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Applying non-formal education to increase students' functional literacy

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State policy on non-formal education

- The state policy for non-formal education in Bulgaria is implemented by some ministries that are actively working with young people through non-formal methods:
- - ***Ministry of Youth and Sports*** with a long-standing practice of organizing competitions for non-governmental organizations to work with youth in various areas - ecology, youth development. Through the Directorate for Youth Policy, non-governmental organizations are provided with funds for protected projects.
- This ministry also finances Youth Centers in all regional cities. Our Association was such a Youth Center for the period 2012-2013. Now there is an expanded program for financing municipalities from regional centers that create Youth Centers, working with young people using informal methods.

State policy on non-formal education

- - ***Ministry of Education*** , which has supported extracurricular activities with informal methods in recent years by financing schools through various programs.
- - ***Ministry of Environment and Water*** through the National Campaign "Clean Environment " , which has a different motto every year . For 2025, the motto is " I Love nature - I participate too " and includes competitions for projects aimed at to nature conservation and participation of young people and children in various ecological initiatives . Schools, municipal children's complexes and kindergartens have the opportunity to participate . Unfortunately, NGOs are excluded from funding in this campaign by several years .
- The Ministry organizes others competitions aimed at directly to young people to work on environmental protection , for example "Youth for the Environment". This campaign includes competitions for projects aimed at to nature conservation and participation of youth and children in various ecological initiatives .

State policy on non-formal education

- - *Center for Human Resources Development (CHRD)* : National agency that coordinates the management and administration of European programs such as "Erasmus+", which include training and projects based on non-formal education.
- **National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAPET)** : It develops state educational standards and licenses vocational training centers, and also works on procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning.

Non-governmental organizations

- A distinctive feature of non-governmental organizations is working with young people using informal methods.
- Some of them work at a national level, while others work at a regional or local level.
- Here some examples of leading organizations:
- - of the **"Together for an Hour" Foundation** - the website We teach , created as a platform for sharing and exchanging good practices from teachers to teachers from all over the country <https://prepodavame.bg/ekologichno-obrazovanie/>
- - of **the EcoCommunity Foundation** , which works in the field of ecology . She there is a program of small projects that encourage sustainable development and change in the behavior and attitudes of young people regarding nature and the climate crisis <https://bepf-bg.org/proekt-mladite-za-klimata/>

Non-governmental organizations

- ***Bulgarian Blue Flag Movement:*** The Organization manages programs "Eco-schools" and "Learn about the forest", which are directed towards educating young people on environmental issues questions <https://biodiversity.bg/bg/Aktualni-proekti.c135>
- ***Green Balkans Association*** : through its youth program activities, aims to change the way of thinking, environmental education, increase the general culture and education of young people in the values of volunteering, which are the longest-term "investment" in the preservation of the Bulgarian nature and sustainable development with informal methods https://greenbalkans.org/bg/Mladezhki_deynosti-c304

Non-governmental organizations

- ***National Youth Forum*** and its members - youth organizations, in the essence of their work use a methodology that is necessary in the field of non-formal education <http://www.nmf.bg/>
- "***Education Without Backpacks***" the association adapts the world-famous free online resources of Khan Academy for Bulgarian children, thus supporting informal and independent learning in mathematics and science.
- ***Montessori Community Bulgaria*** : This association promotes the application of Montessori principles in society, which is an example of an alternative, non-formal educational approach.

More institutions

- *Chitalishte* – these are the oldest organizations in Bulgaria, working with informal methods with children and youth. The Chitalishte is a typically Bulgarian a public institution that performs educational and educational functions and amateur activities . Created by the Bulgarians' urge for spiritual elevation , the folk Community centers carry the spirit of the Renaissance . Maybe that 's why their founders they call it with lofty names – light, progress , science, enlightenment, bell , dawn ... Chitalishta are the first centers for the expression of civil society in Bulgaria , and perhaps in Europe. The community center was born because there were Bulgarians who are understood that it was necessary for the new intellectual , social and ethical norms , understood are that only the community center can " shout " our people for an active public life.

More institutions

- *Libraries* – they are active in working with young people using informal methods of communicating with them.
- *Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski "* - from the academic year 2008/2009 to The Faculty of Pedagogy has Bachelor's degree specialty - Non-formal Education. She aims to prepare higher education personnel for the needs of intensive the growing field of complementary and alternative medicine educational services for children and adults , provided by specialized government , private and non-governmental organizations outside the official (formal) education system, providing educational level (schools, colleges , universities , etc.).

European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism, funded by Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein

- The Fund supports the long-term resilience and capacity of the civil sector, strengthening its role in promoting democratic participation , active citizenship and human rights.
- This is done through the defense of project proposals. They finance activities which are performed with informal methods .
- Our Association Ecoworld Rhodopes has three funded projects:
- ***PROMOTING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP OF YOUNG PEOPLE***
<https://active.ngogrants.ecorodopi.eu/>
- ***SUSTAINABLE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ADEQUATE YOUTH POLICY*** <https://ngogrants.ecorodopi.eu/>
- For a life in harmony with nature ! Citizen initiatives for sustainable development and environmental protection in rural areas municipalities of Smolyan region <https://bilki.ngogrants.ecorodopi.eu/>

Conclusion

- Non-formal education in Bulgaria is a **dynamic and developing practice** that complements the formal system and provides opportunities for personal and professional development.
- It is especially important for young people who are looking for new skills and social engagement.
- Because we know that non-formal education is not just a complement to formal education – it is an opportunity. An opportunity to learn with passion, to develop ourselves and to be active participants in society. In a world that is constantly changing, the most valuable skill is to continue learning. And non-formal education gives us exactly that – freedom, flexibility and meaning.”



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