

2018 Country Report for Bulgaria

Key points for EASPD members

I. Employment and Labour Market Policy

- Employment and activity rates have increased, while the unemployment rate has decreased substantially.
- Some progress was achieved in improving the targeting of active labour market policies.
- **Some progress was achieved in the integration between employment and social services.**
- **Active labour market policies have low coverage and are mostly focused on direct job creation and employment incentives but remain mainly underdeveloped.**
- Bulgaria has a low gender employment gap.
- A shrinking working age population, skills shortages and mismatches, particularly in digital skills, and high inactivity remain major concerns for sustainable growth.
- **Undeclared work continues to distort the labour market.**
- Limited progress was made in establishing a transparent mechanism for setting the minimum wage.
- Minimum wage is still being adjusted without a clear and transparent mechanism, in part due to the current challenges in social dialogue.
- **The employment gap for people with disabilities is among the highest in the EU and effects on putting people with disabilities into work remain to be seen.**

II. Education Policy

- Recent measures aim to modernise the education system, but challenges remain.
- Limited progress was made in increasing the provision of quality mainstream education.
- Bulgaria has made progress tertiary education, but national targets under the Europe2020 Strategy are still to be met.
- The situation has deteriorated regarding the targets on early school leaving.
- The education system does not fully equip students with relevant skills.
- **Access to quality education remains unequal.**
- Educational outcomes are low and strongly influenced by socioeconomic status.
- Early school leaving is high and kindergarten fees contribute to an unequal start in education.



III. Social Policy

- Limited progress was made in increasing health insurance coverage and in addressing **shortages of healthcare professionals.**
- The population face difficulties in accessing healthcare.
- **The healthcare system remains hospital-centred.**
- **The percentage of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion is among the highest in the EU particularly among the disadvantaged social groups.**
- **The provision of social services is insufficient and their integration with labour market services remains incomplete.**
- Income inequality, poverty and social exclusion remain high.
- **Work is ongoing on disability reform and de-institutionalisation of adults and children.**

IV. Anything else?

- **The population is ageing and shrinking fast.**
- **Disparities between urban and rural areas and between different regions are high.**
- **Inequality of opportunity – in education, healthcare and housing – is among the highest in the EU.**
- **Children, the elderly and people with disabilities face a higher risk of poverty.**
- **The poverty gap for people with disabilities is among the highest in the EU.**

Additional Information

- European Commission: 2018 Country Report for [Bulgaria](#)
- EASPD [Activities on the European Semester](#)

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