

Bulgaria

Bulgaria will undertake its 1st Voluntary National Review in July 2020. With a focus this year on development accelerators and transformative action, it is a key moment to consider activities and tools which can unlock progress, for all, across the board.

Access to information – understood as the physical possibility and right for all to seek and find information, and the skills to use it – can make just such a contribution. This access can help at all levels. It supports individuals to take better decisions about how to farm, where to look for work or how to look after their own and their families' health. It gives governments the possibility to define better policies. It allows researchers to understand the world around us, establish new insights and innovate. Libraries are a key part of the infrastructure for ensuring that this is the case.

But where does Bulgaria stand today as concerns its libraries and access to information? This data sheet provides background based on data from the Development and Access to Information report produced by IFLA in partnership with the Technology and Social Change Group at the University of Washington, as well as IFLA's own Library Map of the World.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- *Bulgaria has a dense network of public libraries, representing an important potential to support connectivity, access to information and broader SDG delivery in communities. However, the academic library is less strong, reducing the opportunities open to students and researchers to innovate.*
- *There are strong examples of projects run through public libraries in particular to help achieve sustainable development in the country.*
- *Bulgaria scores around European averages on both skills and rights – two key pillars of the DA2I framework. Libraries could play a useful role in efforts to promote gender equality and the integration of young unemployed adults, and in particular to bring more people online.*

LIBRARIES IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria has over 3 500 libraries in total, including nearly 2 500 public libraries. This represents a strong network, at over 35 per 100 000 people (nearly six times the global average and 2.5 times the European average), and over 40

public library workers per 100 000 (compared to less than 12 globally, and less than 29 in Europe). The network is also dense, with one library per 44.45km², meaning that they are generally relatively easy to access. This implies that they have a strong potential to contribute to efforts to reach out into communities and support development.

Bulgaria does have fewer academic libraries and library workers per 100 000 (0.93 and 7.33) than both the European (1.33 and 15.01) and the global (1.32 and 10.63), averages, with figures of 0.93 and 7.33. This nonetheless compares favourably to neighbouring countries, but indicates an area for investment, given the correlation between these figures and rates of patenting and publishing.

The [Global Libraries Bulgaria Foundation](#) has carried out many projects underlining the potential of libraries to deliver development within communities, while the Bulgarian Library and Information Association has focused strongly on the Sustainable Development Goals in its own work.

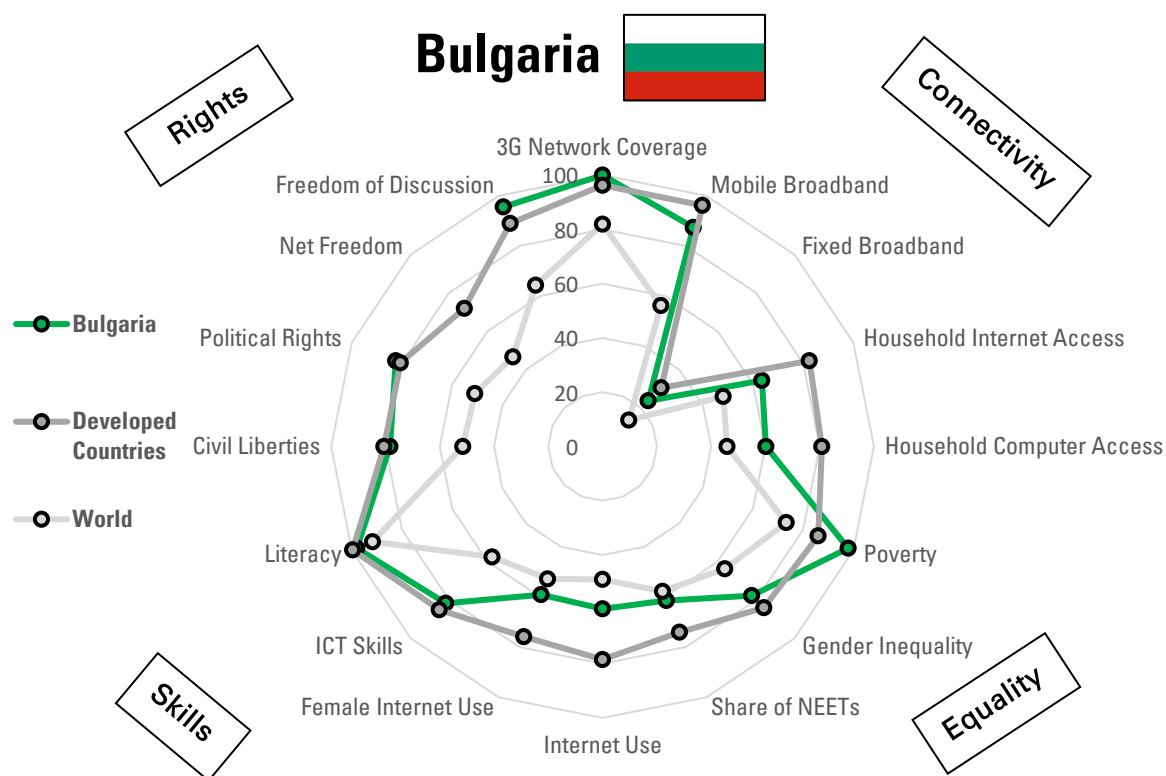
DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN BULGARIA

The Development and Access to Information report draws on a range of indicators highlighting where countries stand on four key pillars of access to information: connectivity, equality, skills and rights. For meaningful access to information to be a reality for all, performance needs to be strong across all of these categories.

Concerning **connectivity**, Bulgaria scores very highly on 3G network coverage, but below the average for developed countries for mobile broadband subscriptions. Similarly, it is some way below the developed countries average on numbers of fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 people, as well as household internet and computer access. Internet use, also, is closer to global than developed countries averages. This indicates an unrealised potential to get people online – libraries can play a crucial role in overcoming this.

Concerning **equality**, Bulgaria has a very low share of the population living below the national poverty line, but performs below the developed countries average on both gender equality and the share of youth not in employment, education or training. There is a small gender gap in internet use in favour of men. This implies some need to help young people access opportunities and support, even once they've left school – an area where libraries can help.

On **skills**, Bulgaria scores well, coming in around the developed countries average. Meanwhile on **rights**, Bulgaria developed countries averages for political rights and civil liberties, and performs better on freedom of discussion. In other words, once Bulgarians are online, they do have the skills and opportunity to make use of the information they find.



How to read the graph: this graph displays a range of indicators used within the DA2I framework, adjusted to fit on a scale of 0-100, where 100 is the most positive outcome in terms of access to information.

TABLE OF DATA

See below for explanations. * = or latest available year. Regional averages are based on available data.

PILLAR	INDICATOR	BULGARIA	Year	DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	Year	WORLD	Year
CONNECTIVITY	3G Network Coverage	99.98%	2016	96.23%	2016	81.92%	2016
	Mobile Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	87.39	2016	96.15	2016	56.22	2016
	Fixed Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	23.80	2016	30.55	2016	13.71	2016
	Household Internet Access	63.54%	2016	82.49%	2016	48.16%	2016
	Household Computer Access	60.22%	2016	80.82%	2016	45.88%	2016
EQUALITY	Poverty (Share of pop'n below national poverty line)	2.03%	2012	13.99%	2015*	26.69%	2015*
	Gender Inequality (0 = More equal, 1 = Less equal)	0.22	2015	0.16	2015	0.36*	2015*
	Share of NEETs	19.28%	2015	12.95%	2015*	21.12%	2015*
	Internet Use	59.83%	2016	78.50%	2016*	49%	2016*
	Female Internet Use	59.10%	2016	75.85%	2016*	52.79%	2016*
SKILLS	ICT Skills	8.17	2017	8.51	2017	5.76	2017
	Literacy	98.00%	2015	99.67%	2015	91.75	2015
RIGHTS	Civil Liberties (0 = least free, 60 = most free)	47.00	2018	48.33	2018	30.9	2018
	Political Rights (0 = least free, 40 = most free)	33.00	2018	32.24	2018	20.37	2018
	Net Freedom (0 = most free, 100 = least free)			28.02	2016	53.29	2016
	Freedom of Discussion	0.96	2016	0.89	2016	0.64	2016

EXPLANATION OF INDICATORS

3G Network Coverage: this provides a measure of whether one part of the basic infrastructure for connectivity exists, although in itself is not enough to guarantee access (users need a device and a relevant subscription to be able to get online). Source: ITU

Mobile Broadband (Mobile Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how many people can use mobile internet, opening up many – if not all – of the possibilities that internet access brings. One person may have more than one subscription. Source: ITU

Fixed Broadband (Fixed Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how widespread home or business internet access is. Fixed access is often associated with the possibility to connect computers to make more advanced uses of the internet. Source: ITU

Household Internet Access (Share of Households with Internet Access): access to the internet at home allows for access to information at any time without having to go outside, but may be controlled by some members of the family. Source: ITU

Household Computer Access (Share of Households with a Computer): this focuses on access to computers. This is crucial for people to be able to carry out more advanced activities on the internet that might be impossible on a phone, such as writing resumes or analysing data. Source: ITU

Poverty: this indicator measures the number of people living below the national poverty line, which varies from country to country. It is a measure of economic inequality in a country. The indicator is inversed in the chart (i.e. the share of people not under the poverty line). Source: World Bank

Gender Inequality: this is calculated using the Gender Inequality Index. This index uses a basket of indicators in different areas of social development including: reproductive health, proportion of women in parliament, relative shares of men and women with at least some secondary education, and labour market participation in order to provide a broad idea of the extent of gender inequality in a country. The indicator runs from 0 (most equal) to 1 (least equal) and is inversed and adapted in the chart above. Source: UNDP

Share of NEETS (People aged 15-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training): this measures the share of young people cut off from education or the job market. Being 'NEET' can bring long-term scarring effects, and so reducing numbers is a key priority. The indicator is inversed and adapted in the chart (i.e. the share of young people who are not NEET). Source: ILO.

Internet Use (Share of People Using the Internet): looking beyond household access data (which will be affected by the structure of households in general), this gives a figure for the number of people using the internet. Source: ITU

Female Internet Use: this measure, in conjunction with the share of the overall population using the internet, allows us to understand to what extent there is a gender digital divide. Source: ITU

ICT Skills: there are relatively few global metrics of ICT skills, with those that exist only focusing on certain regions. The Skills Sub-Index of the ICT Development Index created by the ITU aims to work in this direction using levels of secondary and tertiary education enrolment, plus mean years of schooling, as proxies. Source: ITU

Literacy: this measures literacy among 15-24 year olds – i.e. people who have finished formal education. While there are online resources available for people with low literacy, being able to read, type, and understand information remains a fundamental skill. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Civil Liberties: this provides an indication of the degree to which citizens of a country enjoy fundamental civic rights, including freedom of expression and association, as well as the strength of the rule of law, based on expert judgements. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 60 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Political Rights: this provides a measure of the rights people have to participate in the political process, including fair and free elections, political pluralism, and the functioning of government in general. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 40 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Net Freedom: this metric assesses the level of restrictions on rights online by both public and private actors. It draws on assessments of obstacles to access (legal, economic and practical), limits on content, and violations of rights. Scores run from 100 (least free) to 0 (most free) and so are inverted in the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Freedom of Discussion: this indicator looks at whether people are able to hold private discussions without fear of repercussions either from the authorities or society in general due to cultural restrictions or norms. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 1 (most free), and so are adapted to fit into the graphic above. Source: V-Dem dataset codebook.