



## Youth Mediators

Young people are trained as youth mediators to help other young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) to become active

### BULGARIA

**Title of the practice (in original language)**

Младежки медиатори  
Mladezhki mediatori

**Who is implementing the practice?**

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)

**Which other organisations are involved in the practice?**

The organisations involved with Youth Mediators include the following:

- Bulgarian Public Employment Service (PES)
- Local municipalities with highest number of inactive youth
- Regional inspectorates of the Ministry of Education and Science (government)
- Local schools and universities (education)
- Information and counselling centres (NGOs)

The MLSP will evaluate the effectiveness of Youth Mediators.

**What are the main objectives of the practice?**

The primary objective of Youth Mediators is to identify young NEETs who are not registered with the Bulgarian PES, contact them, and inform them of careers' services and opportunities for education, employment or training.

**When was the practice implemented?**

2015 (ongoing)

**Which groups are targeted by the practice?**

Youth Mediators targets young people (up to the age of 29) not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Unemployed young people (registered with the PES) who have completed tertiary education are eligible to be recruited as youth mediators. The selected youth mediators receive training in job placement mediation, which enables them to counsel other NEETs within the target group.

**What activities are carried out?**

The practice involves the following:

- The selection and training of youth mediators. Candidates for youth mediators must have a tertiary education.
- Once selected they receive similar training to PES case managers. They acquire knowledge and skills on how to reach out to and communicate with inactive young people and to provide information and counselling support for activation.
- They are also taught how to engage with employers and educational institutions. Training costs are fully covered by the MLSP (including accommodation and transport).

**What activities are carried out?**

- After completing training, the soon-to-be youth mediator is then put in touch with the labour mediator from the local PES and a representative of the local Education Inspectorate who help the youth mediator in establishing contacts with formal institutions.
- The entire process – from application and selection to the start of mediation work – takes about five months.
- Youth mediators are responsible for carrying out a wide range of activities which include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Identification; locating NEETs who are not registered with the PES. This is typically done through informal meetings in the locality such as with local NGOs, which attract unregistered NEETs (e.g. information and counselling services, sports clubs).
  - Consultation; working individually and in groups with NEETs to determine their needs and build up their skills and employability (e.g. helping them to create a CV).
- Giving NEETs details of and directing them towards relevant training/ education and employment opportunities. Youth mediators act as an intermediary with experts from different institutions in order to offer a package of services (e.g. social, health, educational), that meet the individual needs of the NEETs and complement mediation and activation services provided by the labour offices.
- These contacts are a critical element providing a bridge between unregistered NEETs and formal institutions. The youth mediators are hired in the municipalities' administration and receive monthly remuneration for the activities they undertake. The MLSP covers the salary of EUR 290 per month which is above the Bulgarian minimum wage of EUR 230. Additionally, youth mediators benefit from social and health insurance coverage.

**What are the sources of funding?**

The activities of Youth Mediators are funded by the MLSP under the National programme "Activation of Inactive Persons". The total budget for the salaries of the youth mediators during 2017 is more than EUR 350 000.

**What are the outputs: people reached and products?**

**People reached**

- To date, 101 young people with tertiary education have been trained as youth mediators.
- 98 of these youth mediators have now been deployed to work in the municipalities with the highest number of inactive youths throughout Bulgaria.
- Between May 2015 and July 2017, Youth Mediators engaged and consulted with 16 846 inactive young people.

**Products**

- A specific programme to train those selected to become Youth Mediators.
- Establishment of networks with representatives of local authorities, schools, employers, NGOs and others.

**What are the outcomes: medium-term results or effects?**

By the end of July 2017:

- Of the 16 846 young NEETs who were identified and received support from a youth mediator, 10 461 (62 %) subsequently took steps towards activation (e.g. registering with relevant services, attending a job interview).
- 5 175 NEETs had registered with the local PES as a direct consequence of their contact with a youth mediator.
- Another 1 940 young people found employment solely through youth mediators' support, i.e. without going through the PES.

## What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

### Lessons learnt:

- It is highly likely that if youth mediators had engaged with a wider variety of institutions they could have generated even more opportunities for NEETs (e.g. engaging with local businesses, who do not advertise their vacancies through the PES).
- The cost-effectiveness of Youth Mediators demonstrated that there should have been a higher level of initial investment as the cost of one youth mediator is far less than the social cost of ten inactive young people, notwithstanding the benefits to the state of additional revenues from employment.

### Success factors:

- Establishment of meaningful and effective contact between NEETs and youth mediators without which there would be little chance of activating the NEETs. This is ensured through effective training of the youth mediators.
- Identification of young people who are NEET and are not registered with PES and identification of their needs by collecting information and conducting informal meetings with them.
- Establishment of an initial contact between the inactive young people and the institutions through the Youth Mediator activities, which would not otherwise have existed. The scheme is effective when the youth mediator has good contacts with representatives from institutions such as the PES who can provide them with details of job vacancies and training courses.
- The Youth Mediator model could easily be replicated in other countries. It provides valuable interpersonal skills and a career option to unemployed young people with tertiary education. The model is also based on “peer to peer” mediation, which is potentially effective in terms of outreach and engagement among NEETs.

## What are key source(s) of information?

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036&langId=en&videoId=2729&furtherVideos=yes>