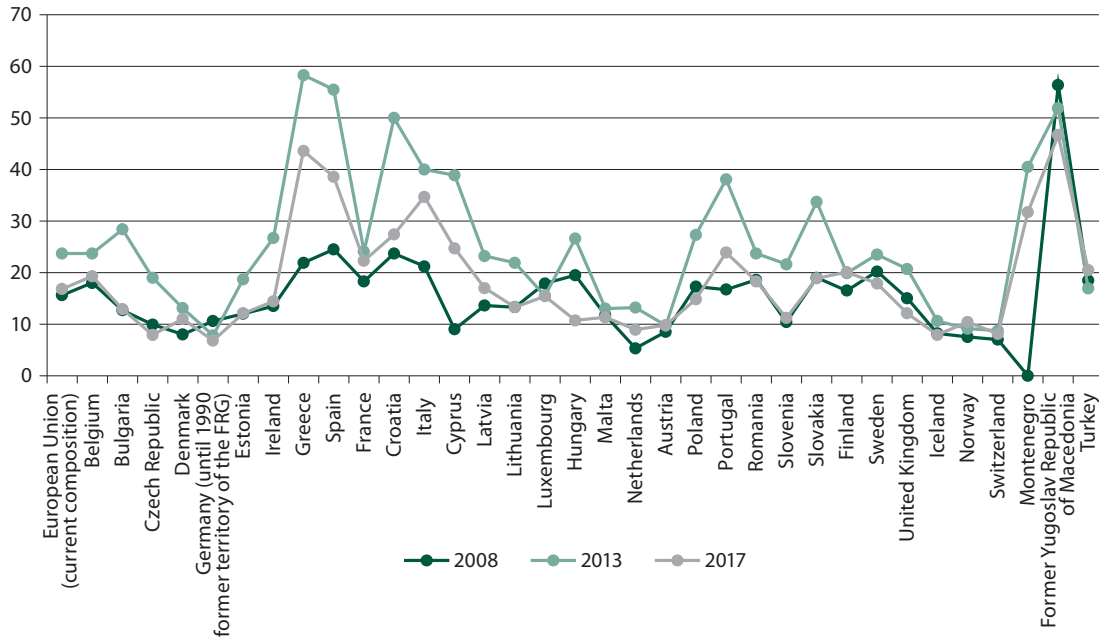
FIGURE 1. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT RATE IN % (AGE GROUP 15-24)



Note: Data are unavailable for countries where NEET rates in the table equal zero.

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

FIGURE 2. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN % (AGE GROUP 15-24)



Note: Data are unavailable for countries where NEET rates in the table equal zero.

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

When it comes to NEET youth across Europe, data indicate that for 2017 almost 17 million people aged 20-34 were not in employment, education, and training. For youth between the ages of 15-19, most of whom are still in education, the NEET rate was low (6.1 percent in 2017) compared to the higher-age group of 20-34 for whom almost one in five people (17.2 percent) were neither in employment nor in education and training (corresponding to 15.8 million youths).⁴

2. YOUTH GUARANTEE GOALS

In response to the youth unemployment trends caused by the financial crisis of 2008, the Council of the European Union took measures in the form of the Youth Guarantee (YG) (2014 – 2020). “Youth Guarantee” refers to “a situation in which young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, and apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or

⁴ Eurostat, ‘Statistics on Young People Neither in Employment Nor in Education or Training’, Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training, (accessed 15 February 2019).

leaving formal education”.⁵ With the creation of the Youth Guarantee and its adoption across the EU, member states agreed to design national YG schemes, submit national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans, as well as implement the Youth Guarantee to promote integration of youth on the labour market, in particular youth who are not in employment, education and training (NEETs).

To implement the YG, the EU has planned to invest at least EUR 12.7 billion between 2014 – 2020 through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI),⁶ in the form of various measures to support the programme, including the modernisation of labour market institutions and education system reform. In addition to providing financial support to each member state, the EU has also provided members with policy support and mutual learning activities so that states can rely on infrastructures and measures to implement the YG.⁷

Fundamentally, the YG is a goal-driven structural reform at the EU level. However, even though it was designed at that level, the Youth Guarantee is tailored to national and local circumstances, making the implementation of the scheme a unique endeavor in each member state. This has led to context-specific measures such as the creation of a network of youth mediators (Roma labour mediators and youth labour mediators) to inform unemployed youth about the Guarantee (in Bulgaria), reformation of the apprenticeship system (Spain), and one-stop guidance centers for youth (Finland).⁸

3. YOUTH GUARANTEE AS PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

Another important feature of the YG is that it has been designed as a partnership-based scheme. In setting up the initiative, the Council of the EU has asked EU member states to establish and coordinate partnerships across all sectors and levels that will take responsibility for executing the YG. This has made it imperative for stakeholders such as employment services, various government institutions, trade unions, youth and career guidance services, youth NGOs, Public Employment Service (PES) offices among others to cooperate in boosting employment opportunities for unemployed youth. Relatedly, the Youth Guarantee is seen as a way to provide long-term impacts on how public institutions work. In that

⁵ Council of the European Union, ‘Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on Establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01), *Official Journal of the European Union*, 120, 1, 2013, p. 1, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H0426\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H0426(01)&from=EN), (accessed 9 May 2018).

⁶ The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is the EU funding programme that facilitates the Youth Guarantee and aims to support NEETs in regions where youth unemployment is higher than 25 percent. The YEI was created in the first half of 2013 by the EU Council (Source: EU Factsheet on the Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative – Three Years On, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3216_en.htm).

⁷ EU Commission, EU-Level Support for the Implementation of the youth Guarantee, [website] <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1099&langId=en> (accessed 9 May 2018)

⁸ EU-Level Support for the Implementation of the youth Guarantee.

respect, the implementation of the YG in the various EU member states has indeed depended on the structural and institutional specificities of each member. For instance, some member states have had to make changes and invest in institutional partnerships. Others have had to strengthen the capacity of public and private employment services, reform the vocational training and apprenticeship systems, as well as encourage labour demand among youth.⁹ Despite encouraging such changes, in and of itself, the YG is not designed with the intention to serve as a single-pronged approach to addressing youth unemployment in the EU. Indeed, to work successfully, the YG should be part of additional structural reforms that support youth inclusion in the labour market, including changes in the labour market regulation (such as youth labour segmentation),¹⁰ as well as reformation of educational systems supported by member state funding and funding from the European Regional Development Fund.¹¹

4. IMPACTS AT EU LEVEL

Researchers and policy-makers have been curious about the impacts of the YG. Evaluation efforts have looked at: (1) the extent to which the YG has been implemented by EU member states and (2) the extent to which implementation has led to the achievement of scheme goals.

In regards to the first criterion (extent of YG implementation), all member states have been active in setting up various measures, including: (1) education and training for employment, (2) school dropout measures, (3) labour market intermediation, and (4) labour market policy reforms that impact labour demand.¹² In terms of education and training for employment, all member states have planned such initiatives with a focus on providing traineeships and apprenticeships. Measures to reduce school dropout and enhance school completion rates have also been part of member states' implementation plans. This has been particularly important for member states which have a high presence of vulnerable groups lacking in basic skills due to early school leaving. Some states have had a challenging time implementing such measures due to the fact that such youth can be difficult to reach and supporting them requires significant changes to the country's educational system.¹³ Additionally, all member states have planned to include intermediation services to support job searches primarily by strengthening their Public Employment Services (PES) (e.g., review of PES activities, make changes to PES staff, focus resources to the quick and efficient implementation of the YG).¹⁴ Finally, most member states have started to make changes

⁹ EU Commission, *Frequently Asked Questions about the Youth Guarantee*.

¹⁰ EU Commission, *Frequently Asked Questions about the Youth Guarantee*.

¹¹ EU-Level Support for the Implementation of the youth Guarantee.

¹² V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, 'The European Youth Guarantee', p. 1.

¹³ V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, 'The European Youth Guarantee', p. 1.

¹⁴ V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, 'The European Youth Guarantee', p. 15.

to labour market policy, primarily by boosting labour demand through incentives.

Other criteria that have been used to evaluate the implementation progress of the YG involve how much member states have handled three factors: (1) development of institutional frameworks, (2) efficient resource allocation, and (3) the presence of mechanisms that make sure that YG beneficiaries comply with their obligations. Evaluation data indicate that most member states have created institutional frameworks and paid particular focus on modernising their PES structures. However, there has been less success in making sure that stakeholders such as trade unions and employer representatives are involved in the implementation of the YG. In terms of efficient resource allocation, there have been great variations, with some countries allocating more funds to the YG than recommended and planned (e.g., Hungary, Ireland) and others significantly less than recommended (Belgium, Italy, Latvia, Poland). Finally, most of the member states have applied commitment compliance rules for YG beneficiaries.¹⁵

Monitoring and evaluation of the YG up to date suggest mixed impacts of the scheme implementation. The EU Commission reports that 5 million young people have entered the Youth Guarantee each year since its launch in January 2014.¹⁶ Five years after the implementation of the Guarantee, there are nearly 2 million fewer unemployed youth in the EU and 1 million fewer young people who are in the NEET category.¹⁷ Overall, this has led to a drop in the EU youth unemployment from 23.7 percent in 2013 to 18.7 percent in 2016.¹⁸ Importantly, while the EU reports such numbers in the context of the YG, such positive results are likely not an aftereffect solely of the YG.¹⁹

Along those lines, while some evaluation results are encouraging, they show only “some improvement in the situation of young people” across the EU.²⁰ Evaluation data for 2017 indicate that at the EU-28 aggregate level, the YG covers and reaches out to less than 40 percent of its main target group – the category of youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). This suggests that as a whole, five years into their operation, the YG schemes are still not accomplishing their main objective of reaching out all young people in a NEET situation after they leave school or become unemployed. Data further show that a little over 40 percent of the youth leaving the YG take up an offer within the designated 4-month duration of the programme. Another important consideration is the reality that “more than half of those

¹⁵ V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, ‘The European Youth Guarantee’, p. 17.

¹⁶ EU Commission, ‘The Youth Guarantee’, *Employment, social affairs and inclusion*, [website], 2018, What has been achieved so far?, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079> (accessed 10 May 2018).

¹⁷ EU Commission, ‘The Youth Guarantee’, What has been achieved so far?

¹⁸ EU Commission, What has been achieved so far?

¹⁹ M. Barslund and D. Gros, ‘Declining Youth Unemployment in Europe: The Effect of the Business Cycle or the European Youth Guarantee?’ Centre for European Policy Studies, 2017, <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/declining-youth-unemployment-europe-effect-business-cycle-or-european-youth-guarantee> (accessed 5 March 2019).

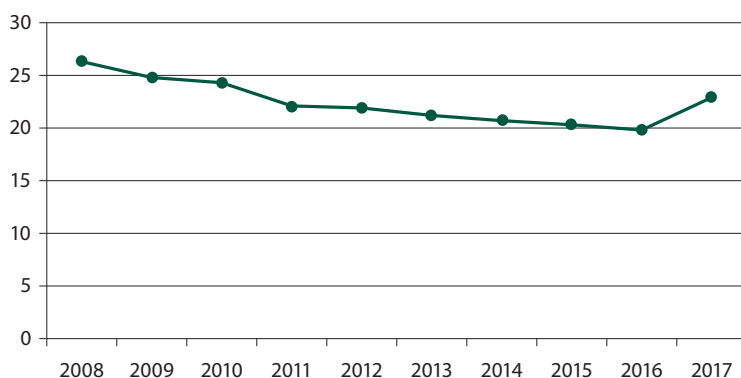
²⁰ Council of the European Union, p. 2.

passing through YG schemes are in a negative situation or unknown situation after leaving the YG.”²¹ Finally, research points out that even though most member states have established proper institutional frameworks for the implementation of the YG, members have issues with securing early intervention (in many member states, registered youth need more than 4 months to be placed in employment or training), effective enforcement of the schemes, as well as sufficient resources to follow the planned actions.²² In some states (particularly the Eastern European ones), initiatives are still in development and the number of executed measures is still not high. What accounts for such slower development (e.g., in Romania and Slovakia) is the limited capacity of the PES system, as well as the need to strengthen the relationship between major actors such as the PES, schools, social partners, and private stakeholders. Even in some EU states where youth employment measures have already been adopted (such as in France), a major challenge has been to integrate non-registered NEET youth.²³ More action and initiative are needed on the side of member states to get closer to the goals of the YG.

5. THE YOUTH GUARANTEE CONTEXT IN BULGARIA

Similar to other EU member states, Bulgaria suffered economically as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, which led to a significant increase in the country’s unemployment rate, in particular among young Bulgarians. Since the peak of the financial crisis in 2008, the youth employment rate for the main age group of the YG (15-24) has been declining, whereas the unemployment rate of this group has been increasing until 2013 and since then the unemployment rate started declining (see Figures 3 and 4 below). Simultaneously, the NEET rate for the main target group of the YG has been increasing since 2008 and in 2017 the rate started becoming smaller than that for 2008 (refer to Figure 5 below).

FIGURE 3. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT RATE IN % (AGE GROUP 15-24, 2008 – 2017)



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

whereas the unemployment rate of this group has been increasing until 2013 and since then the unemployment rate started declining (see Figures 3 and 4 below). Simultaneously, the NEET rate for the main target group of the YG has been increasing since 2008 and in 2017 the rate started becoming smaller than that for 2008 (refer to Figure 5 below).

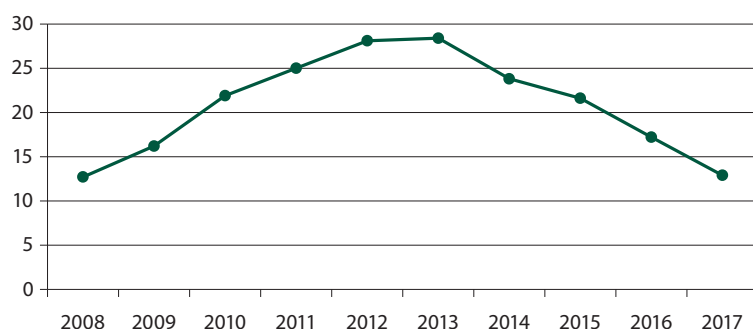
The groups that were most severely affected by the crisis were the age groups between 25-34 and 35-44 for which the unemployment rate when economic recovery started (2013) was 15.3

²¹ Council of the European Union, p. 9.

²² V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, ‘The European Youth Guarantee’, p. 19.

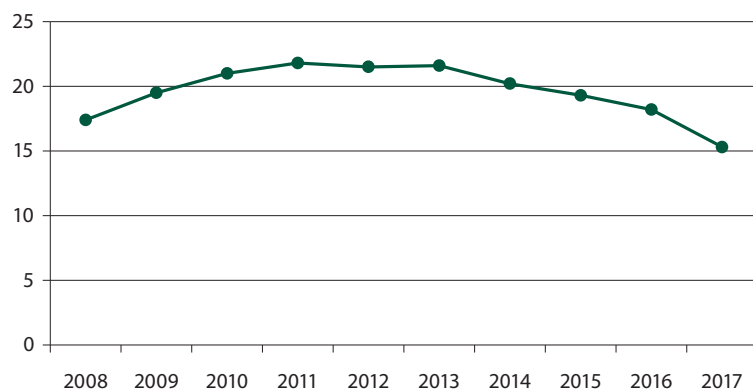
²³ V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, ‘The European Youth Guarantee’, p. 20.

**FIGURE 4. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN %, BULGARIA
(AGE GROUP 15-24, 2008 – 2017)**



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

FIGURE 5. BULGARIA NEET RATE IN % (AGES 15-24), 2008 – 2017



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

percent and nearly 10 percent respectively.²⁴ Immediately before the implementation of the YG, the unemployment coefficient of Bulgarian nationals between 15-24 was the highest (nearly 30 percent) in comparison to all other groups at employable age.²⁵ Apart from the general economic picture of an economy recovering from a recent crisis, other reasons contextualised the need for the YG scheme in Bulgaria, including many young people's low education status leading to low professional qualifications. Such factors, accompanied by an overall insecure economic environment contributed to youth unemployment. However, in addition to these factors, other structural reasons included the lack of professional experience, key skills and work habits, the premature abandonment of school, as well as the loss of motivation to work as a result of ongoing unemployment.²⁶ It is in the context of such dynamics that the Bulgarian government prepared and implemented the European YG.

6. YOUTH GUARANTEE MEASURES IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria submitted its YG plan to the EU Commission in December 2013 and since January 2014 has been receiving support for scheme implementation through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Social Fund (ESF), as well as national government funds. The national plan determined that the following goals would be met by Bulgaria between 2014 – 2020: (1) a decline of the unemployment rate

²⁴ National Plan for the Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014 – 2020 (Sofia, BG) s1.

²⁵ National Plan s1.

²⁶ National Plan s1.

among youth aged 15-24 to 27.2 percent; (2) a decline of the relative ratio of youth aged 15-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) to 20.5 percent; (3) a 50-percent increase of the relative ratio of registered unemployed youth (aged 15-24) who are included in training or employment out of the entire number of registered unemployed youth. Relevant to this project, the national plan envisions measures to encourage the use of the YG among Roma youth, thus presenting Roma youth NEETs as one target group of the scheme.

Since it implemented the Youth Guarantee in 2014, Bulgaria has conducted reforms outlined in its national plan. For example, PES offices have started offering specific services including:²⁷ registration of young people in the YG scheme, career advising and guidance, career guidance for young people who are still in school, face-to-face employment counselling, presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.), provision of automated matching tools (tools which can match candidates online to specific jobs corresponding to their profile), pre-selection of young candidates for employers, individual action planning.

In addition to these services PES offices in Bulgaria have offered some Active Labour Market Policies in the context of the YG,²⁸ including: training (work experience, work trials, institutional training, workplace training, alternative training and special support for apprenticeships), employment incentives (recruitment, employment maintenance incentives, mobility/relocation allowance, job rotation, job sharing), sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation, direct job creation, start-up incentives.

The Bulgarian plan foresaw an incremental approach of YG implementation. The initial focus of the initiative was to fund the training and employability of youth below 24 years of age who had registered with local PES offices and who had left the educational system prematurely. Following this group, the Bulgarian plan foresaw support for unemployed youth with university and high-school education to support their start of a first job. For youth with high-school education, the plan offered professional training. Another priority group in the plan was also youth not in education, employment or training (NEETs) who would be approached through the support of the Ministry of Education and Science, employment mediators, Roma mediators and NGOs working in the sphere of Roma integration. According to the YG plan, Bulgarian youth registered with the Public Employment Service (PES) should receive a job offer by the end of the fourth month after their PES registration. Each registered person would receive an individual action plan which would determine the registrant's profile. Based on the profile, the registrant would receive a good-quality job offer, an offer for traineeship, apprenticeship or continued education. According to the national plan, for NEET youth who are not registered with PES, the Ministry of Education and Science provides information to PES offices and other relevant organisations

²⁷ EU Commission, 'Report on PES Implementation of the Youth Guarantee,' 2016, ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18901&langId=en (accessed 11 July 2018).

²⁸ EU Commission, 'Report on PES Implementation', p. 28.

will be informing these youth individually about PES services and the opportunities offered by the YG.

7. YOUTH GUARANTEE IN BULGARIA AS PARTNERSHIP-BASED

As outlined by the Council recommendations on the Youth Guarantee, Bulgaria planned to take a partnership approach to implementing the scheme. The Bulgarian plan includes a number of institutions in the execution of the initiative,²⁹ including the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education and Science, labour and municipal associations and others (for the full list of the participating institutions, refer to Table 3 in Annex 1 of the Appendix section). At the local level, coordination of the YG happens through partnership between local PES offices, municipalities and, in some locations, institutions such as social services and NGOs.

The plan aimed to set up a coordinating council which would coordinate and monitor the progress of implementation. The council is presided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Apart from members of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the council is also comprised of members of other ministries, representatives of employer and employee organisations, as well as members of youth organisations and the National Association of Municipalities. The National Employment Agency has been taking leadership in cooperation with organisational partners and is the main actor responsible for connecting employers to unemployed youth and encouraging these youth to register for the YG. The coordinating council is not a consultative organ, but has responsibility over the practical implementation and monitoring of the YG. Presiding the council is the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The council meets at least twice a year, but at times more frequently. There are no publicly available reports of the meetings of the council nor regular publically-available reporting on its work. Decision-making in the council is made according to common agreement and in the cases when such cannot be reached, the majority principle is followed. According to the council's statute book, the council is to be comprised of representatives of some of the main YG implementing institutions³⁰ as outlined in the YG implementation plan.

Importantly, some sources report³¹ that representatives of NGOs dealing with ethnic minority issues are currently missing from this council as are members of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Matters (Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria).

²⁹ *National Plan s2.*

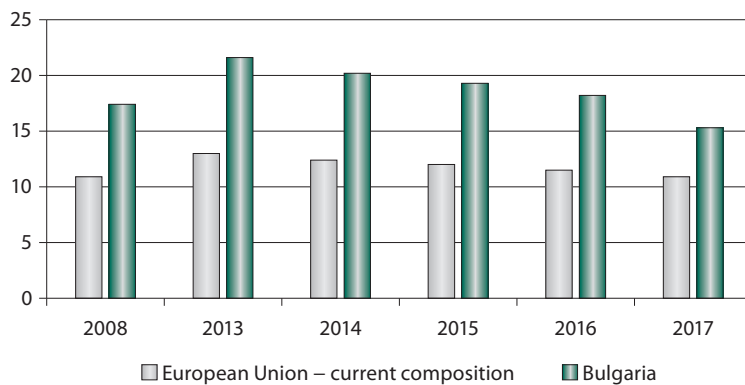
³⁰ Currently, the YG coordination council consists of members of the following partner groups: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Regional Development, Labour Confederation "Podkrepa," Confederation of independent syndicates, Association of Industry Capital in Bulgaria, Confederation of Employers in Bulgaria, Bulgarian Trade Association, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, National Youth Forum, National Employment Agency (<https://www.bia-bg.com/advocacy/view/21455/>).

³¹ *Ibid.*

8. YOUTH GUARANTEE IMPACTS IN BULGARIA

In designing the National Plan for Implementation of the YG, the responsible actors set a number of indicators for evaluation of the initiatives. We tracked down these indicators and what the YG implementing authorities report on them in their reports since the implementation of the YG. At the EU level, there are several indicators for YG monitoring and evaluation. The primary indicator is the aggregate NEET rate among youth aged 15-24 (i.e., the people not in employment, education, and training). Eurostat data indicate that since the implementation of the YG, Bulgaria's NEET rate has been on the decline, but still higher than the aggregate NEET rate for the EU (see Figure 6 below). Indeed, compared to other EU members, Bulgaria has one of the largest and most disadvantaged NEET youth populations.³²

FIGURE 6. NEET RATES (% POPULATION, 15-24)



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

At the EU level, there are several indicators of YG impact. The main indicator is the NEET rate.³³ Another indicator taking a more detailed look at the main indicators is the NEET rate by labour market status. This supplementary indicator looks at the relative weights of unemployed (they can be actively looking for employment) and inactive youth (they are not looking for work, education or training). As demonstrated by Figure 7, the rate of inactive NEETs in Bulgaria has been significantly greater than the rate of unemployed NEETs. This raises the issue in Bulgaria

of an ongoing need for the YG to reach out to inactive youth with the goal to activate them.

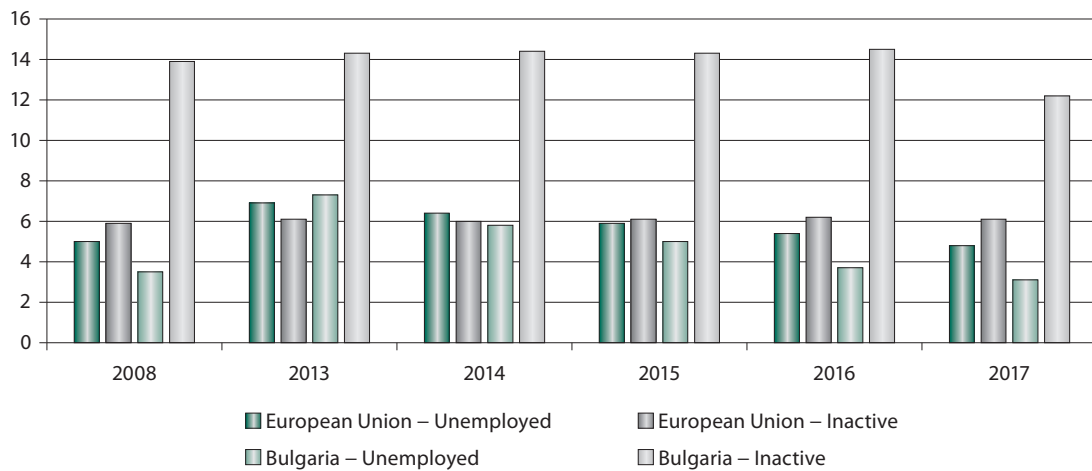
A second supplementary indicator to evaluate the YG is the proportion of unemployed youth not in education or training. The results for this indicator in Bulgaria demonstrate a declining trend, especially for 2016 and 2017, but still a rate higher than the average for the EU (see Figure 8).

Apart from these EU-level indicators, the National Plan for the Implementation of the YG in Bulgaria outlines input indicators as evaluation and

³² L. L. Anghel and J. McGrath, 'Implementation of the Youth Guarantee by the Public Employment Services', 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9295&furtherNews=yes> (accessed 14 February, 2019).

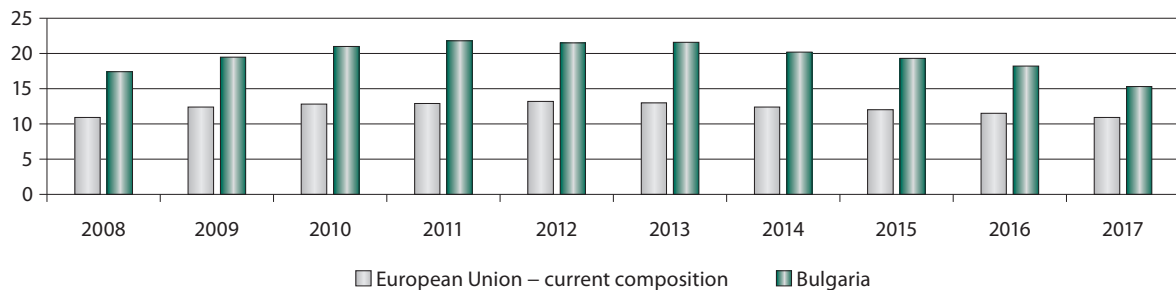
³³ There are two types of supplementary indicators: (1) those giving more detailed information on the labour market situation of young people (e.g., NEET rate by labour market status, employment rate of youth aged 15-24, youth unemployment rate 15-24) and (2) those measuring long-term consequences of implementing the YG on attaining education and labour (e.g., proportion of people with low educational attainment 20-29, proportion of early leavers from education and training 18-24, etc.) (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14725&langId=en>)

FIGURE 7. NEET RATE BY LABOUR MARKET STATUS (% POPULATION, 15-24)



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

FIGURE 8. PROPORTION OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH NOT IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING, BULGARIA (% 15-24)



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey.

monitoring indicators. For instance, in terms of the number of NEET youth between 15-24, one of the main monitoring indicators, the overall situation in Bulgaria seems to be improving, with 149,000 NEET youth in 2014 down to 99,000 NEET youth in 2017.³⁴ Similarly, according to another indicator – the number of unemployed youth up to 29 registered with PES – statistics have gone down from 64,122 in 2014 to 33,600 in 2017. More on additional indicators can be seen in Table 9 in the Appendix section.

Although such data suggest that initiatives have been implemented to meet the goals of the YG with some success, the existing data do not provide a detailed enough picture on how successful the YG imple-

³⁴ It is important to note, though, as fieldwork suggested, that demographic processes could be implicated in these numbers. Migration processes could account for a decrease in the number of NEET youth as these youth may be leaving Bulgaria to live and work abroad.

mentation process has been. While these data give a sense of initiative implementation, the existing data are mainly descriptive, oftentimes not exhaustive enough to support statements about the quality of YG implementation in Bulgaria. Furthermore, while the majority of the indicators outlined present some positive changes in youth unemployment in the context of the YG schemes, it cannot be claimed that these changes are solely due to the YG, not necessarily proving the YG effectiveness.³⁵ It is feasible that demographic trends (NEET youth leaving the country to work abroad), educational reforms and economic recovery processes may interact with these figures, making decreasing NEET rates not a direct contributor to YG effectiveness.

Additionally, EU Council³⁶ data demonstrate that despite the presence of early intervention efforts to prevent school dropout (one of the YG measures), early-school leaves are still an issue and there is a mismatch between the education system and the needs of the labour market. There are remaining issues with securing a positive situation for youth who leave the YG.³⁷

Importantly, Bulgaria still has the task to achieve positive outcomes in a main indicator for YG monitoring – the NEET rate for youth between 15-24. In that regard, even though the country's NEET rate dropped between 2015 and 2016, with its 2017 NEET rate of 15.3 percent, the country remains lagging behind the EU-28 aggregate NEET level of 10.9 percent.³⁸ For 2016, out of all the youth included in the NEET category, only 11.9 percent of the NEET population was covered by the YG which is below the EU average of 42.5 percent, but lower than the same number for Bulgaria for 2014 (19.3 percent). As the Council of EU evaluation report argues, this NEET number covers only inactive youth registered as unemployed with the National Employment Agency, leaving out about 80 percent of NEETs out of the scope of the YG. The decline in the NEET coverage numbers from 2014 (from 42,700 in 2014 to 25,000 in 2016) can signify a lack of success in reaching inactive NEETs the numbers of whom have not dropped significantly between 2014 and 2016 (from 106,000 to 97,800).³⁹ YG coverage also differs for NEET youth of different ages, with NEETs between 20-24 (14.8 percent) and 25-29 (17.3 percent) being covered more than those aged 15-19 (6 percent),⁴⁰ indicating that registration with PES associates to higher rates of YG participation and that a major challenge in decreasing the number of NEETs is that many NEETs are not registered with PES offices.

³⁵ M. Barslund and D. Gros, 'Declining youth unemployment in Europe: The effect of the business cycle or the European Youth Guarantee?' Centre for European Policy Studies, 2017, <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/declining-youth-unemployment-europe-effect-business-cycle-or-european-youth-guarantee> (accessed June 21 2019).

³⁶ Council of the European Union, 'Investing in Youth Employment: Implementation of the Youth Guarantee', *Consilium Europe*, 2018, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6149-2018-ADD-4/en/pdf> (accessed 10 May 2018).

³⁷ Council of the European Union, 'Investing in Youth Employment', p. 2.

³⁸ Council of the European Union, p. 4.

³⁹ Council of the European Union, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Council of the European Union, p. 7.

Finally, when it comes to the financial performance of the YG, further steps towards fulfilling the financial capacities of the YG could be taken. Recent Ministry of Labour and Social Policy data on the actual YG spending suggest that certain funds (e.g., the Youth Employment Initiative funds) negotiated for various YG measures could be spent more fully and reach out to more beneficiaries. This can be seen in the the existing discrepancy between the negotiated financial resources for various YG measures and the funds actually spent for these measures. For instance, for some of the main schemes within the YG, the percentage of verified expenses has not exceeded 60 percent of the negotiated and for others the verified expenses have been less than 20 percent (see Table 1 below).

TABLE 1. YG VERIFIED FUNDS RELATIVE TO THE NEGOTIATED FUNDS FOR THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (YEI)

YG Scheme (Name)	Negotiated funds allocated through the Youth Employment Initiative (in BG leva)	Verified expenses (in BG leva)				Total verified expenses (in BG leva)	Percentage of verified expenses out of negotiated funds
		2014 & 2015	2016	2017	2018		
BG05M9OP001-1.001 (Youth employment)	74,513,400.01	0.00	18,436,940.89	21,052,123.52	12,912,391.77	52,401,456.18	67.46
BG05M9OP001-1.002 (Active)	25,010,852.19	0.00	696,812.07	8,599,243.38	5,480,234.44	14,776,289.89	59.08
BG05M9OP001-1.005 (Training and employment of youth)	116,954,936.00	0.00	21,354,480.11	17,329,164.38	305,565,458.04	69,240,102.53	59.20
BG05M9OP001-1.017 (Ready for work)	8,000,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,054,780.83	1,054,780.83	13.18

Source: Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2018.

II. THE YOUTH GUARANTEE AND ROMA YOUTH IN BULGARIA

Across Europe, in different respects, the situation of Roma is more challenging than that of non-Roma. In the area of education, almost twice as many Roma at the age of 16 (56 percent) left school compared to non-Roma living nearby who left school at the same age (29 percent).⁴¹ On average, 17 percent of Roma across 11 EU member states⁴² never went to school (versus 2 percent of non-Roma living nearby).⁴³ Across these 11 EU member states, 87 percent of Roma are at risk of poverty versus 46 percent of non-Roma living nearby who are at such a risk.

One of the priorities and focuses of Bulgaria's YG national plan is the encouragement of participation of particularly vulnerable youth in the NEET situation, such as Roma.⁴⁴ The overall employment situation of Roma in Bulgaria needs improvement. According to Bulgaria's National Roma Integration Plan, Roma people have been historically at labour disadvantage because of structural changes that have been taking place in Bulgaria, including changes in the country's macroeconomy after the end of communism, leading to persistent high unemployment and low-income jobs among Roma.⁴⁵ Experts in the area of Roma education also claim that despite the increasing number of policy documents on Roma integration, the overall conditions of Roma have been deteriorating.⁴⁶ The latest 2011 Bulgarian census reported that there are marked differences in the employment and unemployment rates between the three major ethnic groups in Bulgaria.⁴⁷ For 2011, 19.4 percent of all Roma were employed versus 33.7 percent people of Turkish origin and 46.9 percent ethnic Bulgarians.⁴⁸ For 2011, 19.3 percent of the ethnic Roma were unemployed versus 11.7 percent of ethnic Turks and 6.6 percent of ethnic Bulgarians.⁴⁹

⁴¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Survey data explorer – Results from the 2011 Roma survey', 2011, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-results-2011-roma-survey> (accessed 9 July 2018).

⁴² The eleven member states included in the 2011 household survey by the Fundamental Rights Agency are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.

⁴³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Survey data explorer – Results from the 2011 Roma survey'.

⁴⁴ V. Escudero and E. L. Mourelo, 'The European Youth Guarantee', p. 19.

⁴⁵ *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 – 2020)* (BG) s1.

⁴⁶ Roma Education Fund, 'Advancing the Education of Roma in Bulgaria REF Country Assessment – 2015', 2015, https://www.romaeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/bg_country_assessment_2015_web.pdf (accessed 11 May 2018).

⁴⁷ National Statistical Institute, 'Population, Book 3, Economic Characteristics of the Population', *Census Questionnaire for Buildings, Dwellings and Population in 2011*, 2011, <http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/pagebg2.php?p2=175&sp2=218> 9 (accessed 22 May 2018).

⁴⁸ National Statistical Institute, 'Population, Book 3, Economic Characteristics same', p. 56.

⁴⁹ National Statistical Institute, p. 56.

Among the Roma population, economically inactive are three fifths (60 percent) of the Roma above 15 years of age.⁵⁰ Such statistics also coincide with a low share (4.4 percent) of all Roma youth who continue their education after the age of 15.⁵¹ Reasons for such trends are usually the lower education status and insufficient qualification profile of Roma youth which make them less competitive on the job market for well-paid employment. Research also shows that even though the number of Roma who have never attended school seems to have been on the decline lately, Roma are still more likely than other ethnicities to drop out of school,⁵² have low literacy rates, or not attend early education programmes.⁵³ The 2011 census also indicates that in terms of university education acquisition, 23 percent of ethnic Bulgarians have received such education, versus 5 percent of ethnic Turks and only 0.3 percent of ethnic Romas.⁵⁴ Among ethnic Bulgarians, 47.5 percent have secondary education versus 26 percent of ethnic Turks and 6.8 percent of ethnic Romas (for primary education, the numbers are: 20 percent of ethnic Bulgarians, 43 percent of ethnic Turks and 35.3 percent of ethnic Roma).⁵⁵ In 2011, 0.4 percent of ethnic Bulgarians never attended school versus 3.6 percent of ethnic Turks and 9.4 percent of ethnic Romas.⁵⁶ According to a 2017 civil society report monitoring the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the Integration of Roma, around 90 percent of Roma above 18 have only primary or lower education.⁵⁷ According to academic experts on Roma in Bulgaria, 42 percent of Roma are functionally or totally illiterate.⁵⁸

Data provided by the National Employment Agency on the percentage of unemployed youth by 32 reveal that compared to ethnic Bulgarians and ethnic Turks, Roma with lower education, such as elementary or no education, tend to be more unemployed (see Table 2 below).

⁵⁰ *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 – 2020)* (BG) s2.

⁵¹ *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 – 2020)* (BG) s2.

⁵² Open Society Institute, 'Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma, Volume 1', 2007, https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/2roma_20070329_0.pdf (accessed 11 May 2018).

⁵³ D. Berman, 'BULGARIA: Does making early education free benefit disadvantaged children?', *From Evidence to Policy*, 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/223521522180987329/pdf/124657-BRI-PUBLIC-EPBulgaria.pdf> (accessed 11 May 2018).

⁵⁴ National Statistical Institute, 'Population, Book 2, Demographic and Social Characteristics', *Census Questionnaire for Buildings, Dwellings and Population in 2011*, 2011, <http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/pagebg2.php?p2=175&sp2=218> (accessed 22 May 2018).

⁵⁵ National Statistical Institute, 'Population, Book 2, Demographic and Social, p. 2-11.

⁵⁶ National Statistical Institute, p. 2-11.

⁵⁷ Center for Multiethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe, World Without Borders, "Indy-Roma" Foundation, Roma Academy for Culture and Education, & "Gender Alternatives" Foundation, 'Civil Society Monitoring Report about the Implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the Integration of Roma', *European Commission Justice and Consumers*, 2018, <http://amalipe.com/files/publications/2017-C1-Bulgaria-local-electronic.pdf> (accessed 28 June 2019).

⁵⁸ N. Tsekov, 'Roma and School', *Deutsche Welle*, 24 September 2013, <https://www.dw.com/bg/%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%B8-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%89%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE/a-17109467> (accessed 28 June 2019).

TABLE 2. EDUCATION LEVEL AND ETHNIC GROUP AFFILIATION OF INDIVIDUALS UP TO 32 REGISTERED FOR PES SERVICES, 2014 – 2017

Level of Education/ Ethnicity	Armenian	Bulgarian	Vlah	Greek	Jewish	Roma	Romanian	Russian	Turkish	Ukrainian	Other
Without education	0.79%	1.23%	6.41%	NA	NA	7.18%	2.36%	5.21%	2.81%	1.11%	1.74%
University education	4.76%	5.25%	1.28%	4.87%	NA	0.33%	NA	2.78%	3.65%	4.44%	4.36%
Elementary education	0.79%	0.82%	4.7%	NA	NA	4.59%	NA	0.69%	1.43%	NA	1.05%
Primary education	NA	2.67%	13.24%	2.43%	NA	5.55%	3.15%	3.82%	5.56%	NA	3.83%
Some college education	NA	0.003%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.17%
Professional college	NA	0.009%	NA	NA	NA	0.007%	NA	0.35%	0.02%	NA	NA
Professional qualification	2.38%	1.82%	5.98%	2.43%	NA	2.71%	1.57%	0.69%	2.82%	NA	1.92%
Secondary education	5.56%	8.86%	7.26%	4.87%	NA	2.9%	0.79%	4.17%	9.24%	5.56%	8.19%
Not specified by respondent	85.71%	79.32%	61.11%	85.37%	100%	76.73%	92.12%	82.29%	74.48%	88.89%	78.75%

Note: The data reported in this table are provided upon request by the Center for the Study of Democracy. The accuracy of these calculations may not be complete as a great number of the entries in the education level category were left blank by respondents or entered responses did not refer to level of education.

Source: Bulgarian National Employment Agency, 2018.

Complicating such trends is the reality that Roma housewives make up a great part of the share of inactive Roma – 36.5 percent⁵⁹ – as well as the fact that Roma population is the youngest population in Bulgaria (Roma under 30 are 57.33 percent of the total number of people who identified as Roma compared to 28.11 percent of ethnic Bulgarians of the same age).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 – 2020)* (BG) s2. It is important to note that according to experts the research team interviewed in a local PES office, in some places PES works with information centers providing package instruments for social services for children and their families. Such packages offer kindergarten care for young children as a way to open times for Roma mothers to work. The official who shared about the presence of such opportunities also indicated that in their specific office, no single Roma mother of young children had taken advantage of this opportunity. Relatedly, in some regions (e.g., in Smolyan), fieldwork data revealed that there are no such opportunities present for Roma women, thus impeding them from seeking work opportunities.

⁶⁰ I. Tomova, E. Benedetti, A. Piacquadio, A. Leu and M. Frankovic, *Analyses of the Situation of Roma in the Four Countries with Emphasis on Chosen Localities*, Maribor, Slovenia, ISCOMET Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, 2013, p. 29. Available from: <http://www.iscomet.org/images/documents/Publikacije/Redupre-Publication.pdf>, (accessed 22 May 2018). As of the publication date of this report, the web link to this source is no longer available.

Due to such trends among the Roma population and particularly among Roma youth, targeting Roma youth has been an essential aspect of the YG scheme. In this regard, the Bulgarian plan has envisioned some direct and informal outreach to Roma communities so that Roma youth can be informed about the YG. The plan envisions the special presence of mediators, psychologists and case managers who are offering Roma youth services to encourage activation.⁶¹ The people who take these roles work with Roma communities and individual Roma youths, as well as organise informal group gatherings with members of local PES offices.

1. YOUTH GUARANTEE INDICATORS PERTAINING TO ROMA IN BULGARIA

Although the National Plan for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria envisions Roma youth as one target group, it does not outline specific Roma-related indicators to measure impact. In this sense, the NEET rate among Roma youth can be viewed as a measure that may provide some sense of current YG outreach to this specific group. Indeed, recent research indicates that Roma youth are among the NEET youth groups in Bulgaria who are the most difficult to activate and motivate.⁶² In 2014, the NEET share of Roma between 16 and 24 was 61 percent, compared to 22 percent of non-Roma youth in the same category.⁶³ For 2017, the NEET rate among Roma youth still remained high – 65 percent.^{64,65} Among the Roma youth in Bulgaria who are in the NEET category, the percentage of females is higher than that of males (54 percent versus 46 percent) – a trend similar across the EU when it comes to gender differences among Roma NEETs.⁶⁶

⁶¹ The YG national plan envisions the presence of youth labour mediators and Roma labour mediators, both of whom have the function to support the activation of inactive youth. Youth labour mediators are typically situated in municipalities and they support NEET youth who come to their office looking for work by directing them to the local PES office. They may or may not be of Roma ethnic background. Roma labour mediators have the specific task to do fieldwork in the Roma community and establish informal contact with Roma NEET youth in these communities. Through this contact, the Roma labour mediator encourages such Roma youth to register with the PES office and use the YG. Roma labour mediators are of Roma ethnicity. When a NEET youth registers with PES to benefit from YG measures, psychologists and case managers working at the PES office are assigned to individual registrants to identify the needs of the specific youth and create an individual action plan for the youth.

⁶² L. L. Anghel and J. McGrath, 'Implementation of the Youth Guarantee by the Public Employment Services', 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9295&furtherNews=yes> (accessed 14 February, 2019).

⁶³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Poverty and Employment: The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States, 2014', https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-roma-survey-employment_en.pdf (accessed 10 May 2018).

⁶⁴ European Commission, 'Youth Guarantee Country by Country Bulgaria 2018', 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13631&langId=en> (accessed 13 February, 2018).

⁶⁵ Note: There is restricted comparability between the definition of NEET as reported by the EU Commission and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The latter uses the ILO definition (NEET = "not involved in any training or education in the four weeks preceding the survey") and the former captures "young people not in employment and not in education and training for a particular year." Thus, NEET numbers may not provide the best comparison. Here, they are used due to insufficient data on comparable Roma NEET rates.

⁶⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Poverty and employment', p. 21.

The high NEET rate among Roma youth in Bulgaria coincides with a trend among some Roma youth to drop out of the education system – a process making their activation for employment even more difficult. In 2011, with the publication of the results of the latest Bulgarian census, a category was established of people “who never attended school” and the 23.2 percent of the Roma children between 7-15 of age in 2011 who had never attended school became part of this category. Only for 2014, the share of Roma youth between 18-24 of age who left school prematurely was between 82-85 percent,⁶⁷ becoming accountable for the high NEET rate of young Roma in the country. A main challenge for the institutions responsible for the implementation of the YG in Bulgaria as one of the EU countries with strong Roma presence is to find ways to activate low-skilled Roma lacking education or transitioning from school to work.⁶⁸ Such practical necessities also call for a deeper understanding of the YG implementation and Roma youth dynamics in Bulgaria.

2. NEED FOR MORE DATA ON YG UPTAKE AMONG ROMA IN BULGARIA

Existing monitoring and evaluation data on the YG in Bulgaria provide clarity about the general situation of scheme implementation and allow policymakers and implementing institutions to see where resources and future efforts can be directed for efficient scheme functioning. However, when it comes to the YG and how it affects Roma youth – one of the groups in Bulgaria with the highest need of employment, financial, human, and networking support – we discovered the need for more data. Indeed, one of the main findings of both the desk and the fieldwork research is that there is insufficient data on the uptake and impacts of the YG by Roma youth, as well as lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the YG impacts and uptake among Roma youth. Although the Bulgarian Employment Agency and the EU Council publish annual reports on the overall uptake of the YG scheme among eligible youth, substantive details about the outreach of the scheme specifically to Roma youth need answers. Apart from certain statistical indicators (such as the NEET rate among Roma youth in Bulgaria, the rate of registered Roma youth by the PES offices, the ratio between unemployed male and female Roma youth), much of the data occurring in regards to Bulgarian Roma youth in the context of the YG cannot be deduced fully for the Bulgarian context. Even though official Eurostat data provide insights into the decomposition of young NEETs in Bulgaria according to indicators such as age, gender, and educational level, ethnicity does not figure as an indicator, raising the question of the need for more ethnically-relevant YG targeting and YG monitoring and evaluation reflecting such targeting. In the context of this research, we received access to data about the employment and unemployment dynamics among Roma youth, as well as the NEET rate among this group. Still, we could not locate comprehensive

⁶⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Council of the European Union, p. 4.

data specifically reporting on the uptake and the qualitative impacts of the YG among Roma youth. Collected fieldwork data also revealed that implementing institutions experience difficulty in reporting such data accurately as Roma youth may be reluctant to report on their ethnicity in evaluation forms. Apart from this, fieldwork interviews in some of the research sites also revealed another data-related issue – that there is not systemic and regular monitoring in place to track down the impacts of the scheme among Roma youth after they are out of the scheme. To address such knowledge gaps in the YG uptake among Roma youth, this research addresses three main themes that emerged in the process of the desk and fieldwork research: (1) characteristics of the outreach and uptake of the YG scheme by this target group in Bulgaria, (2) good practices in the uptake of the YG by Roma youth, and (3) challenges in the uptake of the YG by this youth group.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF UPTAKE BY ROMA YOUTH IN BULGARIA

3.1. Lack of knowledge about the YG

The strategic plan for the implementation of the YG in Bulgaria suggests that Roma NEET youth are an important target group of the scheme and need to be able to use it. Contrary to this assumption, field data indicate that Roma NEET youth have little or no information about the YG and its measures. The need for more outreach among this group could contribute to more awareness about the YG. Data from the expert interviews and focus groups suggest that there are various reasons why Roma have little or no information about the measures, including: (1) that these youth do not have enough or have no interactions with the YG implementing institutions and (2) that some Roma youth may not have an interest in taking initiative to seek information that may help them find work/education in their geographical region. Instead, in certain regions (such as the Vidin, Montana, Stara Zagora, Yambol regions), Roma youth leave the region to work abroad. In other cases, they look for work in the grey economy rather than for work through the YG scheme, as undocumented work does not require taxation and is better paid than most work found through the mediatorship of the local PES office. Since they see other more viable options to make a living, Roma youth do not seek information about possibilities offered through the local PES office and the YG.

3.2. YG as valuable in the face of challenges

Even though almost none of the Roma youth that took part in the study have knowledge of the YG and are, therefore, indifferent to the impacts of the scheme, as a whole, the YG implementing institutions view it differently. Data indicate that the local Public Employment Service offices and some designated members within municipalities (specifically, youth labour mediators) appreciate the utility of the YG. These institutions view

the YG as an opportunity for Roma youth to not only receive information about potential employment and training, but to also connect youth to prospective employers, acquire experience and work habits so that they can eventually be more employable in the future. Observations from implementing institutions that took part in the field study reveal that representatives of these institutions in certain regions (e.g., Vidin, Montana) are highly committed to supporting Roma youth in experiencing the measures of the YG by Roma youth as valuable. This was due to the individual initiative and commitment of the local labour mediators, most particularly, the Roma labour mediator. For example, the Roma labour mediator in the City of Lom would drive youth from the Roma community in his personal car to the PES office so that they can register with the PES office and take advantage of the YG. Both the Roma labour mediator and the youth labour mediator in the City of Lom (the two self-identify as ethnic Roma) volunteered to take part in one of the focus groups in the area so that they could share about the benefits of the YG with Roma NEET youth. While similar committed acts could not be observed everywhere (e.g., in some locations, the youth labour mediator in the municipality, who is not of Roma ethnicity, expressed reluctance to visit the Roma community and shared negative experiences working with them), implementing institutions as a whole recognise the value of the YG more so than the target group.

This observation, however, should be taken in the context of another observation. While certain institutions view the YG as a series of highly-effective instruments to encourage youth to find employment, members of other implementing institutions/bodies consider the YG as not fulfilling its full capacity. For example, although representatives of the National Employment Agency recognise that the YG is designed to offer what is necessary for Roma youth to find employment, members of PES offices in certain locations admitted that despite its potentials, the YG is not implemented effectively enough as Roma youth lack and continue to lack information and knowledge about the scheme.

3.3. YG uptake contingent on Roma-specific needs

Although one of the main findings of the fieldwork research is that the reason for the low uptake of the YG among Roma NEET youth is due to their low level of knowledge about it, there are other reasons that complicate the scheme uptake. In some instances, these reasons impede interest and/or participation in the YG despite the ongoing efforts of implementing institutions to reach out to this target group through PES fieldwork and individual work with Roma NEET youth. These reasons relate to:

3.3.1. Education, employment and skill dynamics interacting with family dynamics and expectations about employment. Field data from expert interviews and from focus groups with Roma NEET youth reveal that compared to past decades, there is some increase in the percentage of young Roma interested in higher education and mastering professional skills for employment. Data reveal that there has

been some increase in the percentage of Roma who graduate with secondary and tertiary education over the decade between 2001 and 2011 (e.g., Roma pursuing secondary education were 9 percent in 2011 compared to 6.5 percent in 2001. Roma pursuing tertiary education were 0.5 percent in 2011 compared to 0.2 percent in 2001).⁶⁹ In expert interviews and focus groups in some locations (e.g., the City of Sofia and City of Vidin), a couple of examples of highly educated young Roma were given, suggesting that some Roma youth are making strides towards higher education and future employment. For instance, fieldwork in several sites (e.g., in the City of Sofia, City of Stara Zagora, Town of Nikolaevo, City of Lom) revealed that despite a tendency for many young Roma to view education as unimportant, some Roma youth consider education to be a door to professional success and is, therefore, needed. For instance, youth in the City of Sofia argued that education is a must if one is to become independent and achieve progress in life:

„they [Roma female youth] think about how to get married, how many children to have, where to live and they get married. Then the problems with the in-laws begin and so on and so forth. All in all, the issues in each Roma family are such. This is all you hear from every house. Because this is the life in our neighborhood [referring to the Roma neighborhood]. Nobody wants to do something different. Education is the door to everything.” (female participant, focus group)

Relatedly, in other locations (e.g., the City of Smolyan, City of Lom), some Roma youth who took part in the focus groups expressed appreciation for continuing education. However, the fieldwork also reveals that despite the presence of examples of youth pursuing education and/or being interested in it, the historically dominant trend of generally low level of education and insufficient professional skills continues to pose major obstacles to Roma youth in utilising the full potential of the YG. Instances from focus group data reveal that education and work are viewed by Roma youth and their families as unnecessary since regardless of attempts to acquire them, there is an expectation that youth would be discriminated or exploited at the workplace (e.g., City of Kyustendil). Apart from these concerns, data show that family traditions, community capsulation and family-oriented expectations, particularly in regards to women, minimise the importance given to education and work. As in some communities girls willingly become wives and mothers early on, education and subsequent employment are unimportant and these girls/women view education and work as something that they will not have to do until a later stage of their life, if at all (e.g., such was the case with young Roma women in the City of Vidin). In these instances, education and employment are viewed as duties of men. In some Roma communities, such as in the City of Smolyan, young Roma women expressed interest in working. However, these Roma women did not seek employment because of family obligations and because they had nobody to take care of their small children. In this location,

⁶⁹ National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the Integration of Roma (2012 – 2020) (Sofia, Bulgaria) s2.

there were no programmes or measures in place that could subsidize child care.⁷⁰

Alongside family dynamics which influence the employment and education status of certain Roma youth, unrealistic expectations about employment also stop Roma youth from taking advantage of what the YG offers. Officials from YG implementing institutions and employers reveal that at times Roma youth may have high expectations about salary amounts while not being able to offer high-quality labour due to insufficient education and professional qualifications, and/or lack of desire to increase qualifications. For example, in some locations, youth labour mediators and Roma mediators who would guide youth to positions sponsored through the YG would either receive refusal from the youth due to the low pay for the positions or would be unable to help the youth be hired due to their lack of qualifications for the specific job. Here is what one youth labour mediator shared about her work with youth (Roma youth included):

“In my work until now, I have met youth with a varying degree of education. The predominant part of these youth have primary or secondary education. The peculiarities and characteristics of this group are that these young people are discouraged [to work] because payment is low or education and experience are required, which these youth do not have... Another characteristic is the low degree of education, the extremely high payment expectations of youth, some of whom are not interested in finding work, especially when they have somebody to support them financially and they do not need to work. Others are demotivated because of low payment” (youth labour mediator)

Furthermore, data also reveal that youth and employers have differing expectations about major employment specifics – with youth expecting work and payment conditions divergent from those of employers⁷¹ (e.g., in terms of the amount of pay, working hours, working rules).

3.3.2. YG in the context of Roma youth migration. In some communities where we collected field data, the uptake of the YG is impacted by intensive migration processes. This has particularly been the case in some of the poorest regions in Bulgaria, such as Vidin (the City of Vidin) and Montana (the City of Lom). Migration in these locations has significantly impacted the economy of the regions, leaving little qualified labour and few businesses interested in investing in these locations. Roma youth in these regions choose to leave the regions looking for work abroad as they see employment abroad as a more viable option than working in the region for low pay and, at times, unfavorable conditions. As Roma community members in the City of Vidin commented, young Roma are interested in working

⁷⁰ Note that in other locations, such as in the City of Sofia, an expert from a PES office indicated that there were such measures in place, but not associated with the YG and provided through other organisations. Despite the presence of such subsidies, though, at least for this sub-region within the City of Sofia, no registered Roma woman with small children applied for subsidies.

⁷¹ The businesses included in the fieldwork are mainly small businesses as well as established local companies. Large firms with nation-wide or world-wide reach were not included in the fieldwork.

abroad because of the higher pay and because employers abroad are more likely to treat them in non-discriminatory ways. In this sense, the data revealed that fears and expectations of discrimination and exploitation by Bulgarian employers are obstacles for Roma youth to seek employment in Bulgaria. This lack of interest to be employed in Bulgaria, but abroad, explains why Roma youth are not seeking information about YG-related measures and why even if they knew about such measures, a number of them might still give priority to realising their employment potential abroad.

3.4. Little NGO involvement in YG measures

The National Plan for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria envisions the involvement of the NGO sector, and more specifically Roma NGOs. In this regard, the data reveal that the reality of Roma and Roma-related NGO engagement in the implementation of the YG as a whole does not meet the national plan. Roma and Roma-related NGOs are not only uninvolved in the processes related to the YG as a whole, but the majority of NGOs which we interviewed do not know anything or know little about the YG. Thus, this research itself became an opportunity for some NGO organisations to learn about the YG and start planning on how they can take the initiative to become involved in some way in the future.

In regard to a couple of organisations, though, fieldwork revealed that they had heard of the YG in some ways, but as expressed by one NGO leader, did not have interest being involved in it as they did not see the measures as practical enough for the local realities regarding Roma. This NGO leader explained that his organisation had some interest in being involved in some of the measures shared, but eventually he gave up on this intention as he did not see that the design of the YG reflected local realities effectively. Knowing his community, this NGO leader explained that some Roma youth eligible for these measures leave them prematurely as they leave the country.

Another issue this NGO leader mentioned was his observation that many Roma youth seem to lack interest in the measures because involvement in them would entail these youth to give up the social benefits that they receive from the government (i.e., PES registration and the possibility to find employment is tied to limiting reception of social benefits). Importantly, although most of the NGOs in the study did not know about the YG or lacked interest in it, some NGO representatives are already taking steps towards collaborating and partnering with local businesses to hire Roma youth as well as taking steps to activate inactive youth (e.g., one Roma NGO in Stara Zagora). Some Roma NGOs also take their own initiative in supporting future Roma employment by supporting the social and educational needs of Roma children and youth who have dropped out of school. For instance, an NGO in the City of Vidin has built a social center in the Roma neighborhood which functions as a social service to children who left school and are on the street. Sometimes, the parents of these children, who are often school

dropouts, are indeed also users of this social center. Furthermore, this particular NGO has also been involved in social-entrepreneurial activities which aim to find such parents employment.

In other cases, such as the case of a Roma NGO in the City of Lom, the NGOs would mentor Roma NEET youth through providing professional orientation, motivating them to study and work, teaching them work-related basics (such as work ethics, work benefits, etc.). Thus, through their own efforts, Roma NGOs can play their own crucial role supporting some of the goals of the YG, while doing this separately from the parameters of the YG.

3.5. Similar YG trends across regions

Apart from examining the YG trends in the individual regions included in this study, collected data reveal that contrary to expectations, the YG uptake among Roma youth is not significantly different between regions even when the regions exhibit different economic development indicators or have different Roma population. There were a few major trends related to the YG uptake among Roma youth that were observed across regions. For example, in all the regions where data were collected, Roma youth have limited or no knowledge of the YG measures and thus rarely take advantage of them. Furthermore, in all regions, Roma youth eligible to use YG measures shared that they would not be interested in work that does not pay sufficiently. Money and high remuneration, in this sense, and not acquiring work experience or developing one's work skills, are the major motivator to seek employment. In that regard, since the positions offered through the YG are paid at rates that seem to not meet Roma youth's expectations for acceptable payment, there is less motivation to sign up for the YG and use the services of PES offices to find employment. In this context, Roma youth across regions would find what they consider to be better alternatives to the YG, including: 1) emigrating and finding work abroad, 2) finding work that is acceptable through personal networks and contacts, 3) working in the grey economy without engaging in regulated taxation or 4) preferring not to work at all as relatives from abroad sustain them financially. Relatedly, in all regions it was apparent that the uptake of the YG among Roma youth is determined by the specifics of the job market and the need for more favorable conditions of this job market locally, regionally and nationally. Although certain regions appeared at a more disadvantageous economic position (such as the Montana and Vidin regions), data indicate that in all regions there is a need for diversification of the type of labour being offered, as well as an increase in the overall payment rate for labour, particularly for low-skilled labour typically offered by Roma. Such dynamics play a strong impact on the employment expectations of Roma youth and their interest in the YG.

4. GOOD PRACTICES IN YG UPTAKE AMONG ROMA YOUTH

4.1. Resources offered to targeted NEETs

Data reveal that the YG offers various resources to tackle youth unemployment among NEET youth, Roma NEET youth included. One of the tactics that emerged as a good practice is the individualised approach of support tailored to the situation of each youth who is registered with the PES services. Typically, this approach involves career consultations combined with professional orientation by a specialised team of PES staff. Services provided to registered youth may also include workshops on how to develop CVs and present themselves in front of an employer at a job interview. The teams that specialise in providing these services to NEET youth can include a variety of members, such as case managers, psychologists, Roma labour mediators (who are ethnic Roma themselves) and in some cases youth labour mediators (in most locations, these mediators are employed by the local municipality, but they work closely with the PES team). These services are available to every registered NEET youth (not just Roma NEET youths) from the beginning of PES registration until the registrant finds placement. While there was no consistency in the presence of these staff members in each fieldwork location (for instance, some locations lacked a psychologist or a Roma labour mediator due to the lack of applicants for the position in the case of the latter), the PES office of each location relied on one or more such staff members who were accountable for the implementation of such YG measures. Furthermore, in some locations, the specialised teams are purposefully made up of youth or of Roma. However, although the young age of PES staff emerged as a good practice in some locations, in other places, Roma youth expressed the need for younger PES employees to work with them.

Relatedly, an important good practice that was identified in most fieldwork locations is the personal and informal contact that many PES offices rely on to reach out Roma youth. As data show, with some exceptions, wherever Roma labour mediators and youth labour mediators are assigned, personal contact with Roma NEET youth through fieldwork is of utmost importance in reaching out to this group. Interviewees working at PES and municipal authorities in multiple locations shared that while YG flyers, other YG print publications and social media posts about the YG contribute to informing youth about the scheme, none of these outreach and informational methods appear as impactful as personal and informal contact with Roma youth in their own communities. In this regard, of particular significance is the fieldwork contact established by Roma labour mediators who meet Roma youth in their own community. As the data in some locations suggest, the informal contact by Roma labour mediators can be a turning point in the decision to sign up for PES services and YG participation. In the City of Lom, for instance, the Roma labour mediator contact expressed through openness and friendliness with Roma youth in their communities enhances the interest of Roma youth in putting their trust in the local PES office and signing up for PES assistance. In this case, the specific approach of this Roma

labour mediator gained the trust of Roma NEET youth and their interest in PES services.

4.2. Institutional partnerships

Across fieldwork locations, a good YG practice that emerged involved institutional partnerships. In this regard, the implementing institutions in all locations fulfill the National Plan for the Implementation of the YG which outlines a partnership implementation approach. The data reveal that partnerships are not only important in that they fulfill the plan, but they are also crucial in the overall implementation of the YG. Without healthy partnerships, implementing institutions would have a difficult time or would find it impossible to implement the scheme. In this regard, a good practice present in all fieldwork locations is the tight collaboration between local municipalities and PES offices. This partnership is typically expressed through the presence of youth labour mediators at municipalities, one of the goals of whom is to connect NEET youth to the local PES office. This collaboration typically happens through communication between the youth labour mediator in municipalities and PES staff. Typically, the youth labour mediators in municipalities refer youth they work with to the PES office. So in a sense, municipal authorities may supply PES offices with clients. In some specific cases, partnership between municipalities and PES transpires in the form of mentorship support provided by one institution to the other. For instance, in the City of Lom the youth labour mediator at the municipality shared knowledge and mentored the Roma labour mediator to the task of being a labour mediator. This, however, was not established as a common practice across locations, but was present in the case of Lom because the youth labour mediator and the Roma labour mediator already knew each other at the time the latter was hired by the local PES.

In other instances, partnerships expressed in these and additional ways. For example, in other locations, additional partnerships would be established with the Agency for Social Support, which together with local PES offices offer a combined service to Roma NEET youth. In still other cases partnerships would be expressed through a joint effort between municipalities, local PES offices, regional educational institutions and local NGOs which serve as the bridge between implementing institutions and Roma NEET youth. Such was the instance in the City of Stara Zagora where the municipality, the PES office and the regional education inspectorate are in tight collaboration with the International Youth Center, a local youth NGO. This is a special (and possibly rare) example of collaboration between YG implementing institutions and a local NGO. In this case the youth labour mediator and the Roma labour mediator are based at the International Youth Center where they come together and go in the Roma community together. Different YG institutions such as the Stara Zagora municipality, the regional structures of the Ministry of Education and Science (including individual schools) give the International Youth Center information about the school dropouts so that mediators can get in contact with these dropouts to stimulate return to school.

5. CHALLENGES IN ROMA YG UPTAKE

5.1. Challenges faced by PES offices

Although local PES offices offer valuable resources to Roma NEET youth realised through strong partnerships, PES offices face certain challenges in their outreach towards Roma NEET youth, including: (1) the predominant attitudes or lack of information of the Roma NEET youth in regards to the institution; (2) issues related to Roma labour mediators; (3) issues related to evaluating the qualitative and long-term impacts of the scheme on youth.

One of the trends observed in most fieldwork locations is that with some exceptions, most Roma youth have predominantly negative attitudes towards the PES capacity to assist them in finding what they define as good work or do not have sufficient information about what PES offers. In this regard, a number of Roma youth claimed that PES can help them in finding work, but not the kind of work that they desire. For instance, some youth expressed that self-initiative by looking for work on one's own through personal contacts and online platforms, rather than using PES, is a better approach to becoming employed. Relatedly, even in the instances when youth consider the use of PES, they do not have high expectations of the institution as they feel that PES cannot help them sufficiently in finding an appealing job that is interesting and well-paid. Rather, some youth would also accuse the institution of being corrupt or of mistreating Roma youth, in particular, by being rude and impatient with them.

While such views were shared by some Roma youth, some representatives of PES and municipalities argued that the issue lays in the lack of information about PES as an institution among these youth. As it became clear from a number of interviews with these representatives, some youth view PES primarily as an institution where youth can sign papers to receive social benefits, not as much receive support in find employment through the YG.

In addition to negative attitudes by Roma youth and a somewhat existent lack of information about the nature and quality of PES services, another challenge that PES meets in the context of the YG implementation relates to one of the most essential YG measures – Roma labour mediators. As the data reveal, the presence of Roma labour mediators who visit Roma communities to inform Roma youth about the YG often contributes to more knowledge about PES, possibilities to trust PES more and, subsequently, a higher rate of PES registration among Roma youth.

Roma labour mediators typically know how to communicate with people in the community as they know the community language. This is essential in gaining the trust of youth in Roma communities, in some of which youth can be capsulated. Any access by people coming from the world out of the community could be perceived with mistrust. Thus, in informing about the YG, PES is more effective when it sends a staff

member who is Roma, speaks the community language, or/and is a native to the community, and/or is on good terms with the community. As one Roma labour mediator stated:

*"I am from the [Roma] community and for them [Roma youth], this institution [PES] is only about money-laundering and lies. I try hard, it is not very easy, but I try. People can sift through things which I tell them. I already have long-term acquaintances and friendships with people from the communities, the Roma neighborhoods. In the moment we are moving towards a higher level."
(Roma labour mediator)*

Data also show that in locations where a Roma labour mediator is not present usually due to the fact that there are no candidates for this position (e.g., in the City of Sliven where expert interviewees shared that people who would be hired for the position would give it up due to discomfort being in the field), PESes find it more difficult to reach to Roma youth with the purpose of informing about the YG. Apart from the challenge of not having a Roma labour mediator, in several locations there would be frequent turnover of Roma labour mediators as the primary person attending Roma communities. This leads to instability and lack of continuity in the relationship between the respective PES office and local Roma youth.

Although these observations show the sometimes complicated situation surrounding Roma labour mediators, what complicates the situation even further is that even though they are designated to go in the field and acquaint Roma community youth, few youth are actually aware of the presence of these mediators in their community. Such were the trends across fieldwork locations. Even in locations where Roma NEET youth would personally know the individual holding the position of labour mediator, they would not know him/her in this capacity, but rather as the community pastor or another community member whose task has nothing to do with labour mediatorship. In such instances, it could be important that Roma labour mediators are more proactive in sharing their PES-related role with the youth in the community. Thus, although the presence of Roma labour mediators could contribute to more information and possibly a viable relationship between Roma youth and PES, such presence does not always guarantee the provision of sufficient information about the YG and PES-related services. As commented by NGO representatives who work actively in the Roma community, in some of the locations, even in the presence of Roma labour mediators, there is insufficient outreach in the community when it comes to the opportunities offered by the YG. Observations by such NGO representatives suggest that while Roma labour mediators may visit communities a few times to spread the work about the YG, the visits of these mediators are not regular and ongoing enough to secure more consistency and continuity of outreach over time.

Granted a context of insufficient information about the YG across fieldwork locations, accompanied by low use of the YG among Roma youth, another issue that emerges is the challenge with evaluating detailed long-term YG impacts. In that sense, municipal and PES employees expressed

concern that there is no way to track down what is going on with NEET youth once they leave the YG. How the YG has qualitatively impacted youth, and more particularly Roma youth, after they have left is not always clear enough. Although implementing authorities report indicator data annually which suggest that progress with implementation has been made, a couple of youth labour mediators raised concerns that they do not know anything about the youth they have helped after they are no longer registered with PES as well as whether the YG really helped them. While annually-reported statistical data on the progress of the YG are present, more actual data reporting on the qualitative impacts of the YG on the participants is needed. Thus, a main challenge that implementing institutions are facing concerns the YG monitoring, particularly tracking down how the YG participation has qualitatively impacted participants. Addressing this issues could be instrumental in securing long-term feedback on the utility and outcomes of the scheme.

5.2. Challenges associated with business

Business plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of the YG as without the participation of business in the initiative, there would be no employment opportunities to be provided through the YG. According to the YG national plan, business will receive financial incentives in the form of support for job creation for unemployed youth, as well as apprenticeship and internship subsidies. Financial incentives include payments to employers to cover expenses for each hired youth including: salary, social and health benefits, transportation to the work place and others. In the case of apprenticeships, the plan envisions subsidies for apprenticeship mentors as well. In this regard, the fieldwork data revealed that although various businesses participate in the YG, they find it challenging to navigate the scheme primarily for bureaucratic reasons. Businesses that took part in this study explained that the application procedures were vague and too taxing, especially to smaller companies which may not have a significant number of staff to collect the necessary application documents within a short time. One business also commented that the very conditions of the YG for eligibility to hire a particular candidate were limiting, making it difficult to hire good candidates with some experience because the scheme only envisions candidates without experience as eligible to be funded. Businesses also shared that the process of approval and contract signing with the YG was not expedient enough. Another area which can be improved for business concerns the amount of reporting that businesses using the programme are expected to do. For instance, one employer stated that the daily reporting that the programme requires is too demanding for the dynamism that accompanies business in that particular company. Importantly, there is a tendency for businesses to not see the benefit of participating in the YG as expressed by the lack of any business that uses the YG in some locations (e.g., in certain locations the local municipality is the only employer providing work through the YG). Indeed, the data show that some businesses see participation in the YG as risky and disadvantageous to their own financial sustainability as the programme may require from them to return funds from their own

coffers if a (Roma) youth employed through the YG leaves employment prematurely, a scenario which can happen due to the employee's decision to leave Bulgaria for better paid employment opportunities abroad. The overall hesitancy of business regarding the YG was also revealed during advocacy workshops organized post-fieldwork so as to communicate research results to relevant stakeholders and create space for stakeholder dialogue. In most of the workshops, even though multiple local and regional businesses were invited to participate in the dialogue, there was scant or no participation from this stakeholder.

5.3. Challenges of structural nature

Finally, a more macro-level challenge to a successful outreach of the YG among Roma youth in Bulgaria relates to structural characteristics of the YG itself as well as those of the Bulgarian socio-economic reality.

Across fieldwork locations, interviews and focus groups with YG stakeholders reveal that one of the main issues with the YG is its temporality. The temporary nature of the YG measures, in this regard, limit their impacts and create a sense that the YG is only a temporary fix to issues that may need more sustainable approaches. Across locations, the temporality of impacts is expressed in a return of YG users to the PES offices once the YG measures they were part of previously expire. Thus, in some cases, the same users may jump from one YG measure to another, while still not being guaranteed a more permanent employment in the longer run.

Another challenge of a structural nature concerns the role of PES as the main implementing institution of the YG. As noted by some PES interviewees, even though it is the main institution implementing the YG on the ground, fundamentally, PES has limited potential and power to address core issues that influence the low participation and the relative disinterest of Roma youth in the YG and PES's employment assistance more generally. For instance, PES does not have the capacity or authority to address aspects such as family dynamics that may impede participation in the YG. Interview data from Roma labour mediators and youth labour mediators in multiple locations reveal that at times no matter how much effort, material resources, and time the implementing institutions put into motivating and informing Roma youth about the YG, there are dynamics (such as the lack of education, family expectations, lack of motivation to work) that go beyond the control and authority of the implementing institutions. An expert in one of the PES offices where data were collected mentioned:

“Well, the very environment works against them [Roma youth] – their parents. Most parents in Roma families, their children do not emphasise studying so much, or acquisition of knowledge and skills because for them it is important to push their children somewhere to start making money somehow. The parents cannot imagine that their child can go to a university, to graduate and become something, to receive a diploma and to be a respected person. The parents do not permit such a thing. So there is a

problem with this. If the child has the attitude and aptitude for talents and skills, it would be faced with the response: 'Hey, where are you going? Look around.' So things happen in this way and this is why our work among Roma is weak, because we are doing what we can and however we can. But we should not forget that we are just one institution which is dependent on one thing, and another, and has to abide by a large normative foundation, without having any powers in practice." (expert in PES office)

Relatedly, the structural dynamics of the Bulgarian labour market also emerge as being beyond the control of the institutions implementing the YG. As interview and focus group data reveal, the outreach of the YG among Roma youth cannot be at its fullest potential because of limitations in the Bulgarian labour market such as the lack of variety of open positions (youth at focus groups raised the issue that in Bulgaria one may not always be able to find work related to one's major at school/university), the lack of long-term investment in some regions (particularly in the northwestern region of Bulgaria), and the tendency for many youth to have to work jobs that do not correspond to their education (due to the lack of workplaces in their field of interest). Thus, the outreach and impact of the YG on Roma youth is framed within larger unfavorable economic dynamics that may function independently from the scheme.

Finally, one of the great structural impediments to the effective uptake of the YG by Roma youth is discrimination against Roma. Across regions, Roma youth often state that they would prefer not to consider working due to many reasons, one of the most frequent of which is expectations that they would be discriminated against at the workplace. Expectations and fears of discrimination if they get hired are also accompanied by demotivation to pursue education because, as some youth state, employers place more importance on Roma's "skin color" than on their qualifications and education. Although employers are not described as prone to discrimination across regions, in some regions, Roma youth would report experiencing exploitation at the workplace, business's lack of effort to relate to them in a constructive way and a generally unsupportive work environment. Such general context makes it undesirable for Roma youth to consider the YG and employment as a whole in some instances.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This publication provided an analysis of the YG in Bulgaria and more specifically analysed the uptake of the scheme among NEET youth of ethnic Roma origin through an in-depth desk and fieldwork study of the scheme implementation in ten locations across Bulgaria. The report contextualises the topic of Roma youth uptake in the overall implementation of the YG in Bulgaria while outlining major trends, good implementation practices, as well as challenges that relevant stakeholders are encountering in the process of uptake. The general conclusion of this research is that while there are good practices in YG implementation, in the midst of continuously high levels of young Roma NEETs (65 percent), the YG uptake among this group is low and the scheme outreach among this target group needs to be broader and more consistent, so that Roma NEET youth have greater awareness of the YG as well as of the overall employment-related support that implementing institutions offer. Such trends are contextualised by a challenging structural environment marked by an unfavorable youth labour market, ongoing international migration processes among the Roma community, as well as a socio-political climate marked by suspicion and at times discrimination) against Roma and their capacity for employment and education. In view of the good practices and the challenges identified in this study, we propose a number of recommendations to enhance the outreach and uptake of the YG by Roma youth. Along with each recommendation, we provide a description on the institutional level to which it is relevant, the institutions responsible for applying the recommendation and the function of the recommendation:

- Establish procedures and mechanisms to acquire more systematic feedback from Roma NEET youth who use the YG for better monitoring of the YG among this target group. Along these lines, establish mechanisms of tracking down Roma NEET youth who leave the YG.
Institutional level: National, Local
Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices
Function of recommendation: Design and monitoring of YG
- Establish a practice of regular publication of monitoring data about the take-up of the YG by Roma NEET youth.
Institutional level: National, Local
Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices
Function of recommendation: Monitoring of YG
- Expand the network of Roma labour mediators across the country. This can possibly involve changes to the design of the YG in that the YG provides further incentives (including financial) for qualified individuals to apply for the position of Roma labour mediator and stay

at the position for a longer period of time to promote continuity of contact with respective Roma communities.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices

Function of recommendation: Design and implementation

- Provide incentives for other PES staff working on specialised YG teams (including psychologists and case managers) to stay longer at these positions.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices

Function of recommendation: Design and implementation

- Develop strategies/approaches to address young Roma's negative attitudes towards PES and their insufficient knowledge about the potentials and services of PES by:

- o Informing Roma youth more about the services offered by PES that relate particularly to providing employment support.

Institutional level: Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices, schools, youth organisations at local level, NGOs (including Roma NGOs)

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o Popularising further the positions of Roma labour mediators and youth labour mediators. Seek ways to adopt a Roma labour mediator position across regions with the intention to actively and regularly do fieldwork in local Roma communities. Ensure that resources designated for Roma youth mediators are primarily devoted to fieldwork in the Roma community.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency

Function of recommendation: Design and implementation

- o Encouraging and stimulating more regular and continuous (even daily) fieldwork by PES staff in Roma communities.

Institutional level: Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o PES and municipal institutions to focus more on disseminating/promoting/"advertising" good practices and success stories related to the YG and their work with Roma youth.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices, National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o PES and municipal institutions to liaise further with Roma communities and establish stronger connections with Roma community

informants (e.g., community volunteers) who can support the work of Roma labour mediators in the field by serving as link between Roma community youth and Roma labour mediators or other PES staff (in the cases where Roma labour mediators are nonexistent). This would facilitate initial contact between PES staff members and Roma community youth.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices, National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o Considering options of recruiting the support of informal Roma leaders in communities, as well as institutions in the Roma community, such as churches, as information channels about the YG in the community.

Institutional level: Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o Doing community fieldwork at particular times of the day when Roma youth are more likely to be in the community.

Institutional level: Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o Acquiring a realistic picture of the particular profile and approximate number of Roma youth in specific Roma communities for a more streamlined and realistic planning of field visits.

Institutional level: Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- o Doing employment workshops and job-fair-type of events in Roma communities.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Local PES offices, National representatives of employer organisations, local centers for professional training

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- Designing and implementing institutions to further enhance cooperation with business and create instruments to address existing bureaucratic challenges for business to participate in the YG, possibly through trainings or other kind of outreach which can facilitate the use of the YG by business, from the beginning stages of participation in the YG to the final stages of reporting. In enhancing such public-private partnerships, it is important that businesses also seek cooperation and dialogue with the institutions responsible for the design and implementation of the YG, especially with local PES offices, regarding how to work with demotivated NEET youth, particularly Roma youth.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices, National Association of Municipalities in the

Republic of Bulgaria, National representatives of employer organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria, National representatives of employee organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria, Centers for professional training
Function of recommendation: *Design, Implementation*

- To increase awareness among employers/businesses about the expectations and needs of Roma NEET youth in relation to remuneration and work environment.
Institutional level: *National, Local*
Responsible institutions: *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, Local PES offices, National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, National and local representatives of employer organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria, Centers for professional training*
Function of recommendation: *Implementation*

- To do workshops among employers about how to present themselves among employees with the goal to make employers more attractive to potential young employees (Roma youth included).
Institutional level: *National, Local*
Responsible institutions: *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices, National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, National and local representatives of employer organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria, Centers for professional training*
Function of recommendation: *Implementation*

- Designing and implementing institutions to negotiate additional strategies with educational institutions (e.g., Ministry of Education and Science) in enhancing opportunities for dual education and training in the context of the YG (e.g., investing financial resources to stimulate paid scholarships for high school students who combine school attendance with professional training after school hours). Such strategies would work better if businesses/employers partner actively with schools.
Institutional level: *National*
Responsible institutions: *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, Ministry of Education and Science, Regional Inspectorates of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports*
Function of recommendation: *Design, Implementation*

- To facilitate outreach and sufficient information about the YG among Roma youth it is important that implementing institutions collaborate more actively with NGOs working with Roma to provide these NGOs with information about the YG. The NGOs, on their end, can serve as an additional information bridge between the implementing institutions and the Roma communities they work with.
Institutional level: *National, Local*
Responsible institutions: *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, local PES offices, relevant NGOs (Roma NGOs included)*
Function of recommendation: *Implementation*

- To regularly include representatives of Roma NGOs or other NGOs working with Roma as participants in the Coordinating Council for the

implementation and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee, 2014 – 2020 in Bulgaria. To modify the National Plan for the Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee 2014 – 2020 by creating opportunities for increasing payment for jobs offered through the YG, with the goal to attract interested youth (including Roma NEET youth). Such an increase is not supposed to meet the sometimes unrealistic remuneration expectations of youth, but to provide a reasonable compensation bar vis-à-vis local, regional, national and EU living standards. It is likely that proposals for such a change will need to be included in discussions about broader economic dynamics in the country, which will necessitate further negotiation and cooperation between the YG designing and implementing institutions and other relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Economy.

Institutional level: National

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, relevant NGOs (Roma NGOs included), Ministry of Economy

Function of recommendation: Implementation

- To enrich existing strategies or create new strategies as part of the YG which facilitate the hiring of young women with children (including Roma women) who are impeded from employment as they need to provide care to little children. These measures can be implemented through partnership approaches between child-care institutions and businesses interested in hiring such labour.

Institutional level: National, Local

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, Ministry of Education, local PES offices, National and local representatives of employer organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria

Function of recommendation: Design, Implementation

- To include in the YG measures other measures which more actively support job-seeking efforts of Roma youth abroad so that the YG can be adapted to the existing migration processes among this target group abroad.

Institutional level: National

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency

Function of recommendation: Design

- To redesign the YG in a way such that programme beneficiaries are given opportunity to participate in courses the goal of which is to motivate and inspire interest in employment among inactive youth.

Institutional level: National

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Youth and Sports

Function of recommendation: Design

- Designing and implementing institutions to consider ways to effectively contextualise the YG in the broader economic dynamics of Bulgaria. This could involve consideration of how to redesign the YG in ways such that it can have more sustainable impacts in the longer run. One way of approaching this could be by considering how YG

measures could be combined with longer-term employment measures/possibilities for youth.

Institutional level: National

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, Ministry of Economy

Function of recommendation: Design

IV. LIMITATIONS

Although this report aimed to present an analysis of various aspects of the YG in Bulgaria and its uptake among Roma youth, the report has some limitations. One limitation is that the report does not present results sufficiently reflecting the heterogeneity of Roma NEET youth as a group. For instance, the report does not explain the possible differences in the way the YG is perceived and taken up by Roma youth according to markers such as gender and level of education. The focus groups with Roma youth had a mixed profile in this sense with representation of both genders and both youth with lower and higher education. While the research team was aware of such heterogeneity during data collection, the fieldwork did not capture nuances in YG uptake between individual participants, but aimed to examine the uptake more generally. Additionally, as a research group, Roma NEET were only one among a number of research groups which made a more nuanced study of heterogeneity unlikely and impractical. A more in-depth study of Roma NEET youth heterogeneity through individual in-depth interviews could present a more detailed perspective on scheme uptake among this group as well as reveal how such heterogeneity may necessitate different motivational approaches and scheme outreach.

Another limitation of this report concerns the extent to which it analyses the effects and impacts of individual YG measures on Roma youth. We are aware that this report does not present a detailed qualitative evaluation of the uptake by Roma NEET youth of individual YG measures. While this could be done and expert interviews referred to successful practices which were included in this report, it was impractical for fieldwork to touch on the intricacies of every YG measure and the way it was received by Roma youth when they benefitted from them. We recognise, though, that such an exercise in the future could be useful.

Finally, during the process of writing and editing this report, additional themes and topics to be addressed came up, such as: (1) the specific intra-PES responsibilities in Roma youth outreach, (2) the extent to which local PES offices allocate resources to support PES staff members in performing their YG-related activities, and (3) the effectiveness of the YG coordinating council as well as more details on its concrete activities. Additional research can further address such questions.

APPENDIX

ANNEX 1. YG IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTIONS, REFORMS, INTERVENTIONS, AND ACTIVATION – BULGARIA

TABLE 3. YG IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTIONS IN BULGARIA

Institution	Level	Responsibility/Function
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	National	<i>Design, coordination, implementation, monitoring of national YG plan</i>
National Employment Agency Local PES Offices	National, Local	<i>Implementation</i> (e.g., through employment schemes, labour mediator services)
Ministry of Education and Science Regional Inspectorates of Education Schools	National, Local	<i>Implementation</i> (e.g., education measures, prevention of early school dropout, securing access to education)
Ministry of Youth and Sports	National	<i>Design and implementation</i> (of youth programmes; relating to youth NGO sector)
National Center “European Youth Programmes and Initiatives”	National	<i>Consult, manage, coordinate</i> (participation of national and European youth organisations); <i>implementation</i> (by administering projects and disseminating information about them)
National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Matters, Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria	National	<i>Implementation, monitoring</i> (bridging national organs and ethnic/integration matter NGOs)
National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria	Local	<i>Implementation</i> (identification of NEET youth to support outreach)
National representatives of employer organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria	National	<i>Implementation</i> (planning and realising youth interventions), <i>consulting</i> (representing the business side), <i>monitoring</i>
National representatives of employee organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria	National	<i>Implementation</i> (planning and realising youth interventions), <i>consulting</i> (representing the employee side), <i>monitoring</i>
Centers for professional training, recognised and licensed by the National Agency of Professional Education and Training	Local	<i>Implementation</i> (e.g., providing trainings to boost labour integration)

TABLE 3. YG IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTIONS IN BULGARIA (CONTINUED)

Institution	Level	Responsibility/Function
Youth organisations in Bulgaria	National, Local	<i>Implementation</i> (through youth activation and YG information sharing)
Representatives of Bulgarian NGO organisations belonging to ethnic minorities	National, Local	<i>Implementation</i> (through their own youth project work; YG information sharing, activating inactive youth), <i>monitoring</i>

Source: National Plan for the Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee, 2014 – 2020.

TABLE 4. PLANNED REFORMS FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACTIVATION⁷²

Name of Reform	Goal of Reform	Target Group	Institution Responsible for Reform	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeframe
New forms of training and education	Developing long-distance learning and combined forms of education	Youth leaving school prematurely and at risk of dropping out	Ministry of Education and Science; National employer and employee organisations	National	After passing a new law on education and after amendments to the Law for professional education and training
Development of individual and group mentorship	To support youth in overcoming educational, social and personal challenges	Youth at risk of early drop out from school; parents of such youth	Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Youth and Sports; local employer and employee organisations	Local	2013 – 2015
Career Development at Schools	Development and application of a career orientation system for youth of different ages to support professional qualifications	Youth above 15 years of age	Ministry of Education and Science; in collaboration with nationally represented employer and employee organisations	Local	N/A

⁷² National Plan s2.

**TABLE 4. PLANNED REFORMS FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACTIVATION
(CONTINUED)**

Name of Reform	Goal of Reform	Target Group	Institution Responsible for Reform	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeframe
Application of Early-Warning Systems	Identification of youth at risk of early school dropout	Youth at risk of early school dropout	Ministry of Education and Science; Regional and municipal administration; National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria; National Employment Agency; Regional and local administration; local self-government bodies	National and local (municipal, school level)	2013 – 2015
Normative regulation of procedures for validating competencies for acquiring professional qualification	Creation of a system for validating competencies acquired through informal education and self-study	N/A	Ministry of Education and Science; nationally recognized employer organisations	National	N/A
Dual form of education	Creating opportunities for a dual form of professional education	N/A	Ministry of Education and Science	National	2020
Conception for the development of professional education and learning in Bulgaria	Reformation of professional education and adapting it to the needs of the labour market	N/A	Ministry of Education and Science	National	2014

TABLE 5. PLANNED INITIATIVES FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACTIVATION⁷³

Name of Initiative	Goal of Initiative	Target Group	Implementing Institution(s)	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeline
Professional orientation	Professional orientation at schools and universities	School-age and university students	Regional Inspectorates of Education; career centers; nationally recognised employment organisations	Local	N/A
Specialised individualised work	Specialised employment mediator at every branch of the Public Employment Service	All youth registered with the Public Employment Service	Local branches of the Public Employment Service	Local	Daily
Youth labour markets	To organise and conduct youth labour markets during 2014 and 2015	All youth where labour markets are to take place; local employers; local employee and employer organisations; NGOs; Regional Inspectorates of Education	Local directorate of the Public Employment Service; Regional Education Inspectorate; Regional Inspectorate of Education; nationally represented employer and employee organisations	Local	2014 – 2020
Information exchange	To establish information exchange between Ministry of Education and Science & Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Early school dropouts	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Education and Science; Employment Agency	National	2014 – 2020
Career Development Centers	Creation of 10 career development centers part of directorates of regional employment services	N/A	Employment Agency; employer organisations	National; Regional	2014
Resources for children at risk of drop-out due to unexcused school absences	To motivate students at risk of school dropout to continue their education	Students	Schools	Local	2015 – 2020

⁷³ National Plan s2.

**TABLE 5. PLANNED INITIATIVES FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND ACTIVATION
(CONTINUED)**

Name of Initiative	Goal of Initiative	Target Group	Implementing Institution(s)	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeline
Creation of an accessible and modern environment	To improve and modernise the quality of professional education by the use of modern technology in education	Students	Schools; social partners	Local	2014 – 2020
Environment accessible to students with Special Education Needs	To keep students with Special Education Needs as part of the education system	Students with Special Education Needs	Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Ministry of Youth and Sports	Local	2014 – 2020
Information technology	To introduce new information technology as part of instruction processes to motivate students to participate in learning	Student	Schools	Local	2014 – 2020
Information Consultative Centers	Development of Information consultative centers (to offer service packages to eligible youth)	Youth between 15-29	NGOs offering services in the area of youth informational consultative services	Local	2014
Literacy enhancement	To include illiterate youth in trainings to reach the educational minimum	Youth between 15-29	Ministry of Education and Science; schools	Local	2014 – 2015

TABLE 6. REFORMS AND INITIATIVES FOR INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET⁷⁴

Name of Reform/ Initiative	Goal of Reform/ Initiative	Target Group	Implementing Institution(s)	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeline
Individualised action plan	To prepare individualised action plan for each youth registered with the Public Employment Service	Each youth registered with the Public Employment Service	Branches of the Public Employment Service	Local	Daily

⁷⁴ National Plan s2.

**TABLE 6. REFORMS AND INITIATIVES FOR INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET
(CONTINUED)**

Name of Reform/ Initiative	Goal of Reform/ Initiative	Target Group	Implementing Institution(s)	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeline
Career orientation	To conduct career orientation of unemployed youth registered with the Public Employment Service	Centers for career orientation and professional development of youth at the Public Employment Service	Branches of Public Employment Service	Local	2014 – 2020
Motivational training	To include youth in motivation group training	Every youth registered with the Public Employment Service	Branches of the Public Employment Service	Local	2014 – 2020
Directing towards the primary labour market	To select youth for the primary labour market	Every youth registered with the Public Employment Service	Branches of Public Employment Service	Local	Daily
“First job” salary subsidies	To secure work experience of unemployed youth with university degrees	Youth up to 29 without work experience, with higher education, and registered with the Public Employment Service	Branches of Public Employment Service	Local	N/A
Employer subsidies	To encourage employers to open new work places to employ unemployed youth of different backgrounds (e.g., “New Work Place” scheme, “First Job” scheme), as well as offer apprenticeships and traineeships	Unemployed youth up to 29 (including Special Education Needs youth)	Branches of the Public Employment Service	Local	Yearly
Subsidising professional qualification and key competencies	To increase youth employability	Youth up to 29 (with priority for youth up to 24)	Branches of Public Employment Service	Local	Yearly

TABLE 6. REFORMS AND INITIATIVES FOR INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET (CONTINUED)

Name of Reform/ Initiative	Goal of Reform/ Initiative	Target Group	Implementing Institution(s)	Level of Implementation	Implementation Timeline
Start-up grants; subsidising training and consulting services	To encourage unemployed youth to create businesses	Unemployed including youth with approved business plans (priority for youth up to 24)	Branches of Public Employment Service	Local	Yearly
Supporting labour mobility	To use the EURES network for employment and education in the EU	Unemployed including youth	EURES advisors to the National and Regional Branches of the Employment Agency, Public Employment Service	National, Regional, Local	N/A
Development of YG plans	To implement the YG	Registered unemployed youth up to 29	Employment Agency	National	2014

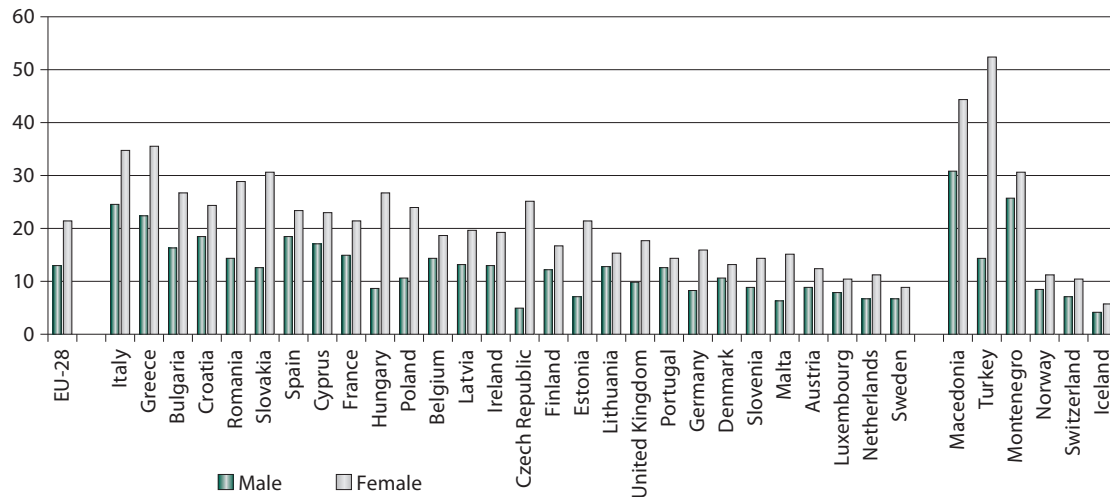
TABLE 7. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR YEI SUPPORT, BULGARIA

Type of activity	Training and support to gain qualification	Apprenticeships and traineeships	Subsidised jobs	Short-term work placements or internships	Job-seeking support, guidance and counselling	Self-employment and entrepreneurship support	Second chance education	Employer incentives	Other
Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes*

* "Other" activities may include promotion of registration of currently inactive or disengaged youth, schemes promoting training and employment in particular economic sectors, mobility schemes, volunteering.

ANNEX 2. STATISTICS ON NATIONAL NEET YOUTH

FIGURE 9. SHARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE (AGED 20-34) NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT NOR IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY SEX, 2017



Note: Ranked on the average share for men and women (aged 24-30).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_20).

TABLE 8. ACTIVITY STATUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT NOR IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING, BY AGE AND SEX, 2017

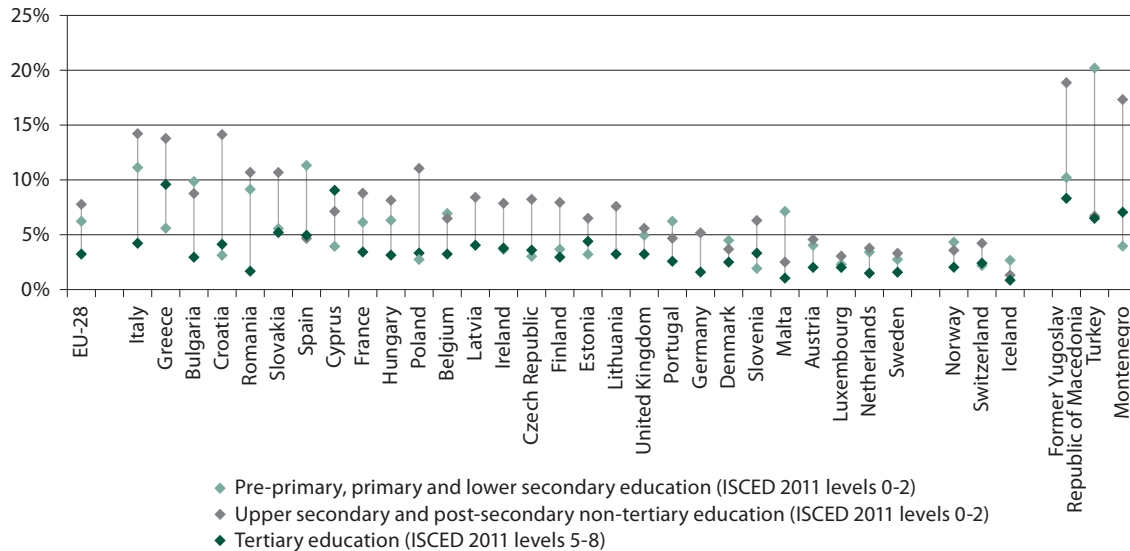
	Total				Male				Female			
	20-34 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	20-34 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	20-34 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years
EU-28	17.2	15.5	17.7	18.1	13.0	14.9	12.9	11.5	21.5	16.2	22.6	24.8
Belgium	16.5	14.1	18.2	17.0	14.4	15.2	15.5	12.6	18.7	13.1	21.0	21.4
Bulgaria	21.4	18.6	24.0	20.9	16.3	16.7	16.6	15.8	26.8	20.6	31.7	26.4
Czech Republic	14.8	9.5	15.3	18.2	5.0	6.3	4.9	4.2	25.1	12.9	26.2	33.1
Denmark	11.8	10.0	13.1	12.5	10.6	10.4	11.4	10.0	13.1	9.5	14.9	15.1
Germany	11.9	9.1	12.0	14.1	8.2	8.3	8.0	8.3	15.9	10.0	16.4	20.2
Estonia	14.2	12.8	13.1	16.2	7.2	9.3	6.9	6.2	21.5	16.3	20.0	26.9
Ireland	16.1	14.2	16.9	16.9	12.9	14.6	13.1	11.3	19.2	13.7	20.7	22.0
Greece	28.8	22.0	32.2	31.0	22.4	21.3	23.6	22.1	35.5	22.8	41.3	40.1
Spain	20.8	18.5	22.1	21.6	18.4	19.0	19.4	17.0	23.3	18.1	24.8	26.0
France	18.2	17.6	18.8	18.1	14.9	18.0	14.8	12.1	21.4	17.3	22.6	23.9

TABLE 8. ACTIVITY STATUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT NOR IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING, BY AGE AND SEX, 2017 (CONTINUED)

	Total				Male				Female			
	20-34 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	20-34 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	20-34 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years
Croatia	21.4	20.0	22.5	21.5	18.4	19.1	19.1	17.2	24.4	20.9	26.1	25.9
Italy	29.5	27.9	31.5	29.1	24.5	28.1	26.2	19.7	34.7	27.7	37.0	38.5
Cyprus	20.1	22.1	19.5	19.2	17.1	22.5	15.1	14.8	23.0	21.6	23.8	23.1
Latvia	16.4	16.9	15.1	17.3	13.2	17.8	11.3	11.9	19.7	16.0	19.0	22.9
Lithuania	14.0	14.9	12.3	14.7	12.8	14.0	11.0	13.3	15.4	15.8	13.9	16.0
Luxembourg	9.1	9.2	7.9	10.3	7.9	9.8	6.8	7.4	10.4	8.5	9.0	13.4
Hungary	17.5	15.5	17.2	19.7	8.7	10.4	7.9	7.9	26.7	20.9	27.0	31.9
Malta	10.6	8.7	8.0	14.8	6.3	8.1	5.5	5.5	15.2	9.2	10.7	24.9
Netherlands	9.0	5.8	9.6	11.7	6.7	5.9	7.0	7.2	11.3	5.7	12.1	16.2
Austria	10.6	8.6	11.4	11.5	8.9	9.5	8.9	8.4	12.4	7.7	14.1	14.8
Poland	17.1	15.4	18.0	17.6	10.6	13.2	9.8	9.5	23.9	17.6	26.6	26.0
Portugal	13.5	14.7	13.0	13.0	12.6	14.0	12.9	11.0	14.4	15.3	13.1	14.8
Romania	21.4	21.0	22.2	20.9	14.3	16.3	15.2	11.9	28.9	25.9	29.7	30.6
Slovenia	11.6	9.2	13.9	11.3	8.9	9.2	10.3	7.5	14.4	9.3	17.5	15.3
Slovakia	21.4	16.4	22.1	24.5	12.6	13.1	11.0	13.6	30.6	19.8	33.6	36.1
Finland	14.5	13.6	13.6	16.2	12.3	14.1	10.8	12.1	16.8	13.1	16.7	20.3
Sweden	7.8	8.5	7.8	7.2	6.7	8.3	6.6	5.4	8.9	8.8	9.0	9.0
United Kingdom	13.7	13.8	13.1	14.4	9.8	13.5	8.5	7.7	17.7	14.1	17.7	21.0
Iceland	4.9	4.7	4.4	5.6	4.1	5.1	-	4.7	5.8	-	6.4	6.6
Norway	9.8	7.2	9.8	12.2	8.4	7.4	7.7	10.0	11.3	7.1	11.9	14.6
Switzerland	8.7	8.3	8.3	9.6	7.2	9.8	7.0	5.2	10.4	6.7	9.7	14.0
Montenegro	28.2	24.9	29.7	29.8	25.8	24.2	27.2	25.6	30.7	25.7	32.4	33.8
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	37.4	34.0	41.6	36.3	30.8	33.1	31.5	28.0	44.4	35.0	52.2	44.9
Turkey	33.4	32.5	34.0	33.7	14.4	17.7	14.6	11.4	52.4	47.0	53.4	56.3

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_20).

FIGURE 10. YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT NOR IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEETs) (20-34), BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVEL, 2017



Note: Ranked on the overall NEET rate.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: edat_ifse_21).

TABLE 9. EVALUATION OF YG ACCORDING TO EVALUATION CRITERIA SET IN NATIONAL PLAN

The National Plan for the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bulgaria set out to achieve the following results by 2015: (1) a decline of the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 to 27.2 percent; (2) a decline of the relative ratio of youth aged 15-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) to 20.5 percent; (3) a 50-percent increase of the relative ratio of registered unemployed youth (aged 15-24) who are included in training or employment out of the entire number of registered unemployed youth

Indicator	Target Group (or equivalent)	Results 2014	Results 2015	Results 2016	Results 2017
1. Macro-Level Indicators					
Number of unemployed up to 24 (included), registered with the Public Employment Service		28,745	21,578	14,736	12,920
Number of activated youth up to 24, registered with the Public Employment Service		2,104	2,049	2,761	2,814
Registered unemployed youth up to 24, out of whom:					
– With previous employment		12,109	9,356	5,879	4,528
– Coming from the school system		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

TABLE 9. EVALUATION OF YG ACCORDING TO EVALUATION CRITERIA SET IN NATIONAL PLAN (CONTINUED)

Indicator	Target Group (or equivalent)	Results 2014	Results 2015	Results 2016	Results 2017
– Having left the education system and not registered as unemployed		120	167	353	258
Number of unemployed up to 29 (including those up to 24) registered with PES		64,122	51,680	37,998	33,600
Number of unemployed 15-24, Eurostat data		48,000	40,000	28,000	22,000
Unemployment Rate 15-24, Eurostat data		6.5	5.6	4.1	3.4
Unemployment Rate 15-29, Eurostat data		8.2	6.6	5.3	4.6
Number of NEET youth (15-24), Eurostat data ⁷⁵		149,000	136,000	123,000	99,000
Share of NEET youth (15-24), Eurostat data ⁷⁶		14.4	14.3	14.5	12.2
2. Implementation indicators					
2.1. Career orientation	Unemployed youth up to 29 (including those up to 24)	15,110	15,897	35,943	42,116
	Unemployed youth up to 24 (included)	4,956	6,568	15,054	17,572
2.2. Number of offers for:	Unemployed youth up to 29 (including those up to 24)	79,021	74,354	86,922	72,221
	Unemployed youth up to 24 (included)	40,815	33,399	36,211	35,655
2.2.1. Training					
Unemployed up to 24 (included)		11,286	9,526	10,254	8,854
Motivational training		0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Literacy training		0	N/A	N/A	N/A

⁷⁵ Data on the number of NEET youth between 15-24 reported in this table (data received upon request from the National Employment Agency) differ from the same data reported by the EU Commission and Eurostat (see page 24 of this publication which reports the same data by the EU Commission). The study team contacted a data expert from the National Employment Agency regarding this discrepancy. The expert explained that when it comes to the NEET rate, the National Employment Agency does not provide such data to the EU Commission. The EU Commission reports data from Eurostat which receives data from the national statistical agencies in the respective member states. According to the National Employment Agency expert the data which Bulgaria's National Statistical Institute provides to Eurostat regarding the youth NEET rate possibly do not correspond to the same indicators reported by the Employment Agency and its administrative registers.

⁷⁶ See footnote 75 above.

TABLE 9. EVALUATION OF YG ACCORDING TO EVALUATION CRITERIA SET IN NATIONAL PLAN (CONTINUED)

Indicator	Target Group (or equivalent)	Results 2014	Results 2015	Results 2016	Results 2017
Acquiring key competencies including:		N/A	N/A	N/A	694
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acquiring professional qualification, including:		N/A	N/A	N/A	1,087
<i>Self-employment and management</i>		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unemployed up to 29 (included)		21,258	18,637	23,547	19,537
Motivational training		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Literacy training		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acquiring key competencies, including:		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acquiring professional qualification, including:		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Self-employment and management</i>		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2.2.2. Employment					
Unemployed up to 24 (included)		29,529	23,873	25,957	26,801
On primary labour market		21,281	17,070	15,102	20,655
Subsidised employment, including:		8,248	6,803	10,855	6,146
<i>Internship</i>		167	1,376	1,215	680
<i>Apprenticeship</i>		43	1,981	2,630	3,240
Independent business activity		3	4	2	3
Unemployed up to 29 (included)		57,763	55,717	63,375	52,684
On primary labour market		44,393	42,164	40,269	39,634
Subsidised employment, including:		13,370	13,553	23,106	13,050
<i>Internship</i>		67	1,845	2,958	1,287
<i>Apprenticeship</i>		31	3,354	4,321	4,900
Independent business activity		14	17	22	18
2.3. Number of youth included in:					
2.3.1. Training					
Unemployed up to 24 (included)					
Motivational training		1,258	1,054	973	951
Literacy training		149	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acquiring key competencies:		1,687	1,371	1,157	1,235
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

TABLE 9. EVALUATION OF YG ACCORDING TO EVALUATION CRITERIA SET IN NATIONAL PLAN (CONTINUED)

Indicator	Target Group (or equivalent)	Results 2014	Results 2015	Results 2016	Results 2017
Acquiring professional qualifications, including:		3,987	4,032	3,899	4,254
Independent business activity		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unemployed up to 29 (included)					
Motivational training		2,721	1,894	1,563	1,381
Literacy training		245	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acquiring key competencies, including:		2,757	2,230	1,951	1,634
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acquiring professional qualifications, including:		5,621	6,025	5,937	6,102
Independent business activity		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2.3.2 Unemployment					
Unemployed up to 24 (included)					
Primary labour market		18,559	15,070	14,102	17,523
Subsidised employment		8,105	6,203	7,855	4,526
<i>Internship</i>		N/A	1,376	1,215	671
<i>Apprenticeship</i>		N/A	1,981	2,630	3,145
Independent business activity		3	4	2	3
Unemployed up to 29 (included)					
Primary labour market		41,173	40,164	40,269	35,634
Subsidised employment		12,619	11,553	15,106	12,050
<i>Internship</i>		N/A	1,845	2,958	1,287
<i>Apprenticeship</i>		N/A	3,354	4,321	4,900
Independent business activity		14	17	22	18
2.4. Territorial mobility of unemployed people					
Unemployed up to 24 (included)		2	N/A	N/A	8
Unemployed up to 29 (including those up to 24)		3	2	N/A	12
2.5. Employment mobility through EURES					
<i>Consulted for services</i>		2,705	2,529	2,556	3,012
<i>Directed to employment</i>		91	47	2,436	8
Unemployed up to 29 (including those at 24)		6,030	5,866	9,605	8,191

TABLE 9. EVALUATION OF YG ACCORDING TO EVALUATION CRITERIA SET IN NATIONAL PLAN (CONTINUED)

Indicator	Target Group (or equivalent)	Results 2014	Results 2015	Results 2016	Results 2017
<i>Consulted for services</i>		5,814	5,752	6,619	8,163
<i>Directed to employment</i>		216	114	2,986	28
2.6. Included in the Youth Guarantee Scheme					
Unemployed up to 24 (including)		N/A	2,536	9,296	4,169
People registered with the Public Employment Service after expiration of employment contract		N/A	758	2,490	347
Participants who 6 months after leaving the measure/ programme/scheme have employment (or are self-employed)		N/A	1,637	6,322	2,613
Participants who 12 months after leaving the measure/ programme/scheme have employment (or are self-employed)		N/A	1,681	6,405	2,877
Unemployed up to 29 (including those up to 24)		N/A	4,852	19,514	8,600
People registered with the Public Employment Service after expiration of employment contract		N/A	1,656	6,334	878
Participants who 6 months after leaving the measure/ programme/scheme have employment (or are self-employed)		N/A	3,460	14,152	6,348
Participants who 12 months after leaving the measure/ programme/scheme have employment (or are self-employed)		N/A	3,482	14,632	6,426

Source: National Employment Agency, 2018.

ANNEX 3. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION

TABLE 10. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION⁷⁷

Name of initiative	Fund- ing period	Resources and levels of funding (in BG leva)					Number of beneficiaries (when applicable)		
		EU/ESF/YEI	National funds, co- funding included	Region- al/local funds	Em- ployer funds	Other	Males	Females	Total
Planned initiatives									
2014									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2014		1,125,000				36,750	38,250	75,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2014		250,000				6,000	8,000	14,000
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2014		1,000,000				3,800	3,700	7,500
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2014		21,900,000				5,200	5,800	11,000
2.4.15. – 2.4.17. Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007 – 2013, Schemes: “New Work Place”, “First job”, “Creating Employment of Youth through Providing Internship Opportunities”	2014	25,000,000					622	648	1,270
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2014	23,412,345					3,824	3,980	7,804
Total		48,412,345	24,275,000	0	0	0			
2015									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2015		1,150,000				34,300	35,700	70,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2015		300,000				6,370	6,630	13,000

⁷⁷ Note that the funds reflected in this table are the initially planned funds to be allocated for various measures within the YG. The funds numbers in this table may not coincide with the eventually negotiated and verified funds used for the implementation of certain YG measures (as indicated in Table 1 above).

TABLE 10. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION (CONTINUED)

Name of initiative	Fund- ing period	Resources and levels of funding (in BG leva)					Number of beneficiaries (when applicable)		
		EU/ESF/YEI	National funds, co- funding included	Region- al/local funds	Em- ployer funds	Other	Males	Females	Total
Planned initiatives									
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2015		1,100,000				3,920	4,080	8,000
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2015		34,650,000				8,143	9,182	17,325
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2015	207,863,655					29,957	31,180	61,136
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)		4,900,000					1,000	1,041	2,042
Total		212,763,655	37,200,000	0	0	0			
2016									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2016		1,175,000				32,500	32,500	65,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2016		350,000				5,880	6,120	12,000
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2016		1,200,000				4,018	4,182	8,200
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2016		54,450,000				11,176	12,603	23,779
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2016						0	0	0

TABLE 10. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION (CONTINUED)

Name of initiative	Fund- ing period	Resources and levels of funding (in BG leva)					Number of beneficiaries (when applicable)		
		EU/ESF/YEI	National funds, co- funding included	Region- al/local funds	Em- ployer funds	Other	Males	Females	Total
Planned initiatives									
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)		5,600,000					1,055	1,098	2,154
Total		5,600,000	57,175,000	0	0	0			
2017									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2017		1,200,000				29,400	30,600	60,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2017		400,000				6,125	6,375	12,500
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2017		1,300,000				4,165	4,335	8,500
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2017		59,895,000				11,490	12,956	24,446
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2017						0	0	0
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2017	8,400,000					1,470	1,530	3,000
Total		8,400,000	62,795,000	0	0	0			
2018									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2018		1,225,000				26,950	28,050	55,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2018		450,000				5,390	5,610	11,000
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2018		1,400,000				4,263	4,437	8,700

TABLE 10. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION (CONTINUED)

Name of initiative	Fund- ing period	Resources and levels of funding (in BG leva)					Number of beneficiaries (when applicable)		
		EU/ESF/YEI	National funds, co- funding included	Region- al/local funds	Em- ployer funds	Other	Males	Females	Total
Planned initiatives									
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2018		65,884,500				11,812	13,320	25,131
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2018						0	0	0
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2018	12,600,000					2,058	2,142	4,200
Total		12,600,000	68,959,500	0	0	0			
2019									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2019		1,300,000				24,500	25,500	50,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2019		300,000				4,900	5,100	10,000
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2019		1,500,000				4,361	4,539	8,900
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and appren- ticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2019		72,472,950				12,143	13,693	25,836
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2019						0	0	0
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2019	15,400,000					2,358	2,454	4,813
Total		15,400,000	75,572,950	0	0	0			

TABLE 10. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION (CONTINUED)

Name of initiative	Fund- ing period	Resources and levels of funding (in BG leva)					Number of beneficiaries (when applicable)		
		EU/ESF/YEI	National funds, co- funding included	Region- al/local funds	Em- ployer funds	Other	Males	Females	Total
Planned initiatives									
2020									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2020		1,325,000				22,050	22,950	45,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2020		350,000				4,900	5,100	10,000
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2020		1,600,000				4,459	4,641	9,100
2.4.5. – 2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2020		79,720,245				12,483	14,077	26,560
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2020						0	0	0
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2020	21,000,000					3,026	3,150	6,176
Total		21,000,000	82,995,245	0	0	0			
2014 – 2020									
2.4.1. Designing individual action plans	2014 – 2020	0	8,500,000	0	0	0	206,450	213,550	420,000
2.4.3. Motivational training	2014 – 2020	0	2,400,000	0	0	0	39,565	42,935	82,500
2.4.4. Finding work for youth at the primary labour market	2014 – 2020	0	9,100,000	0	0	0	28,986	29,914	58,900
2.4.5.-2.4.12. Securing employment, trainings, internship and apprenticeship through the resources from the state budget for active policy on the labour market	2014 – 2020	0	388,972,695	0	0	0	72,447	81,632	154,079

TABLE 10. YG PLANNED BUDGET ALLOCATION (CONTINUED)

Name of initiative	Fund- ing period	Resources and levels of funding (in BG leva)					Number of beneficiaries (when applicable)		
		EU/ESF/YEI	National funds, co- funding included	Region- al/local funds	Em- ployer funds	Other	Males	Females	Total
Planned initiatives									
2.4.14. Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2014 – 2020	231,276,000	0	0	0	0	33 781	35 160	68 940
Schemes for implementation of the Youth Guarantee (OP HRD 2014 – 2020)	2014 – 2020	92,900,000	0	0	0	0	11 591	12 064	23 654
Total		324,176,000	408,972,695	0	0	0			

Source: National Employment Agency, 2018.

ANNEX 4. FIELDWORK LOCATION SELECTION

In the selection of the research sites, of particular interest were sites with the following characteristics/criteria. These five criteria were used in the site selection together with the indicators above:

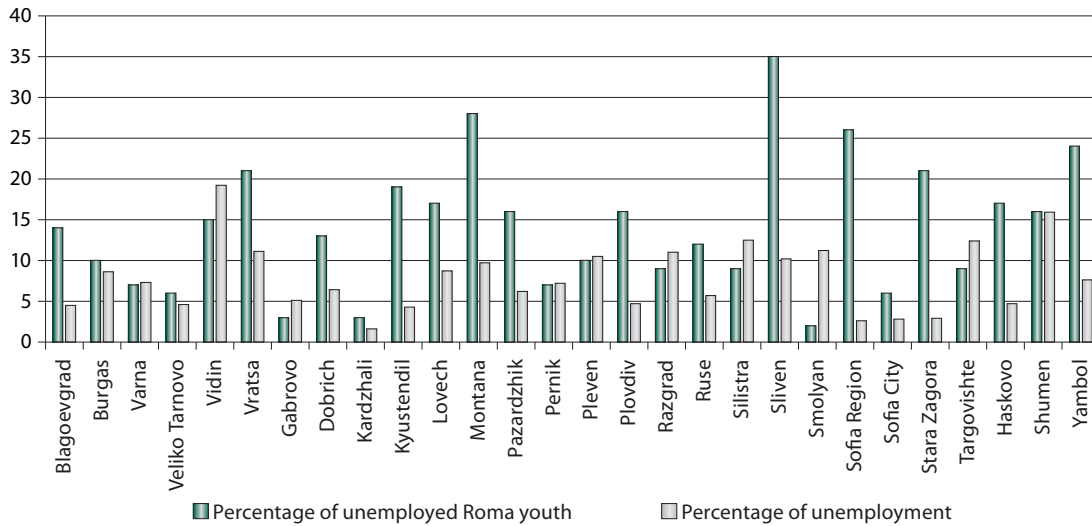
(1) *Low overall unemployment rate, but high unemployment rate among Roma youth.* This criterion was selected because of the contrasting dynamic between the general employment situation of the particular region and the employment situation of Roma youth. Regions with such dynamics are of study interest because they can help understand why there is such a discrepancy, as well as how the YG is implemented among Roma youth in regions where one would not expect that there would be high unemployment among most groups. In the category of regions with “low overall unemployment rate,” we include the group of 10 regions with the lowest overall unemployment rates out of all 28 regions in Bulgaria. We define regions with “high unemployment rate among Roma youth” as the regions with the top 10 highest rates of Roma youth unemployment out of all regions in Bulgaria.

(2) *High overall unemployment rate and high unemployment rate among Roma youth.* This criterion was selected because some of the regions with high overall unemployment rate are in some cases also the most economically challenged regions and are often marked by a high number of Roma living there. These regions are not only economically disadvantaged as a whole, but they also face particularly severe challenges with youth unemployment as a great number of unemployed youth in them are indeed Roma youth. In the category of regions with “high overall unemployment rate,” we include the group of 10 regions with the highest overall unemployment rates out of all 28 regions in Bulgaria. We define regions with “high unemployment rate among Roma youth” as the regions with the top 10 highest rates of Roma youth unemployment out of all regions in Bulgaria.

As Figure 11 below demonstrates, the regions with the highest rate of unemployed youth who are Roma are: Sliven Region (35 percent), Montana Region (28 percent), Sofia Region (26 percent), Yambol Region (24 percent), Stara Zagora Region (21 percent), Vratsa Region (21 percent), Kyustendil Region (19 percent), Lovech Region and Haskovo Region (17 percent). Interestingly, some of these regions appear to be marked by some of the lowest overall unemployment rates in the country: Sofia Region (2.6 percent), Stara Zagora Region (2.9 percent), Kyustendil Region (4.3 percent).

(3) *Low overall unemployment rate and low unemployment rate among Roma youth.* We were also interested in discovering whether there is overlap in the regions with the lowest unemployment rates for 2017 with those where unemployment among youth from Roma ethnic origin is low. Data indicate that Kardzhali Region (1.6 percent), Sofia Region (2.6 percent), Sofia City (2.8 percent), Veliko Tarnovo Region (4.6 percent), Gabrovo Region (5.1 percent), and Ruse Region (5.7 percent) are among the regions with top 10 lowest rates of

FIGURE 11. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AND RATE OF UNEMPLOYED ROMA YOUTH (15-32), % IN 2017

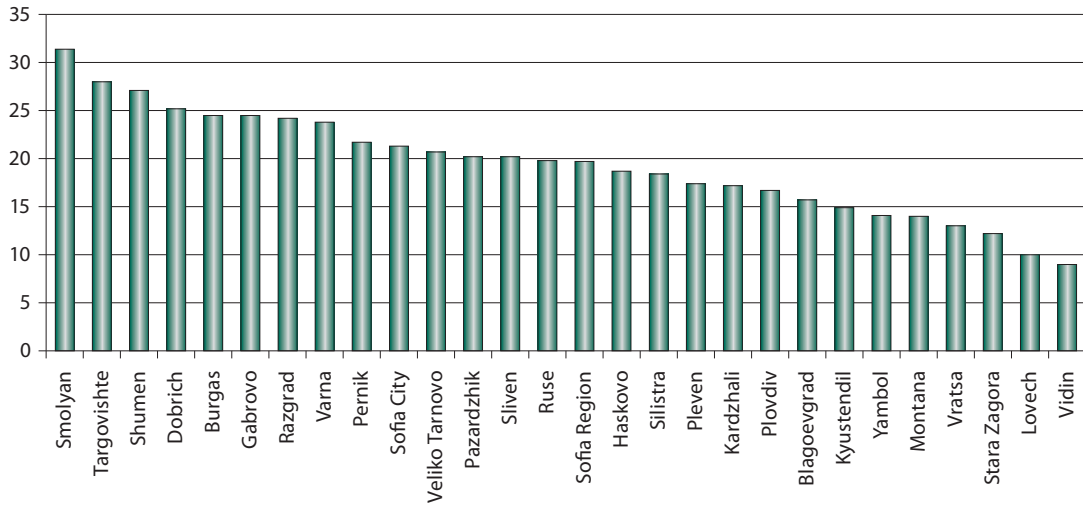


Source: Labour Market Statistics, National Statistical Institute, 2017 & National Employment Agency, 2014 – 2017.

overall unemployment for 2017. Simultaneously, these regions are also among the top 10 regions with the lowest rate of unemployment among youth of Roma ethnic origin: Smolyan Region (2 percent), Gabrovo (3 percent), Kardzhali (3 percent), Veliko Tarnovo (6 percent), Ruse (12 percent). In this regard, it is also important to consider that the same regions are also marked by the lowest percentages of Roma population (e.g., Kardzhali Region, Veliko Tarnovo Region, Gabrovo Region, and Ruse Region) according to the 2011 census.

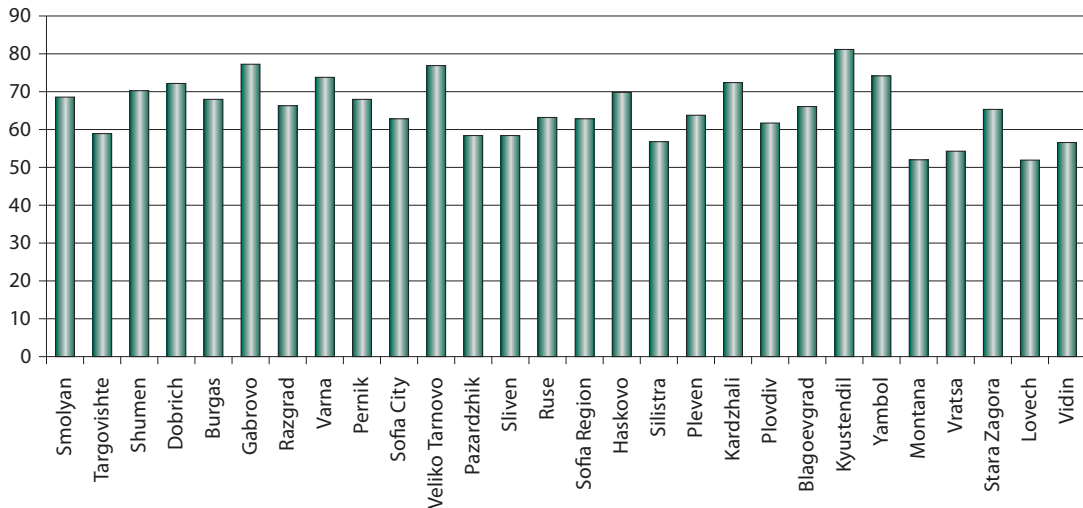
(4) *Employment coefficient among youth (15-24 years of age, 25-34 years of age), 2017.* In selecting the research sites, it was also important to consider the overall employment coefficient of youth in each region for 2017 (see Figure 12 below). As can be seen in Figure 12, the regions with some of the lowest employment coefficients for the main target group of the YG (15-24) are the Vidin Region (9 percent), Vratsa Region (13 percent), Lovech Region (10 percent), and Montana Region (14 percent). These regions overlap with the regions with lowest employment coefficients among people between 25-34 years of age (an age group in Bulgaria targeted by the YG): Vidin Region (56.6 percent), Lovech Region (51.9 percent), Vratsa Region (54.3 percent), and Montana (52 percent) (see Figure 13 below). Importantly, these employment coefficients for this age group are significantly higher than the same for the age group of 15-24, suggesting that the YG and similar programmes in Bulgaria may need to target the 15-24 age group more effectively. Furthermore, the reality that these regions are with lowest employment coefficients overall made them candidates for research sites in the proposed study.

FIGURE 12. EMPLOYMENT COEFFICIENT 2016, 15-24⁷⁸



Source: National Statistical Institute, 2017.

FIGURE 13. EMPLOYMENT COEFFICIENT 2016, 25-34

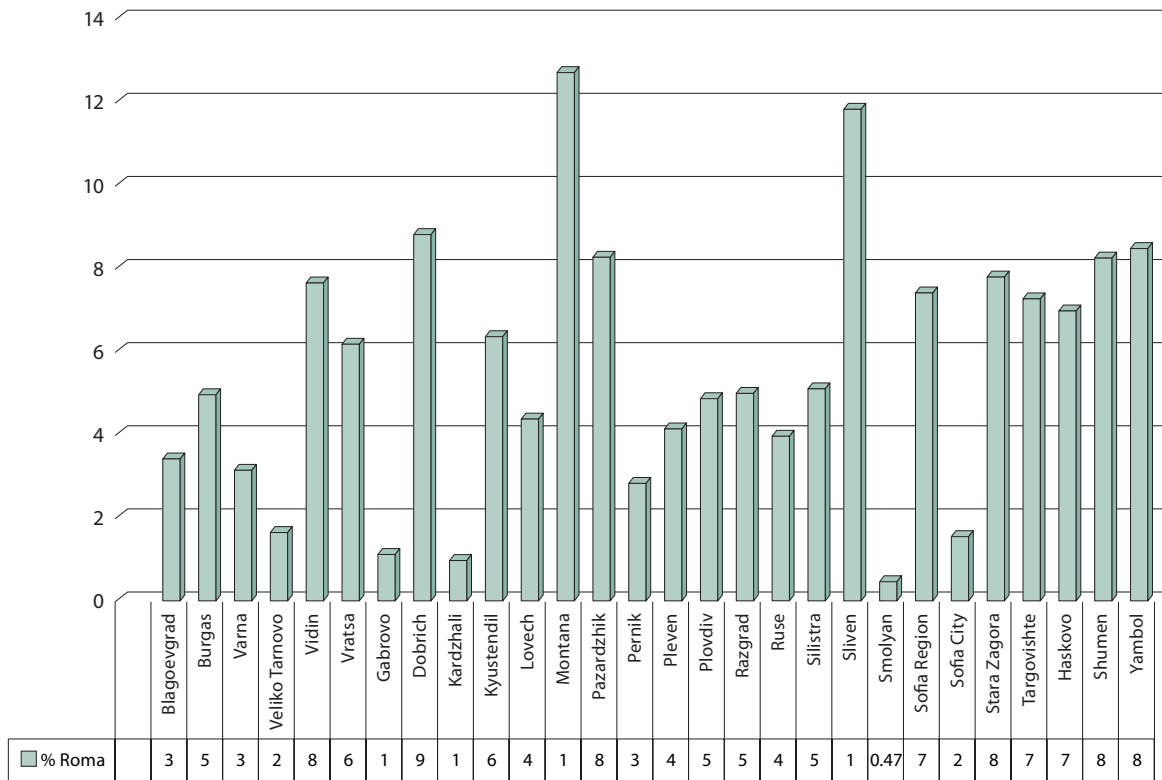


Source: National Statistical Institute, 2017.

⁷⁸ Employment coefficient data from 2016 were used for the purposes of site selection as these data were the most recent available data at the time of site selection and the commencement of fieldwork research.

(5) *Regions with the highest percentage of Roma.* Another criterion that helped in the selection of the research sites was the percentage of people from Roma ethnic origin in each geographical region. To estimate percentages we relied on the 2011 Bulgarian census. While we realise that these census data may not correspond to the realities of 2018, they are the latest official data available about the percentages of Roma in each region. In using these data, we paid particular attention to the regions with the highest percentages of Roma population. We discovered that these regions overlap with some of the regions that drew our attention in the other criteria that we reviewed (e.g., Montana Region – 13 percent of population is Roma, Sliven Region – 12 percent, Vidin – 8 percent) (see Figure 14 below).

FIGURE 14. PERCENTAGE ROMA PER REGION, 2011



Source: 2011 Census, National Statistical Institute.

Once we reviewed the different indicators described above, we pinpointed 10 different regions that appear as likely candidates to conduct a fieldwork study. To narrow down the exact communities we again referred to the 2011 census and focused our attention on the communities/towns/cities within each region with the highest number of Roma. While we observed that in many regions there are small communities (villages) with a high number of Roma, we justified our choice of larger

communities with the reality that employment opportunities exist primarily in bigger towns and cities, and Roma youth in these places could actually benefit from the YG if they sign up for it. Simultaneously, however, in our choice of research sites, we decided to not completely ignore the Roma youth employment realities in smaller communities/villages. Based on anecdotal evidence from Roma youth activists, we deemed it to be crucial to visit at least one small community with a high Roma population. In our case, this was the small Town of Nikolaevo in the Stara Zagora region which was easy to access as a research site.

In view of these indicators, we selected 10 fieldwork locations (see descriptive statistics in Table 11 below:

TABLE 11. FIELDWORK LOCATIONS, DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Location	Regional unemployment rate, 2017	Percentage of unemployed youth in region who are Roma, 2017	Number of Roma in location, 2011 (according to latest census)
City of Sliven	10.2%	35%	12,153
City of Lom	9.7%	28%	4,231
City of Samokov	2.6%	26%	4,678
City of Stara Zagora	2.9%	21%	5,430
Town of Nikolaevo	2.9%	21%	739
City of Kyustendil	4.3%	19%	5,210
City of Yambol	7.6%	24%	4,263
City of Vidin	19.2%	15%	3,753
City of Sofia	2.6%	6%	17,550
City of Smolyan	11.2%	2%	301

(1) Sliven Region (exact location – City of Sliven). We selected Sliven as it covers several of the criteria that we examined to make the site selection. First, as a region, Sliven is the area in Bulgaria with the highest percentage of unemployed youth of Roma ethnicity (35 percent). Sliven as a region was also selected due to it being in the top 10 Bulgarian regions with highest unemployment rate (10.2 percent). The more specific research site – the City of Sliven – was selected as it is the city with the greatest number of Roma in the Sliven Region (12,153 people).⁷⁹

(2) Montana Region (exact location – City of Lom). Montana Region was selected for similar reasons and in that regard Montana Region is similar to the Sliven Region, with very small differences in regards of

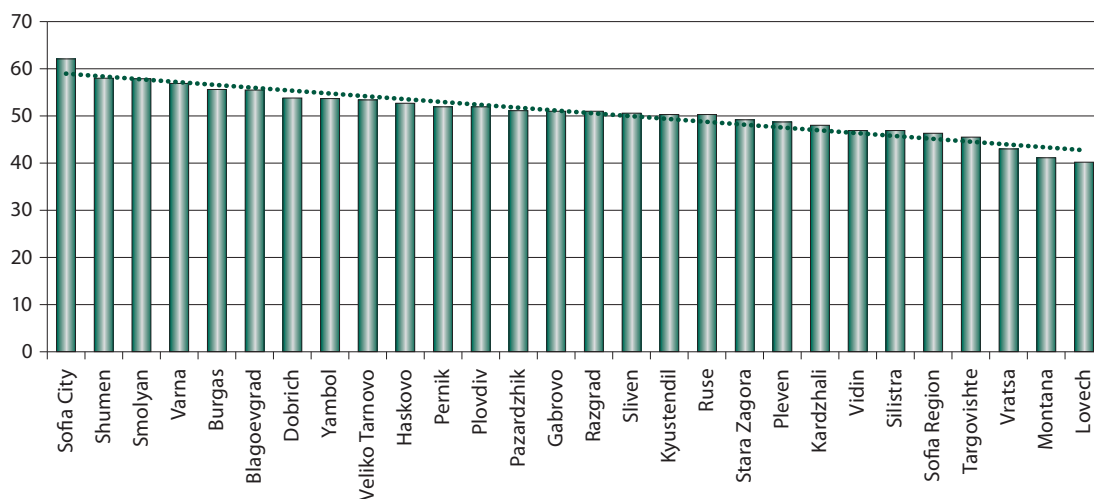
⁷⁹ The exact numbers of Roma in each city/town was taken out of the 2011 census data.

- the main indicators. Following the Sliven Region, the Montana Region has the second highest unemployment rates among Roma youth (28 percent) and is in the top 10 regions with highest unemployment rate for 2017 (9.7 percent). The City of Lom was selected as a research site in Montana Region due to it being the community within the region with the highest number of Roma (4,231 people).
- (3) Sofia Region (exact location – City of Samokov). Sofia Region is comprised of a number of smaller cities/towns around the City of Sofia. Sofia Region was selected as it is in the top regions with highest percentage of unemployed youth who are Roma (26 percent), as well as one of the regions with the lowest unemployment rates in the country (2.6 percent) – a contradiction which makes the region an intriguing case study. The exact location in Sofia Region where we conducted research is the City of Samokov – the community with the largest number of Roma in the region (4,678 people).
 - (4) Stara Zagora Region (exact location – Stara Zagora, and a smaller community – the Town of Nikolaevo). Stara Zagora Region has a profile similar to Sofia Region. With its 21 percent among youth in unemployment who are Roma, Stara Zagora takes fifth place in the top ten regions with the highest percentage of youth in this category. Paradoxically, Stara Zagora is one of the regions with the lowest unemployment rates in Bulgaria (2.9 percent). Its largest Roma community is in the City of Stara Zagora (with 5,430 people), making it one of the research sites. However, our communication with local Roma activists and project collaborators suggested that it might be relevant to examine what the YG processes are in some of the smaller communities with high numbers of Roma compared to the overall population. For this reason, we selected one of the small, but more active, communities in the Stara Zagora region, the Town of Nikolaevo, with 739 Roma or 30 percent of population in the town. Examining the YG processes in this small community could give insight into what is going on in less populated places with a good share of Roma population. Thus, the Stara Zagora Region presented the research team with two research sites.
 - (5) Kyustendil Region (exact location – City of Kyustendil). Kyustendil Region was selected according to similar criteria. The region has one of the lowest rates of overall unemployment (4.3 percent), but simultaneously one of the top rates of young people in unemployment who are Roma (19 percent of unemployed youth in the region are Roma). Furthermore, due to it being with the largest number of Roma in the region (5,210), the City of Kyustendil was the research site in this region.
 - (6) Yambol Region (exact location – City of Yambol). The Yambol Region was chosen as a research site due to its high unemployment among youth of Roma ethnic origin (24 percent), as well as one of the high percentages of Roma in the country (8 percent). The community in this region where the research took place was the City of Yambol, the community with the largest Roma population (4,263).

- (7) Vidin Region (exact location – City of Vidin). The Vidin Region also has one of the high rates of unemployment among youth who are from ethnic Roma origin (15 percent). Simultaneously, the region has the lowest employment coefficient in the country among youth between 15-24 years of age – the main target group of the YG (9 percent). The city with the highest number of Roma is the City of Vidin (3,753), which was the site of research.
- (8) Sofia Region – we selected the City of Sofia as a site of research because based on the desk research, it showed up as a location with some of the most positive indicators that we used for the site selection. For example, when it comes to the unemployment rate among youth of ethnic Roma origin, the City of Sofia has one of the lowest among large cities (6 percent). The City of Sofia is also with the highest rates of economic activity coefficient in the country (62.1 percent) and employment coefficient rates (59.7 percent) (see Annex 5 below for more details). The City of Sofia is also in the top ten of cities with highest coefficients among youth aged 15-24 (21.3 percent) and the highest among youth aged 25-34 (62.8 percent). Thus, as a research site, the City of Sofia was a good source of insights about how the YG functions in a big city with favorable economic indicators.
- (9) Smolyan Region (exact location – City of Smolyan). We selected the Smolyan Region for reasons similar to Sofia City. With its employment coefficient of 31.4 percent among youth aged 15-24, the Smolyan Region takes the top position (though not in a top position among youth in the 25-34 age group). The region also takes one of the leading positions when it comes to the overall coefficient of economic activity (57.9 percent) and employment coefficient (49.7 percent). When it comes to the unemployment rate among youth who are from Roma origin, the Smolyan Region has the lowest rates (2 percent) compared to the rest of the country. Furthermore, the City of Smolyan, the community within the region with the largest number of Roma (301 people) is a community smaller than the City of Sofia, which gave an opportunity to examine how the YG operates in a smaller community with more favorable economic indicators.

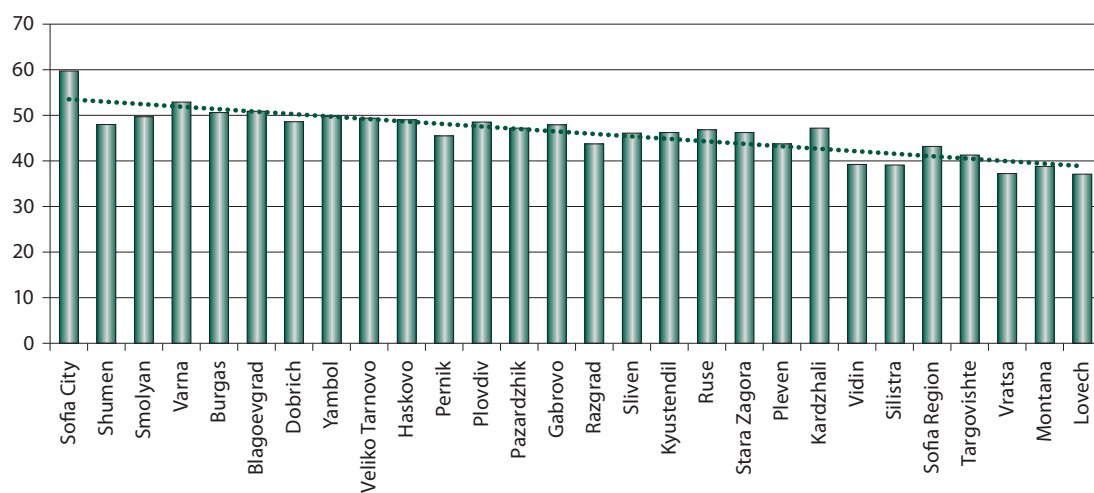
ANNEX 5. COEFFICIENTS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BY REGION, BULGARIA

FIGURE 15. COEFFICIENT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN %⁸⁰



Source: Employment and Unemployment Data 2016, National Statistical Institute.

FIGURE 16. EMPLOYMENT COEFFICIENT IN %, 2016



Source: Employment and Unemployment Data 2016, National Statistical Institute.

⁸⁰ Data are for 2016.

ANNEX 6. FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 12. FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

Location of Focus Group	Number of Participants	Number of Males	Number of Females	Age Range
City of Yambol	8	7	1	N/A
City of Sliven	12	12	0	N/A
City of Sofia	9	4	5	18-29
City of Stara Zagora	9	3	6	N/A
Town of Nikolaevo	7	0	7	N/A
City of Vidin	10	2	8	18-28
City of Lom, Focus Group 1	4	2	2	18-22
City of Lom, Focus Group 2	6	2	4	19-26
City of Samokov	9	2	7	18-29
City of Smolyan	6	0	6	23-39
City of Kyustendil	12	7	5	18-32

* In recruiting the focus group participants, the aim was to include participants in the 18-29 age range in gender-balanced groups. However, the reality of fieldwork did not always allow for gender balance in recruitment, as well as the exact age range (in some cases, we did not manage to collect age information). In the case of the City of Lom, we conducted two focus groups as the initially planned focus group had a low turnout.

ANNEX 7. EXPERT INTERVIEW DETAILS

TABLE 13. EXPERT INTERVIEW DETAILS

City	Type of institution	Number of interviews
City of Yambol	Municipality	2
	NGO	1
	PES office	1
City of Sliven	Municipality	2
	NGO	1
	PES office	1
City of Sofia	Business	1
	NGO	1
	PES office	1
City of Stara Zagora	Business	2
	Municipality	2
	PES office	1
Town of Nikolaevo	NGO	1
	Municipality	1
	PES office	1
City of Vidin	Business	1
	Municipality	1
	NGO	1
City of Lom	PES Office	1
	Business	1
	Municipality	1
City of Samokov	NGO	1
	PES office	1
	Municipality	1
City of Smolyan	PES office	1
	Municipality	1
City of Kyustendil	NGO	1

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