



# *Working attitudes and problems in the professional realization of young people in Bulgaria*

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## **1. Introduction**

Today's generation of young people face one of the biggest challenges. Since the start of the financial and economic crisis, levels of youth unemployment has reached unprecedented sizes throughout Europe. Since the start of the recession, there has been a significant increase in youth unemployment in all EU Member States.

**The purpose** of this article is to reveal what are the working attitudes of young people in Bulgaria, whether they are preventing them from developing their careers and what difficulties young people face when looking for a job in the country.

The following tasks have been achieved to achieve this goal:

- Analysis of the problem of youth unemployment in Bulgaria and the EU;
- The reasons for the difficult professional realization of the young people in Bulgaria have been identified;
- A survey was conducted among young people aged 15-29 in Bulgaria about their wishes, requirements and working attitudes and professional realization.

## **2. The Problem of Youth Unemployment in Bulgaria and the European Union**

Youth employment is a national priority that requires particular public and political attention and effective policy coordination in this regard. The Youth Guarantee, which provides € 100 million to combat this unemployment, is in place from 2014. Some operations under Operational Program

"Human Resources Development" were started up, targeting young people up to 29 years of age. There is a great interest from the employers. They offer training for young people before work, and then a period of subsidized employment. Especially attractive is the "New Workplace" program, which provides, in addition to training and an investment component, equipment in the workplace. €55 million is the budget that the European Commission has allocated to reduce youth unemployment in Bulgaria under the new operational program "Human Resources Development" "2014-2020. The funds are intended to encourage young people aged 15-24 to enter the real labor market or back into the education system.

All these programs to tackle youth unemployment result in reducing youth unemployment, but unfortunately its level is still quite high. In December 2016, the unemployed youths in Bulgaria are 22.4% according to data of the National Statistical Institute (see Figure 1). As shown in Figure 1, the largest number of unemployed youths are in Greece, Spain and Italy, and the smallest number is in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Godishen obzor na Agentshiyata po zaetostta za pazara na truda prez 2016, <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/4/208/>*

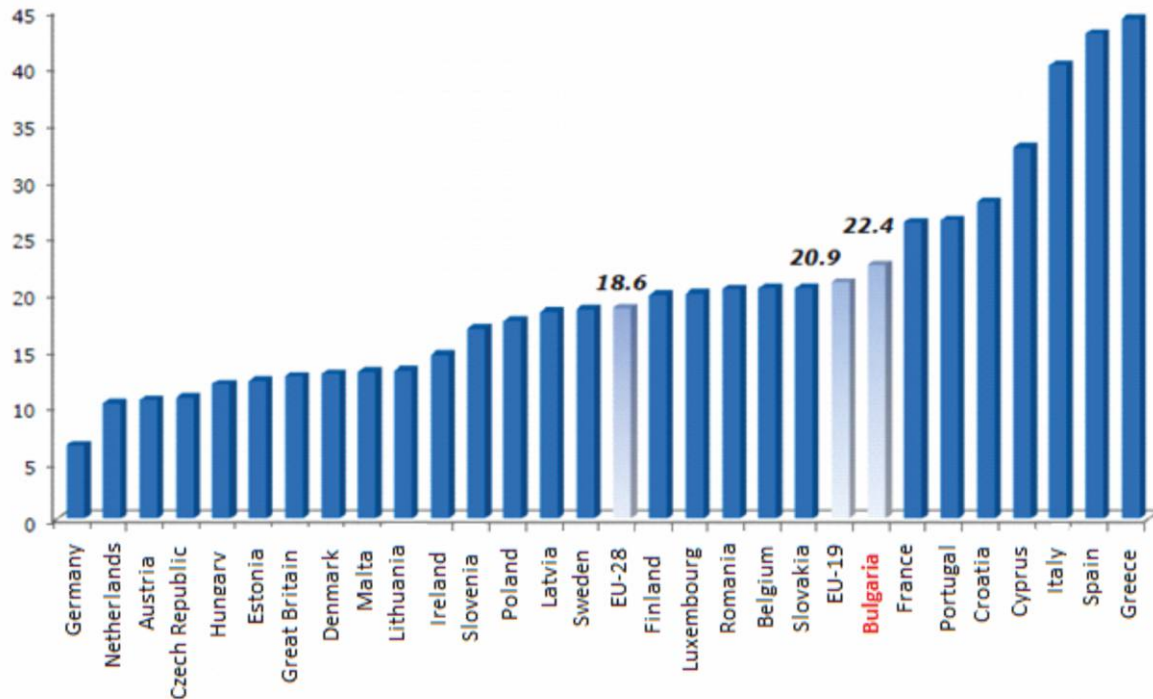


Figure 1: Youth unemployment in the European Union in December 2016

In Bulgaria, the employment rate in the 15-24 age group is about 23%, i.e. less than 1/4 of the young people of this age work. The clash with the labor market is postponed in practice.. In Europe this percentage is about 35%, and in some northern or northwest countries it is about 50%. In the Netherlands, 50% of young people work hourly. Over 3.9 million of young people in the EU are unemployed. According to data of the Employment Agency in January 2017, the unemployed youths in Bulgaria are 35420. By comparison, in 2012 the number was 74 779, and last year - 37 998, or 13.3% of all unemployed in the country.<sup>2</sup> (See Figure 2)

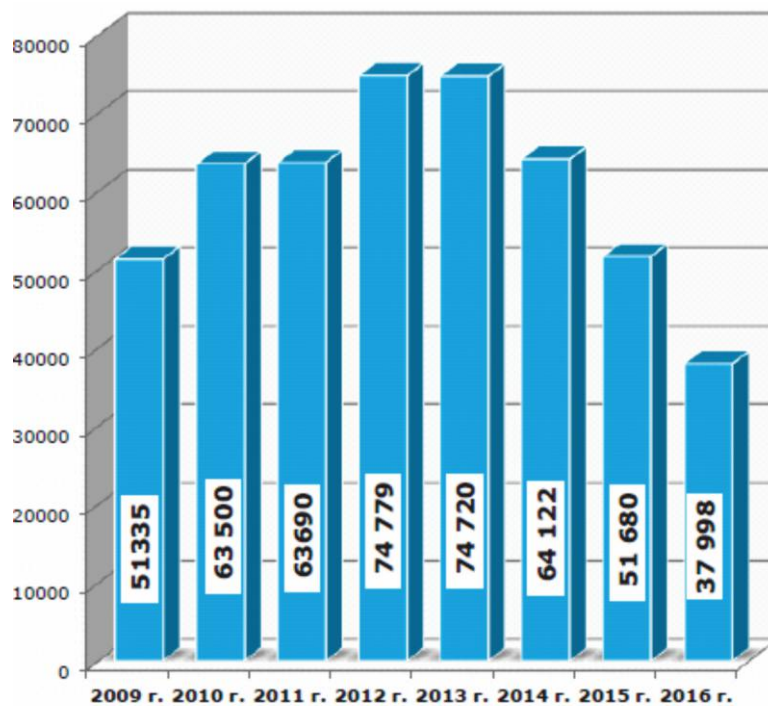


Figure 2: Average annual number of unemployed youths up to 29 years in the period 2009-2016.

<sup>2</sup> Godishen obzor na Agentshiyata po zаетostta za pazara na truda prez 2016, <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/4/208/>



Unemployment among young people has many long-term consequences for both the individual and the state as a whole. Finding jobs in unattractive fields or jobs that do not meet the education of young people leads to their alienation, disrespect and hatred of the system, encapsulation of young people in their imaginary, unreal world. By staying long-term unemployed, young people lose their skills acquired during their training, and many of them lose their desire and working habits.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Profile of the typical unemployed youth in Bulgaria

According to the Employment Agency by December 2016:

- 26.3% of the registered unemployed young people up to 24 years have primary and lower education, and 64.6% are young people without specialty and profession.<sup>4</sup>

- 26.7% of the registered youngsters up to 29 have primary and lower education, and 58.6% are young people without specialty and profession.

According to Unicef's survey conducted in 2015, the proportion of NEETs (youths up to 24 years of age who neither study nor work) among school-aged young people (15-18 years) is just under 11%, and among the older (between 19 and 24) reaches 28%. This, recalculated to the general population of 15-24-year-olds, means that there are 167,670 young people in the country who are not employed or involved in any form of education.<sup>5</sup>

Young people in the NEETs group are characterized by a clearly defined socio-demographic profile. The majority have secondary or lower education, they live mostly in small settlements, more than half belong to minority ethnic groups. Education is the socio-demographic characteristic that determines to the greatest extent the fall or failure of NEETs. The group includes both persons with all levels of education or those without

education. However, a significant proportion of them dropped out of school early (47%). The structure of NEETs is dominated by people from small settlements (63%). The smaller the settlement (as a type), the more the proportion of NEETs there grows. The reasons can be found mainly in the depopulation of small settlements and their poor economic situation as a result. This makes the settlement the third most important risk factor for joining the group. For minority ethnicity, gender is emerging as an additional risk factor for joining the group. A total of 44% of NEETs remain stable (over 1 year) in a non-learning, non-training and non-working environment. The longest in the group are prematurely dropped out of school and especially those who have never worked. The duration of the NEETs depends mainly on the education of young people.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Todorov, T.(2013), Sravnitelnen analiz na natsionalnite politiki za mladezhkata bezrobotitsha v Bulgariya i Velikobritaniya, [https://www.bezgranici.brtim.com/uploads/wysiwyg/images/Анализ%20Т\\_%20Тодоров.pdf](https://www.bezgranici.brtim.com/uploads/wysiwyg/images/Анализ%20Т_%20Тодоров.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Agentshiya po zacetostta, Statisticheski dannii za registriranite bezrobotni mladezhi v Byurata po truda, <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/1/201/>

<sup>5</sup> Unicef (2015), Otshenka na sustoqnieto I analiz na profila na podrastvashtite I mladezhite, koito ne rabotyat, ne uchat I ne se obuchavat (NEETs), [https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs\\_BG\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs_BG_Final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Unicef (2015), Otshenka na sustoqnieto I analiz na profila na podrastvashtite I mladezhite, koito ne rabotyat, ne uchat I ne se obuchavat (NEETs), [https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs\\_BG\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs_BG_Final.pdf)

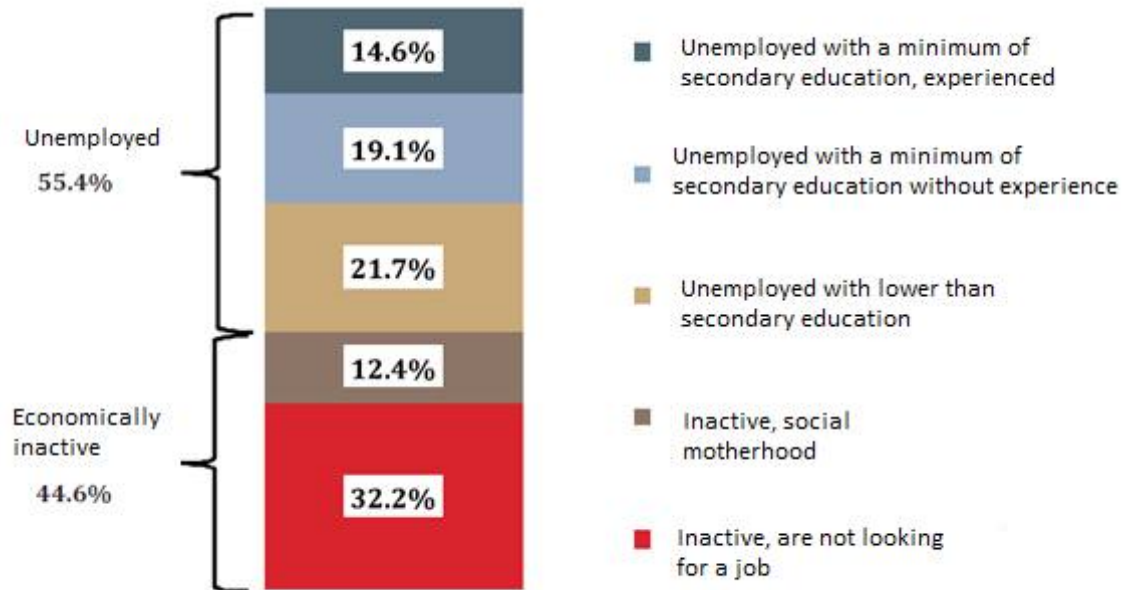


Figure 3: Main subgroups of NEETs

#### 4. Difficulties in starting the career of young people under 29 years of age

Youths are an important group on the labor market and are expected to respond to current market demands, the development of high-tech sectors and the search for a young and educated workforce.

By the end of 2015 and 2016, the economic activity of young people in Bulgaria at 15-24 years has fallen to its lowest level for at least 15 years - below 24%. By comparison, the EU average in 2015 is over 41%. The reasons for this are many: there are a number of cultural and social features that keep the economic activity of young people relatively low - such are the late age at which young people leave their parents' households, low levels of labor mobility, poor social and economic development. Some regions of the country and the problems of the labor and social integration of ethnic minorities. In 2014, a study by the Ministry of Youth and Sports showed that more than half of young people in Bulgaria have a passive image of their labor status and believe that "the state must guarantee a good life."

In the current economic situation where firms are pressed to the wall to use the most of their resources, they are reluctant to invest in training or longer-term investment in the staff but to get ready.

In many cases young university graduates who can not be realized in their specialties in the market in our country decide to look for work abroad among less qualified professions.

The **main challenges** and causes of the difficult job placement among young people are:

- **Early school leaving, lack of specialty, low education**

The chances of people without education and training to find a job are very small. According to data from the Employment Agency of April 2017, young people under the age of 29 are 34 520. Those with basic and lower education retain the largest share - 46.4%, while the youngsters with higher education are 12.5%. According to the professional structure, the largest relative share of all unemployed youths up to 29 years old are those without specialty and profession - 61.6%.<sup>7</sup>

According to the results of an ESTAT<sup>8</sup> survey conducted in 2015, education is the key factor determining the formation of the NEETs group. About 47% of young people in this group are

<sup>7</sup> Agentsthiya po zaetostta, profesionalnata I obrazovatelna struktura na registriranite bezrabotni mladezhi v Byurata po truda, Statistika, Mesec April, <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/1/214/>

<sup>8</sup> ESTAT is a company for collecting, processing and analyzing research data and providing consulting services in the field of marketing



dropped out of school prematurely, i.e. they have either basic or lower than primary education. 69% of youngsters in NEETs have almost no qualifications, and 67% of them have never worked.<sup>9</sup>

Young people without specialty have little opportunity for realization on the labor market. They are left out of work for a long time, which leads to a loss of motivation and work habits. Many of these young people do not have a job, but they do not look for it, but they are waiting for someone “to arrange them”. This may be due, on the one hand, to insufficient knowledge of where to look for a job and how to present themselves during an interview and, on the other hand, to job constraints in small settlements.

- **Inadequacy of education with the required qualification by employers**

More than 62% of employers are experiencing serious difficulties in finding suitable candidates for vacant jobs. The imbalance between demand and supply of skills in the labor market is deepening with each passing year. Especially critical is the shortage of qualified workers and specialists.

The labor market experiences a chronic shortage of highly skilled workers - service workers, mechanics, technicians, technologists, operators, drivers, welders, tourism specialists and others. It is becoming more and more problematic to find highly qualified specialists such as engineers, teachers, medical specialists, chemists, environmentalists, financiers, marketing specialists, IT specialists, executive directors, functional managers.<sup>10</sup>

Study from 2012 of Deloitte Consulting Bulgaria among students from leading Bulgarian universities shows that slightly more than half (54%) of students believe that the specialty that follows is sought by employers, one third of whom think they can find work for up to 12 months.<sup>11</sup>

Discrepancy between education and the qualifications sought by the employers is a major problem in young people's employment.<sup>12</sup> This discrepancy is manifested in the following directions:

- Staff shortage for certain production areas;
- Over - education of candidates when graduates occupy jobs requiring lower educational qualifications;
- Insufficient professional knowledge and skills in the acquired specialty.<sup>13</sup>

- **Lack of professional experience, low qualification**

In the labor market, young people face a specific problem: the requirement, often enforced, to have already a work experience to get started. Young people in Bulgaria are one of the latest in the labor market compared to other EU countries. After completing their education, most of the young people in Bulgaria have no practical and working experience, leading to their harder entry into the labor market. Young people often face the inability to accumulate work experience. They fall into a vicious circle - they do not hire them because they do not have an internship, but they can not accumulate it once they do not hire them.

- **Insufficient and inconsistent job search activity**

Another problem for the large number of unemployed youths is the culture of job search among young people - first of all they turn to relatives and friends. More unpopular among the young remains the demand with advertisements, employers or labor offices where job opportunities are real. According to the Employment Agency, the realization of the young people on the labor market through the intermediation of the labor offices is as follows (see Table 1).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “Pazara na truda I mladite hora – predizvikatelstva I politiki, Diskusionen forum organiziran ot Sdruzhenie “Mladezhki forum 21 vek”, svumestno s KNSB I Fondatshiya “Fridrikh Ebert”, <http://www.knsb-bg.org>

<sup>10</sup> Tomov, T.(2016), Mit ili realnost e kvalifitshiraniyat bulgarin, <https://trud.bg>

<sup>11</sup> Deloitte Bulgaria (2013), Blizo dve treti ot bulgarskite student rabotyat ili stazhuvat, [http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761\\_deloit\\_bulgariai\\_blyzo\\_dve\\_treti\\_ot\\_bulgarskite/](http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761_deloit_bulgariai_blyzo_dve_treti_ot_bulgarskite/)

<sup>12</sup> Teichler, U., (2007), *Careers of university graduates*, Springer

<sup>13</sup> Yordanova, D.(2013), Prekhod ot visshe obrazovanie kum profesionalna realizatshiya- spetshifika, problemi I zainteresovani strani, Nauchni trudove na Rusenskiya universitet, tom 52, seriya 5.1., p.182-186

<sup>14</sup> Godishen obzor na Agentshiyata po zaetostta za pazara na truda prez 2016, <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/4/208/>



Table 1: The realization of young people on the labor market through the intermediation of the labor offices in 2016.

Indicators	Young people up to 24 years old	Youngsters up to 29 years old (incl. 24 years old)
Started work on employment measures	1023	1969
Started work on employment programs	715	2073
Started work under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development"	9117	19 064
Started work in the primary market	15 102	40 269

The vision of young people's careers is based on subjective notions, public stereotypes, family expectations, etc. rather than on a motivated and informed choice. Labor market competition, exacerbated by unemployment, makes it more or less necessary to use parental opportunities, as well as its own connections and intercessions. The importance of ties and intercessions in the small city is great, as everyone is aware, this network is as important as personal abilities.<sup>15</sup>

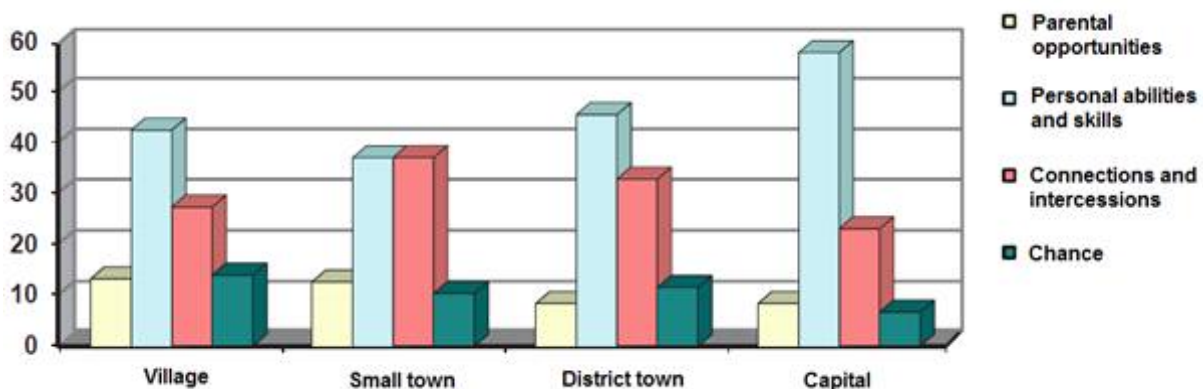


Figure 4: The most important factor for finding a job according to the settlement (in %)<sup>16</sup>

#### • Differences in the expectations of young people and employers

Quality education and training, successful labor market integration and increased mobility of young people are key to unlocking their full potential and achieving their goals. The transition from education to employment, the provision of first job and the increase in employment have a crucial role to play in the employment of young people. The discrepancy between the expectations of young people and reality is sometimes huge. A contributing factor is education itself.

A large proportion of young people completing education, have too high self-esteem and too high Requirements to employers. Perhaps that is the difference. So, after completing their education, most of them remain out of the labor market, and for them the top priority is not finding a job.

<sup>15</sup> Mitev, P, S.Kovacheva(2014), Mladite hora v evropeyska Bulgariya, sotshiologicheski portret, Fondatshiya "Fridrikh Ebert"

<sup>16</sup> Mitev, P, S.Kovacheva(2014), Mladite hora v evropeyska Bulgariya, sotshiologicheski portret, Fondatshiya "Fridrikh Ebert"



The high self-esteem and expectations of young people regarding their future realization are reasons for extending the process of transition from higher education to professional realization. For most young people, three major problems are identified; First, a tendency to overestimate the quality and scope of their competences is formed as a group trend. Secondly and directly related to the above - their pay expectations often exceed the amounts that employers are willing to pay for employees who have not worked. And thirdly, there is a clear tendency for young people to have significant expectations about the quality of the work environment and the opportunities that employers have to provide.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the requirements of employers are increasing. The fact that 92% of the registered companies in the country are micro-enterprises (up to 10 employees) requires the combination of several roles in one job and forces employers to look for more and more multifunctional specialists with hybrid qualifications and a wide range of skills.<sup>18</sup>

- **The lack of a link between education and the labor market**

The lack of commitment of education to the labor market is a problem in both secondary and higher education. The lack of a developed dual education system leads to the breakdown of the relationship between future professionals and business. By completing their education, young people are not prepared to practice the knowledge they have.

At the base of the difficulties in school are two major problem areas in the education system, registered by young people, and by institutions working directly with them. The first is related to the teaching material and teaching, and in particular to the poor orientation of learning to practice, the large volume and lack of focus and structure of the curriculum, the passive model, and the lack of an interactive approach to teaching. It is necessary to apply modern technologies in training and to increase the participation of young people and

adolescents in the process of acquiring knowledge by stimulating creative and analytical thinking and formulating ideas and vision for their own future. The second concerns the way in which schools are funded. The formula "more students = more money" is valid for both schools and higher education institutions. It leads to the vicious practice of admitting to upper classes / courses persons who have not reached the required level only for the purpose of staying in the school / university. This leads to a decrease in the overall quality of education, as there is no competition. The most extreme dimension of the problem is the educational paradox to be acquired by illiterate young people. In the long run, the striving to preserve students at all costs leads to the continually decreasing confidence of young people in the education system and its potential to be the basis for their development.<sup>19</sup>

The exaggerated for the Bulgarian capabilities number of higher education institutions develops the mistakes of secondary education and thus leads to the presence of many young people with "unnecessary diplomas" who have no idea what else to do but wait for "someone to give them a job".<sup>20</sup>

The weakness of higher education institutions is that educational practice and applied pedagogical approaches have not been sufficiently adapted to the development of professional expertise, such as inadequate curricula, teaching methods and forms of assessment. Skills and knowledge are often not practical, and portable skills are not given enough attention in the teaching and assessment process.<sup>21</sup>

According to Deloitte study, less than a quarter of respondents think the university has prepared them well or at least relatively well for practical work. An even smaller share - only 11% - has been helped and well prepared for job search.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Unicef (2015), Otshenka na sustoqniето I analiz na profila na podrastvashite I mladezhite, koito ne rabotyat, ne uchat I ne se obuchavat (NEETs),

[https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs\\_BG\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs_BG_Final.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Deutsche Welle (2016), Ima li koy da raboti v Bulgariya, [https://offnews.bg/news/Analizi\\_289/Ima-li-koj-da-raboti-v-Bulgariia\\_635770.html](https://offnews.bg/news/Analizi_289/Ima-li-koj-da-raboti-v-Bulgariia_635770.html)

<sup>21</sup> Yordanova, D.(2013), Prekhod ot vishe obrazovanie kum profesionalna realizatshiya- spetshifika, problemi I zainteresovani strani, Nauchni trudove na Rusenskiya universitet, tom 52, seriya 5.1., p.182-186

<sup>22</sup> Deloitte Bulgaria (2013), Blizo dve treti ot bulgarskite student rabotyat ili stazhuvat, [http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761\\_deloit\\_bulgaria\\_blizo\\_dve\\_treti\\_ot\\_bulgarskite/](http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761_deloit_bulgaria_blizo_dve_treti_ot_bulgarskite/)

<sup>17</sup> Yordanova, D.(2013), Prekhod ot vishe obrazovanie kum profesionalna realizatshiya- spetshifika, problemi I zainteresovani strani, Nauchni trudove na Rusenskiya universitet, tom 52, seriya 5.1., p.182-186

<sup>18</sup> Tomov, T.(2016), Mit ili realnost e kvalifitshiraniyat bulgarin, <https://trud.bg>



It is necessary to work towards the improvement and the adequacy of the coordination of the training of staff and their professional realization, so that the preparation and qualification of the young people is in line with the requirements of the available job vacancies in the labor market.

In this direction, schemes should be developed to update curricula in the educational system to the requirements of the labor market. In this way, business will be given the opportunity to work with the management of educational establishments in order to prepare such training programs that will give adequate professional qualification to the staff.

One good practice in this regard is the possibility of student practices, which provide opportunities for young people as they learn to reconcile theoretical with practical training. According to the aforementioned Deloitte Bulgaria survey, the predominant opinion of the students surveyed is that internships and employment during the course of study open up more opportunities for career development. About 70% of young people surveyed have passed a traineeship or some kind of professional practice, and nearly two thirds are still trained or already have a permanent position.<sup>23</sup>

The aim of the currently implemented Student Practices - Phase I project is to improve the quality of higher education and to build a good relationship between business and higher education institutions to facilitate the realization of students on the labor market. By practical training in a real work environment, students have the opportunity to build on their theoretical knowledge, acquire new skills and competences, be valued, and learn to achieve a visible and clear result of their work. In addition, they may receive recommendations from employers to facilitate their further professional realization. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science under the Operational Program "Science and Education for Smart Growth" with the support of the European Structural and Investment Funds. The project has a budget of 37 million levs and it is attended by 48 universities from the country. By the end of the project over 40,000 students are expected to complete their practice.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Deloitte Bulgaria (2013), Blizo dve treti ot bulgarskite student rabotyat ili stazhuvat, [http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761\\_deloit\\_bulgariaa\\_blizo\\_dve\\_treti\\_ot\\_bulgarskite/](http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761_deloit_bulgariaa_blizo_dve_treti_ot_bulgarskite/)

<sup>24</sup> <http://praktiki.mon.bg/sp/>

#### • **Lack of motivation for young people to work**

Lack of motivation and values are among the leading reasons why many young people are not looking for a job. Generations and social groups have forgotten what work is and have become "subscribers of the state". Only 20% of those registered in the Labor Offices are willing to start work. The rest are expecting social benefits and are not looking for employment because they will lose the expected support. Thus, about 30 000 jobs, including in areas with high unemployment, remain unoccupied.<sup>25</sup> A large proportion of the unemployed youth rely on the funds their parents sent from abroad, which in many cases are more than the monthly salary they would receive if they work.

The reasons for the lack of motivation are varied: the conscious response to the limited opportunities for professional realization, the discrepancy between the educational level and the requirements of the labor market, low pay and unwillingness to work or training. Young people themselves often point out that they do not work and / or do not study because "I want to rest / I'm just finished" (18%) and "Do not want to work / learn" (11%). 12% do not know why they are in this situation.<sup>26</sup>

According to Unicef the possible reasons for these answers are three:<sup>27</sup>

1/. The first is that reluctance to work and training stems from parental financial security and support that leaves the young person doing whatever they see fit without encouraging them to develop.

2/. The second possible reason is that behind the denial lies the justification for the unfavorable situation in which the young person has fallen and the cover of the feeling of failure in terms of professional realization. Thus the situation is presented as a personal choice, not as a lack of opportunities and a bad coincidence of circumstances.

<sup>25</sup> Tomov, T.(2016), Mit ili realnost e kvalifitshiraniyat bulgarin, <https://trud.bg>

<sup>26</sup> Unicef (2015), Otshenka na sustoqnieto I analiz na profila na podrastvashtite I mladezhite, koito ne rabotyat, ne uchat I ne se obuchavat (NEETs), [https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs\\_BG\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs_BG_Final.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Unicef (2015), Otshenka na sustoqnieto I analiz na profila na podrastvashtite I mladezhite, koito ne rabotyat, ne uchat I ne se obuchavat (NEETs), [https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs\\_BG\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/2015/NEETs_BG_Final.pdf)





3/. The third possible reason is the lack of willingness to work or to study as a result of the negative impact of the family environment and the encirclement, when the role models do not stimulate development but, on the contrary, give ideas for other opportunities.

Motivation is internal and external. In the inner development activity and the responsibility for one's own life is intrinsic to the individual. It is a function of the character of the young person. Active and struggling natures have a much better chance of realizing, especially if supported by their families. To external motivation, reasons are sought outside the personality - the amount of remuneration, working conditions, etc. More passive youths, with less ambitions and more vague goals, are threatened by longer-term

unemployment, as they often expect the help to come from outside (someone to offer them a job) and take no action to change the situation they are in.

• **Lack of practical skills and work habits among young people**

Another major problem in looking for a job is the lack of confidence about their own capabilities and skills to formulate their competitive advantages. Employers are looking not only for technical and academic skills, but also for qualities like openness, responsibility and organization. A survey conducted in Bulgaria at the end of 2010 by the Business Education Foundation among 119 employers showed that the most important skills and qualities they are looking for in their potential employees are:<sup>28</sup>

*Table 2: Qualities and skills that employers look for in their employees*

Skills	Characteristic
<b>Professional skills and knowledge</b>	Specific skills and knowledge of the professional field, an adequate view of the job
<b>Readiness and willingness to learn</b>	Receptivity, curiosity, desire for self-improvement, search and acceptance of feedback
<b>Adaptability</b>	Skill to adapt to corporate culture, flexibility, rapid orientation to the changing environment, including skills to work under stress and in short terms
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	Teamwork skills, collaboration, conflict resolution, community, creating contacts
<b>Efficiency</b>	Ability to handle work tasks with good results
<b>Self-management skills</b>	Responsibility, autonomy, organization of time and work tasks
<b>Motivation</b>	Enthusiasm, positive attitude to work
<b>Communication in native language</b>	Clear, convincing and literate expression in oral and written form
<b>Foreign Language Competencies</b>	Use (written and spoken) in a foreign language, intercultural experience and knowledge
<b>Self presentation</b>	Skills for successful performance (including when applying for a job and during an interview), self-confidence, positivity, persuasiveness, business communication and label
<b>Computer skills</b>	Use of word processing programs, tables, Internet applications
<b>Office Skills</b>	Finding and organizing information, documents, data; working habits; use of office equipment
<b>Customer Service Skills</b>	Responsiveness, empathy, positive attitude, tact, tolerance, patience, kindness

<sup>28</sup> Umeniya za zaetost- koi sa te I kak da gi razvivame, Naruchnik za mladezhi, Fondatshiya na biznesa za obrazovanieto I NAtshionalen tshentur za Evropeyski mladezhki programi I initsiativi, www.fbo.bg/files/Report\_Employability\_Skills\_of\_Young\_People\_in\_Bulgaria.doc



<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Loyalty, honesty, integrity</b>
<b>Critical thinking</b>	Analytics, logic, impartiality, precision, depth
<b>Creative skills</b>	Creativity, innovativeness, resourcefulness, ingenuity, non-standard thinking
<b>Entrepreneurial skills</b>	Initiative, enterprise, proactivity, business knowledge and sense, determination, decision-making and risk-taking skills
<b>Leadership skills</b>	Skills to plan, manage and motivate people, make decisions, negotiate, etc.
<b>Technical skills</b>	Specific skills for using software, programs and equipment
<b>Mathematical skills</b>	Work with numbers, accuracy, methodicality, accuracy

Bulgarian employers and young people themselves think that among the skills that young people in Bulgaria possess are: readiness and willingness to learn, motivation to work, native language communication, computer and creative skills. Young people have the least degree of self-assessment and employers' mathematical skills, entrepreneurial skills, professional knowledge and skills, efficiency, leadership skills, technical skills, self-management, critical thinking Environments, self-presentation and office skills.<sup>29</sup>

The Foundation for Business and Education points to a few more key indicators, which employers identify as missing or poorly developed among young people in Bulgaria and which are particularly necessary for the adaptation of the labor market, namely.<sup>30</sup>

*Table 3: Skills required by employers to adapt the labor market to young people*

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>
<b>Knowledge of labor rights and obligations</b>	When can I start work, what documents are needed, what contracts are there, insurance, hospital, maternity, tax, what to do if my rights are violated
<b>Creating a convincing cover Letter</b>	Although not required as often as the curriculum vitae, the cover letter plays an equally important role in applying for a job. Its compilation hampers even more experienced candidates, as it requires to express convincingly the arguments for work and to advertise their own advantages in accordance with the requirements of the employers
<b>Presentation during an interview</b>	Behavior that is built with experience and can be rehearsed and learned with the help of a career consultant
<b>Job searching</b>	Knowledge of ways to reach workplaces and sources of information
<b>Behavior at work</b>	Employer expectations, company culture - hierarchy, communication, protocol, clothing, working time, obligations, etc. Internship programs, meetings with employers and alumni (former alumni) for exchange of experience, volunteering help for the creation of this skill
<b>Adequate pay expectations</b>	A real idea of how the skills, experience and knowledge of employees are valued in the labor market

<sup>29</sup> Umeniya za zаетost- koi sa te I kak da gi razvivame, Naruchnik za mladezhi, Fondatshiya na biznesa za obrazovaniето I NAtshionalen tshentur za Evropeyski mladezhki programi I initsiativi, [www.fbo.bg/files/Report\\_Employability\\_Skills\\_of\\_Young\\_People\\_in\\_Bulgaria.doc](http://www.fbo.bg/files/Report_Employability_Skills_of_Young_People_in_Bulgaria.doc)

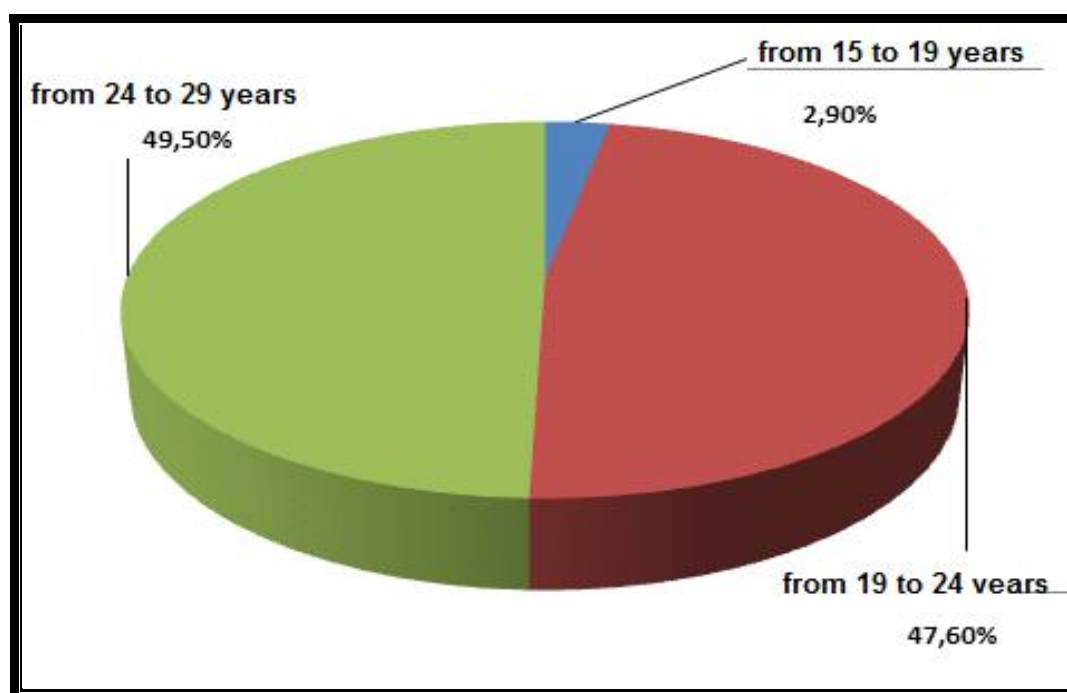
<sup>30</sup> Умения за заетост – кои са те и как да ги развиваме, Наръчник за младежи, Фондация на бизнеса за образованието и Национален център за Европейски младежки програми и инициативи, [www.fbo.bg/files/Report\\_Employability\\_Skills\\_of\\_Young\\_People\\_in\\_Bulgaria.doc](http://www.fbo.bg/files/Report_Employability_Skills_of_Young_People_in_Bulgaria.doc)

- **Tendency to emigrate abroad**

According to the aforementioned Deloitte Bulgaria survey, most of the respondents (70%) tend to emigrate in case they receive a better job offer in another country.<sup>31</sup> Bulgarians most often emigrate from 20 to 29 years old. The high level of youth unemployment is one of the main factors determining their emigration in their attempts to find better places to live and work in the labor market. This, in turn, creates problems both for the countries hosting the young immigrants and for the countries where they come from.

## 5. Methodology of the study

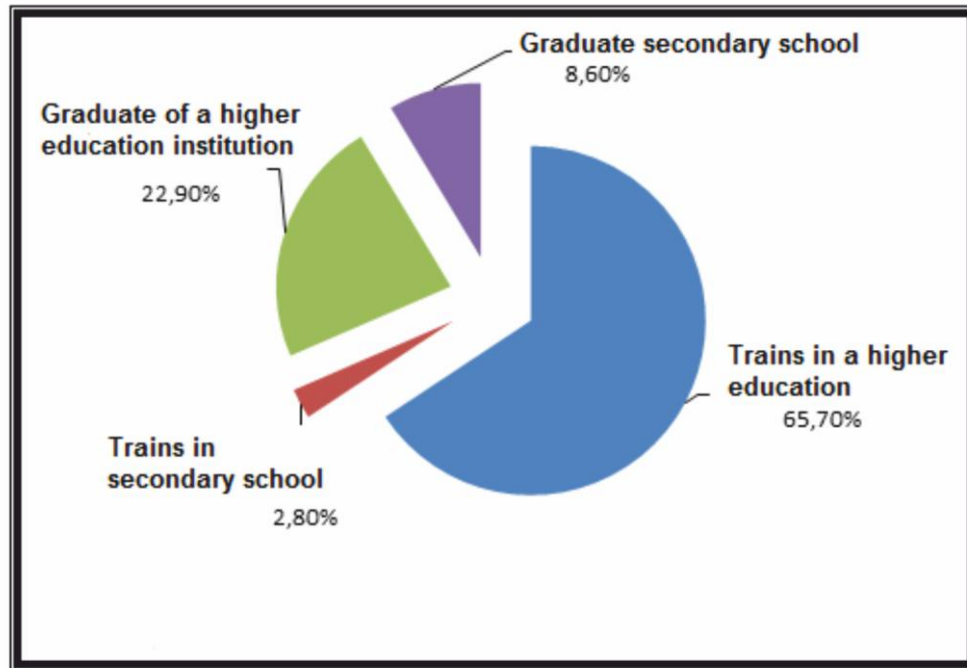
This study was conducted among 210 young people up to 29 years of age - pupils, students and graduates from Sofia and the country. 57.1% of them are women, 42.9% are men. In the category between 15 and 19 years of age, in which young people in Bulgaria are still in secondary education, only 2.9% of the surveyed fall, 47.6% are in the group between 19 and 24 years, the majority of which are still students and in the group of those already graduated (between 24 and 29 years of age) are 49.5% (see Figure 5).



*Figure 5: Distribution of the youngsters studied by age*

Most of the young people surveyed are still trained in a higher education institution (65.7%), 22.9% have already completed their higher education, 8.6% have completed secondary education and have not completed a higher education institution. Only 2.8% are still secondary school students (see Figure 6).

<sup>31</sup> Deloitte Bulgaria (2013), Blizo dve treti ot bulgarskite student rabotyat ili stazhuvat, [http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761\\_deloit\\_bulgariaa\\_blizo\\_dve\\_treti\\_ot\\_bulgarskite/](http://www.dnevnik.bg/biznes/2013/04/09/2037761_deloit_bulgariaa_blizo_dve_treti_ot_bulgarskite/)



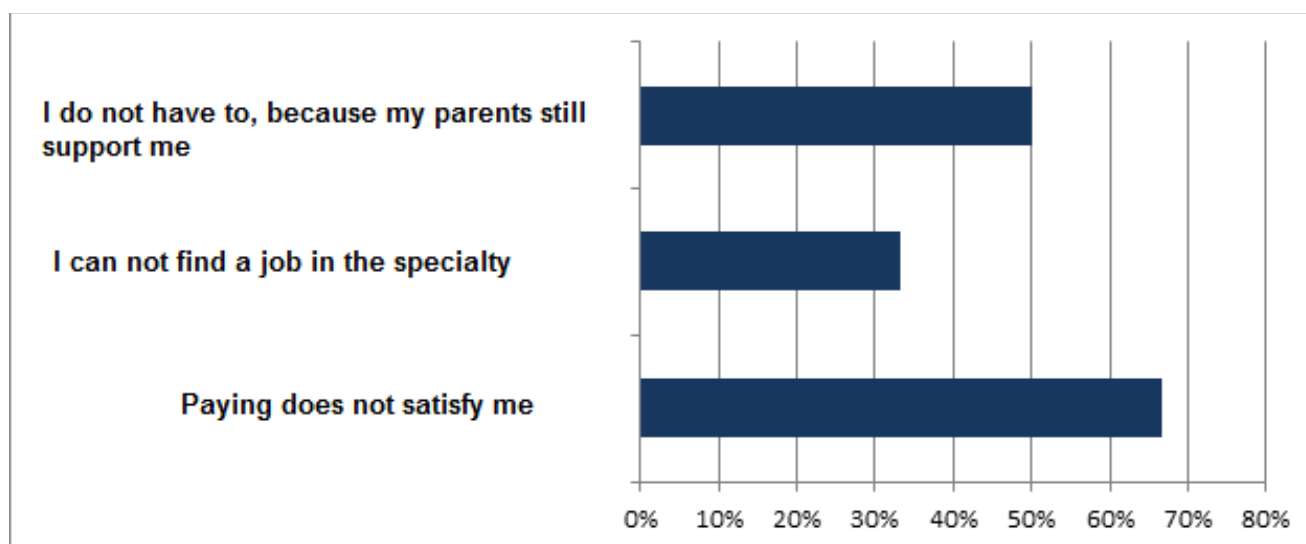
*Figure 6: Educational status of young people surveyed*

The survey was conducted through a questionnaire including 17 closed and 1 open question, and on some of the questions the participants had the opportunity to express their opinion in the "other" answer. The purpose of the survey is to investigate young people's attitudes to work, which prevent them from finding a job or growing up in their careers. Because of the limited number of respondents, the survey can not claim for representativeness, but could draw the attention of researchers and practitioners to further research into working attitudes among young people in order to support their realization in the labor market. The results of the study are processed with MS Excel.

## **6. Results of the study**

The problem of youth unemployment is serious and requires a national strategy to solve it. As mentioned above in the article, the percentage of unemployed Bulgarian youth, as well as those in Europe and the world, is still high. A large part of the youngsters involved in the survey are already working (82.9%), most likely due to the fact that the majority of respondents are university graduates or are currently studying at a higher education institution and for them it is easy to find a job. Among

the reasons for not working at the moment, the remaining 17.1% of the respondents mention first the unsatisfactory pay, offered by the employers (66.7%) (see Figure 7).



*Figure 7: Reasons for the lack of work among the youngsters surveyed  
(The sum of the percentages is more than 100 because the respondents had the opportunity to give more than one answer)*

What is worrying is that a large proportion of them (50%) do not work because they still rely on their parents to support them. According to Eurostat, Bulgarians live with their parents relatively late until the age of 30, which is above the average for Europe - about 26 years.<sup>32</sup> According to the author of the article, this is most likely due to the traditionally stronger attachment of children and parents in our country and the lack of financial means for independent living. On the other hand, it prevents young people from entering the labor market because they are not forced to look for jobs to survive.

<sup>32</sup> Bulgarite zhiveyat s roditelite si do blizo 30 godishna vuzrast (2017), [http://www.capital.bg/multimedia/infografiki/2017/05/10/2968420\\_grafika\\_na\\_denia\\_bulgarite\\_jiveiat\\_s\\_roditelite\\_si\\_do/](http://www.capital.bg/multimedia/infografiki/2017/05/10/2968420_grafika_na_denia_bulgarite_jiveiat_s_roditelite_si_do/)

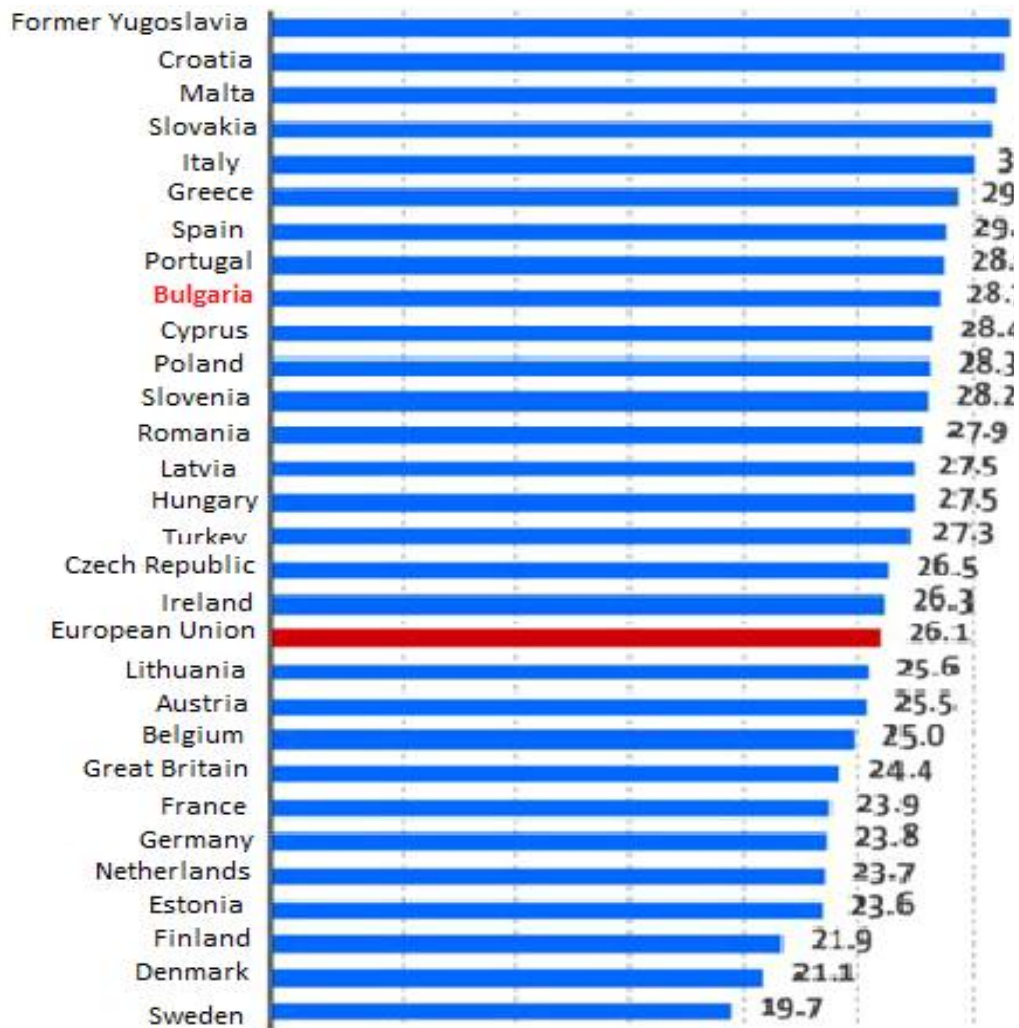
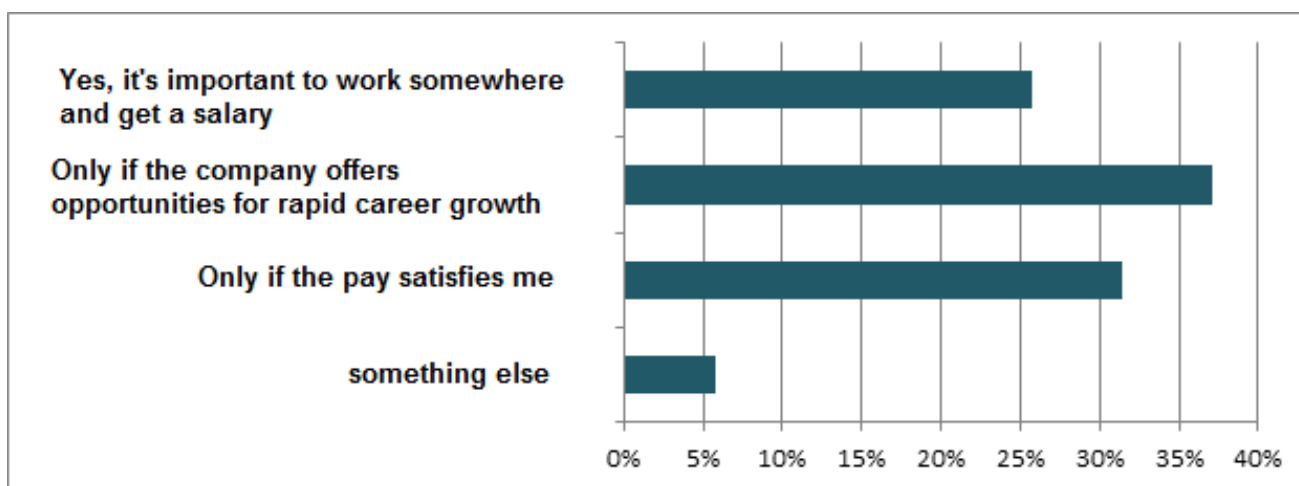


Figure 8: Age at which young people in Europe leave their parents  
Source: Eurostat

The results of the research also show the comparatively low mobility of young people - 25.7% of them say they would definitely not leave the place where they live to start working in their specialty, against just 31.4% , definitely change their place of residence to develop their careers.

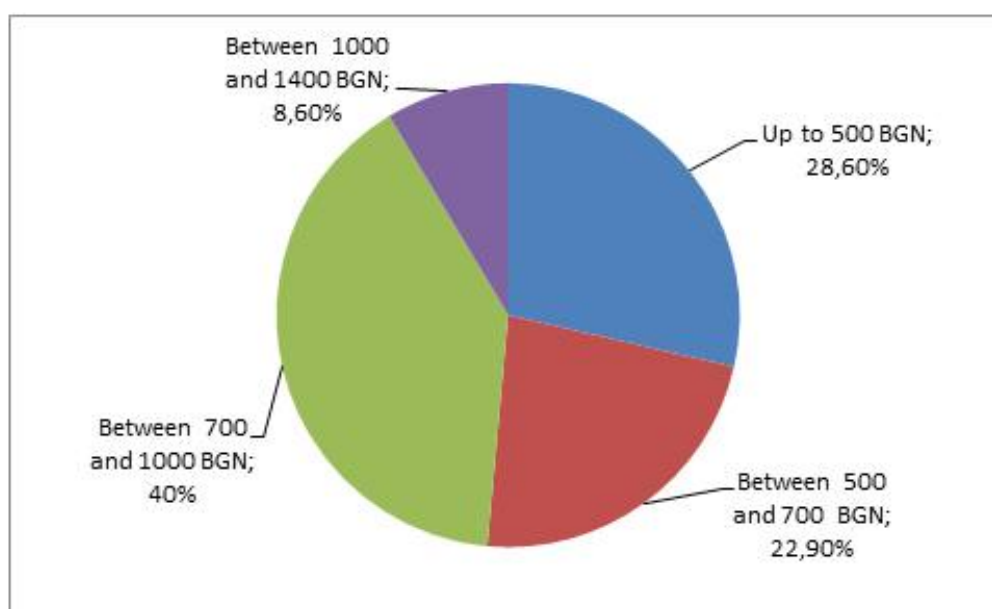
Nearly 1/3 of those surveyed (33.3%) claim that they can not find a job in their specialty (see Figure 7) and only 25.7% would start any job just to work and sustain. Almost 2/3 of the surveyed indicate that they would start work in a lower position only if the company offers a good salary and the opportunity for rapid career development (see Figure 9).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> <https://novinite.eu/12-000-lv-zaplata-ochakvat-abiturienti-video/>



*Figure 9: Readiness to start work at a lower position than their qualifications*

In contrast to the prevailing opinion in the country and the data reported to the media, the young people involved in the present study demonstrate some relatively realistic expectations about the amount of pay they expect (or expected) at the start of their first job. Only 8.6% of them point out that they would not start working with a salary of less than 1,000 BGN (see figure 10). This, according to the author, is due to the fact that many of them are already working some kind of work even if they are not in the specialty and they have focused on what is happening on the labor market in Bulgaria and what are the real opportunities for paying for business. Unlike the studies included in this study, according to recently published data in the media, graduates of secondary education in 2017 do not know what kind of salary they are expecting, and those who still name some amount, it is between 1000 and 2000 , reaching even BGN 12,000.



*Figure 10: Preferred payout level*



To the question "How long after starting work you think you need to get a salary increase and promotion" the answers are quite mixed- little more than half of the respondents respond with between 6 months and 1 year (25.7% and 28, 6%). Not least, however, those who think they need to receive a raise and a wage increase after the first month - 20% of the surveyed. These results fully correspond to the results of another author's study, in which respondents of this generation indicate that the two strongest factors that would motivate them to start work in an organization are high pay and career development.<sup>34</sup>

Many employers believe that young people have poor working habits and behavior that prevents them from building a good career. As such, they indicate lack of initiative, lack of patience and persistence, bad working ethics, dissatisfaction with the management, irresponsibility, etc.<sup>35</sup>

The results about what are the attitudes of the young people, included in the survey, after they have already started work in an organization are interesting. Almost half (43%) of the respondents point out that they would work something that does not fit into their job descriptions only if this would lead to an increase in their remuneration or would give them the opportunity for development and careers. For 19.3% of respondents it is not a problem to be late for work with up to 30 minutes, little more than half will not be left after working hours if they are not paid for it (see Figure 11).

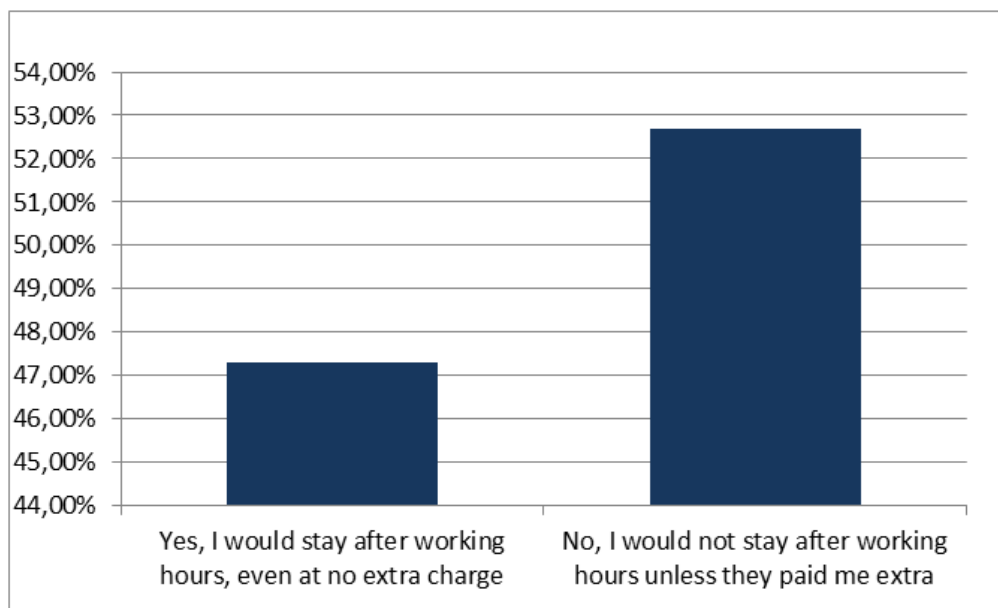


Figure . 11: Attitudes for stay at work after working hours without extra pay

It is also noticed that the willingness to take risks among the young people surveyed is not very large. A large number of them (48.7%) indicated that they would take risks at the workplace only if this would lead to an increase in their pay or opportunities for promotion (see Figure 12). Not a few people (9,7%) who under no circumstances would take risks at their workplace. This is indicative of the lack of initiative among many young people.

<sup>34</sup> Kicheva, T. (2017), Management of Employees from Different Generations - Challenge for Bulgarian Managers and HR Professionals, Journal Economic Alternatives, UNWE Publishing Complex, Issue 1, p.103-121

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.manager.bg>



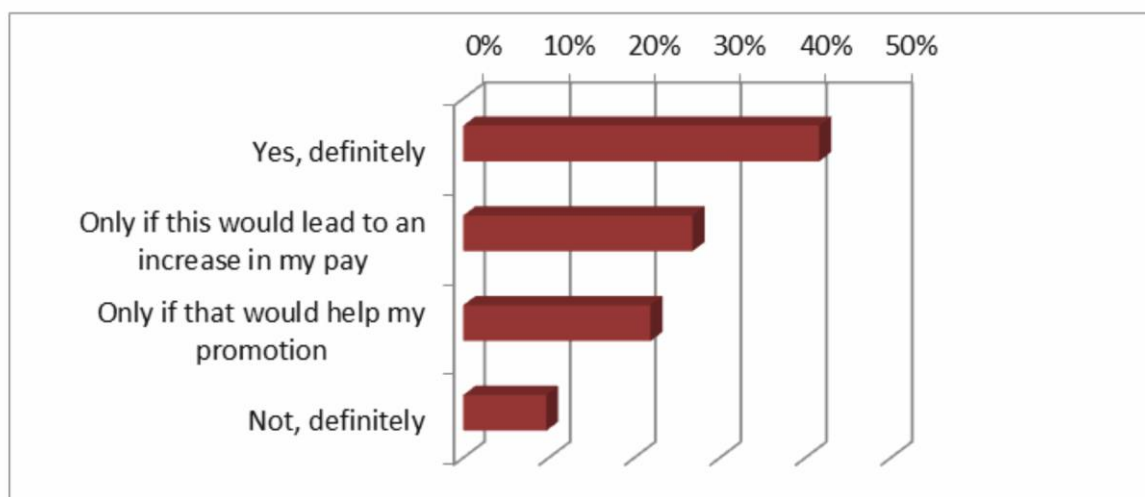


Figure 12: Readiness to take risks in the workplace

On the question "Would you emigrate abroad," little more than half (61.7%) of the respondents said they would. The most frequent reasons for this are: better paid work, studying in a prestigious university and lack of legality and order in our country (see Figure 13).

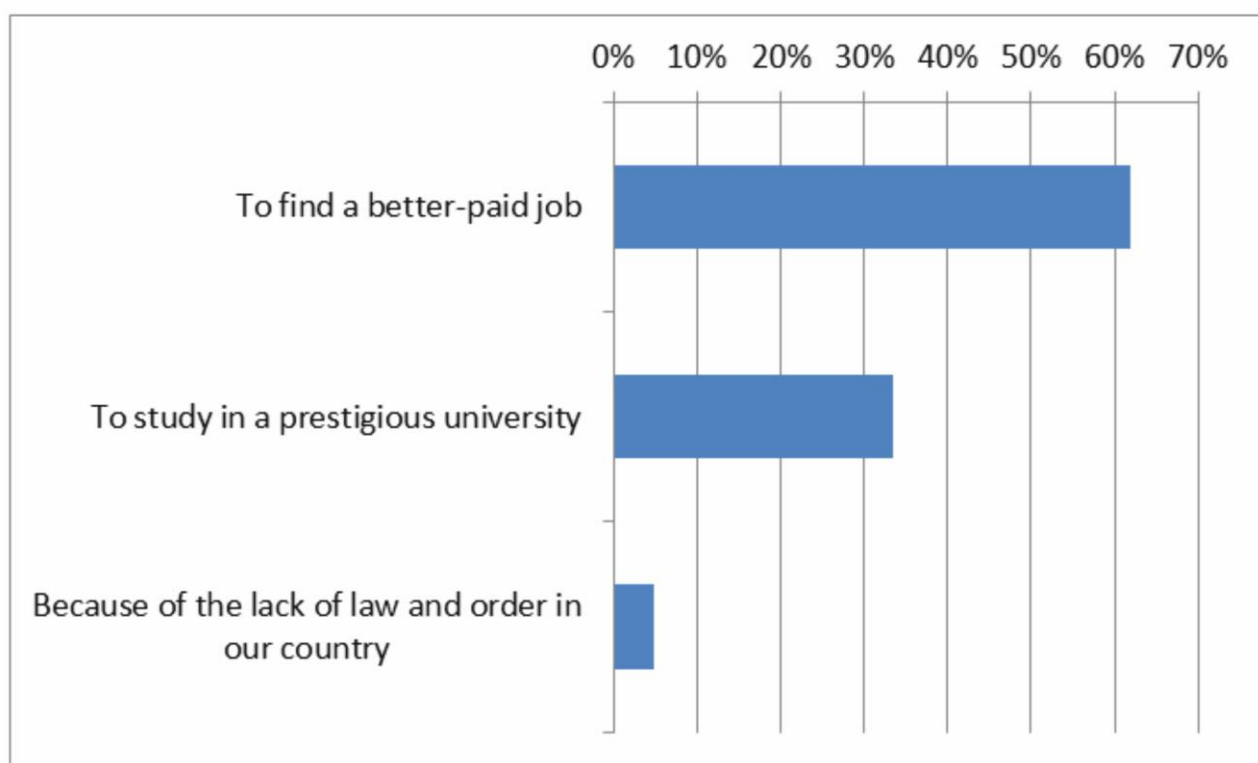


Figure.13: Reasons for the desire for emigration of young people



According to human resource managers, about 27,000 young people leave the country every year, with only 2-3% of those who study abroad returning to work in Bulgaria.<sup>36</sup> Although the minimum wage in the country is steadily increasing, the incomes of the Bulgarians remain much lower than those in the Western European countries. This, along with high levels of youth unemployment, makes Bulgarian young people emigrate abroad - usually Germany, Britain, Spain, Austria. Only 12% of the National Representative survey "Bulgarian Youth 2013" by the National Center for the Study of Public Opinion (NCIOM) said they intended to remain abroad for good forever. More often these are young people under the age of 18, low educated, unemployed and untied respondents.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

Every young person has the potential to be realized and to give him the opportunity to build a successful career, which in turn will provide him with a good material status, public recognition, will give him the right to choose. Bulgaria's EU membership gives young people the opportunity for professional mobility. Every young person can change jobs at any time and accept new challenges that will give him additional opportunities for development and professional growth.

The results of the study presented in the article show that young people in Bulgaria have a relatively realistic picture of the labor market in Bulgaria, the problems of transition from education to employment and the requirements of Bulgarian employers. Many of them are willing to work and study in Western European countries, but at the same time declare their willingness to return to Bulgaria and to become long-term in our country.

For this reason one of the main goals of the Bulgarian institutions should be to improve the opportunities for young people to realize in the country. This could be achieved by reforming and updating the educational system in the country to prepare young people for their professional realization. From the business side, more internships, training opportunities, and company presentations at various career forums could be

organized to motivate young people to stay and work professionally in the country.

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<sup>36</sup> Deutsche Welle (2016), Ima li koy da raboti v Bulgariya, [https://offnews.bg/news/Analizi\\_289/Ima-li-koj-da-raboti-v-Bulgariia\\_635770.html](https://offnews.bg/news/Analizi_289/Ima-li-koj-da-raboti-v-Bulgariia_635770.html)

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.manager.bg>



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