



# YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

NATIONAL STUDY REPORT



This report is produced within the project *Enhancing Democratic Competence and Understanding of Human Rights among Young People*, supported by the Active Citizens Fund under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2014–2021.

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**YOUNG PEOPLE  
ABOUT  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

National Study Report

Sofia, 2020

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
I. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY .....	6
II. RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	7
Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants.....	7
Understanding Human Rights .....	10
Sources of Knowledge about Human Rights .....	12
Human Rights and Bulgarian Legislation.....	15
Human Rights Violations .....	16
Human Rights and Foreign Policy .....	19
III. CONCLUSION.....	21
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING POLICY CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE .....	23
Transforming human rights education into a key sphere of influence regarding democratic education of children and young people.....	23
Use of interactive methods in civic and human rights education.....	23
Creation and translation of new and available methodological materials and other important teaching aids and literature on human rights .....	23
Increasing the capacity of teachers for teaching human rights .....	24
Cooperation of schools with non-governmental organizations and civil society .....	24
Opening up of the school to the community and strengthening its relations with other institutions.....	24
The connection between civic and human rights education in school and social life and practices of young people.....	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	26

# INTRODUCTION

This report is elaborated within the project *Increasing Democratic Competence and Understanding of Human Rights among Young People*, implemented by Partners Bulgaria Foundation, with the financial support of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA Financial Mechanism. The project aims to promote human rights and democracy education among children and young people in Bulgaria.

According to the Council of Europe, education on human rights and education for democratic citizenship are realized in three directions in order to achieve their goals:

- Cognitive – includes the acquisition of ideas, concepts and systems;
- Social – it is defined by the ability to exercise the various forms of democracy in all areas and stages of life;
- Emotional - related to the recognition and acceptance of the values of democratic society.

The study seeks information on the existing knowledge and perceptions of human rights of young people. It assesses their ability to analyse problematic situations from the perspective of human rights defenders and explores the extent to which human rights and democratic society are important to them.

The report contains an analysis of the results of the conducted study and reflects the gathered quantitative and qualitative information; there is also an overview of the policies and practices related to teaching human rights in Bulgaria.

The findings of the study reflect the opinion and the attitudes of young people regarding the situation of human rights in Bulgaria, the available sources of information and the effectiveness of training in this field.

In the second part of the report recommendations for improving human rights education are presented in areas related to formal and informal education; cooperation of schools with non-governmental organizations and civil society; involvement of cultural institutions such as museums; and building capacity to educators to offer contemporary educational tools in this field.

# I. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to determine how young people in the country understand human rights as fundamental values underlying Bulgarian society. An evaluation is made of how familiar young people are with the concept of human rights and how they view different aspects of life in the country through the perspective of human rights. As an outcome of the study, recommendations for improving human rights education have been developed.

The opinion of young people from all over the country was sought, with special attention to the four pilot cities – Gotse Delchev, Blagoevgrad, Montana and Varshets. The collected information helps to find answers to questions related to young people’s understanding about human rights; what is the state role in human rights protection; are human rights part of the legislation and what problems exist in this respect in the country; what can be done to support the system of education to embed the human rights teaching in its programs and levels.

The study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. A separate review of literature and an analysis of previous research on the topic are included as well as research of the available educational tools for human rights protection, the programs in formal and non-formal education, and information from printed and internet sources.

The quantitative study is based on a questionnaire distributed to young people aged 12–29. The total number of the survey respondents is 771.

The qualitative study covers four focus groups with young people from G. Delchev, Blagoevgrad, Montana and Varshets. The focus groups were held between November and December 2019. 49 children and young people aged 12–35 participated. They are students from the schools in Gotse Delchev, Montana and Varshets, and the Southwestern University “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad.

The study of young people’s opinion of human rights was designed to answer the following research questions:

- What is young people’s understanding of human rights?
- Which are the sources of their knowledge?
- Can they connect human rights to Bulgarian legislation?
- How do they view the human rights situation in the country?
- According to them, what is the role of the state for the protection of human rights in Bulgarian domestic and foreign policy?

## II. RESEARCH FINDINGS

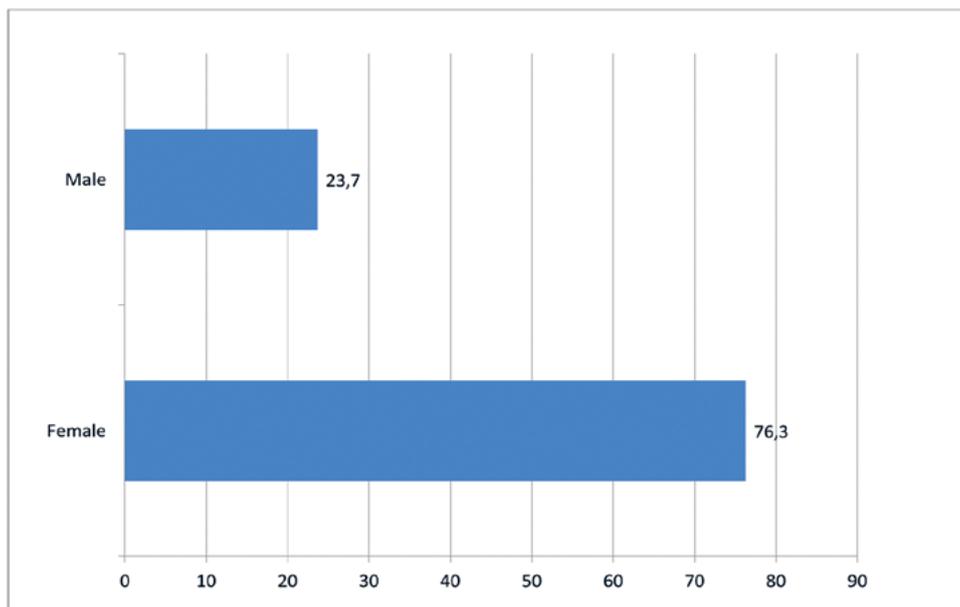
### Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

The total number of participants in the study (both quantitative and qualitative) is 820: 771 children and young people completed an online questionnaire, and 49 took part in focus groups.

The figures below illustrate the survey results obtained through an online questionnaire.

588 (76.3%) of the respondents in the online survey were female and 183 were male (23.7%), a total of 771 (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1.** *Distribution of study participants by gender*

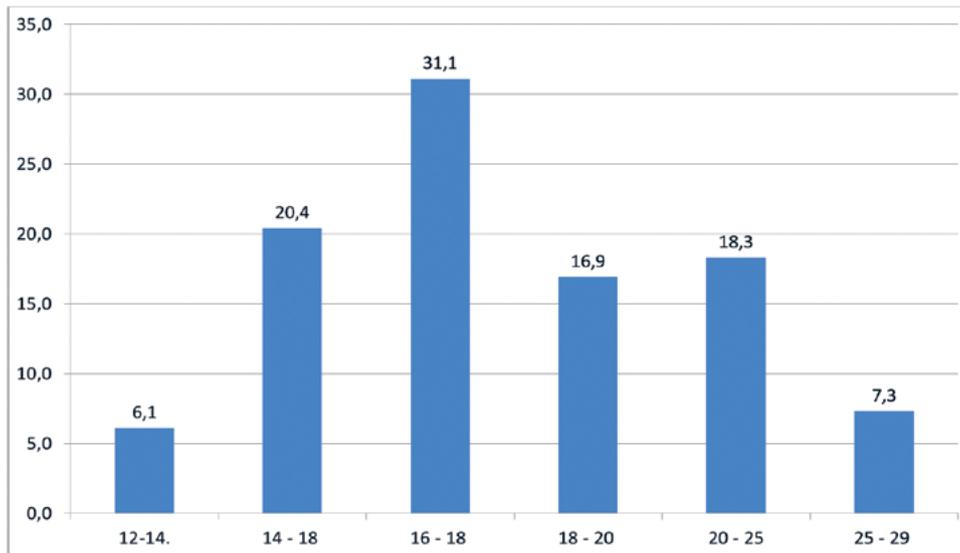


Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 771

**In terms of age**, respondents are children and young people aged 12–29, the proportions of age groups are as follows (Fig. 2):

- Age group 12 – 14: 47 (6.1%);
- Age group 14 – 16: 157 (20.4%);
- Age group 16 – 18: 240 (31.1%);
- Age group 18 – 20: 130 (16.9%);
- Age group 20 – 25: 141 (18.3%);
- Age group 25 – 29: 56 (7.3%).

**Figure 2.** *Percentage distribution by age*



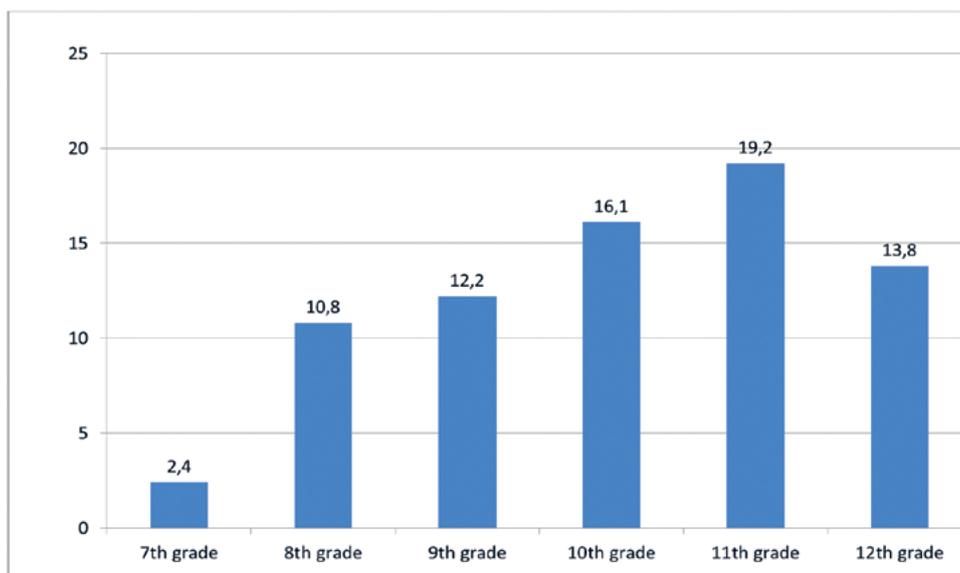
Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 771

416 of the respondents (75%) are **school students**. High school students prevail, especially those from the 10th (107 persons or 16.1%) and 11th grade (128 persons or 19,2% – Fig. 3).

Young people above the age of 18 make 47,34% of all participants. Almost half of them are university students (180 participants or 49.3%), while 80 participants (21.9%) work a full-time job. A small group of the respondents (1.9%) say they are temporarily employed at this moment (Fig. 4).

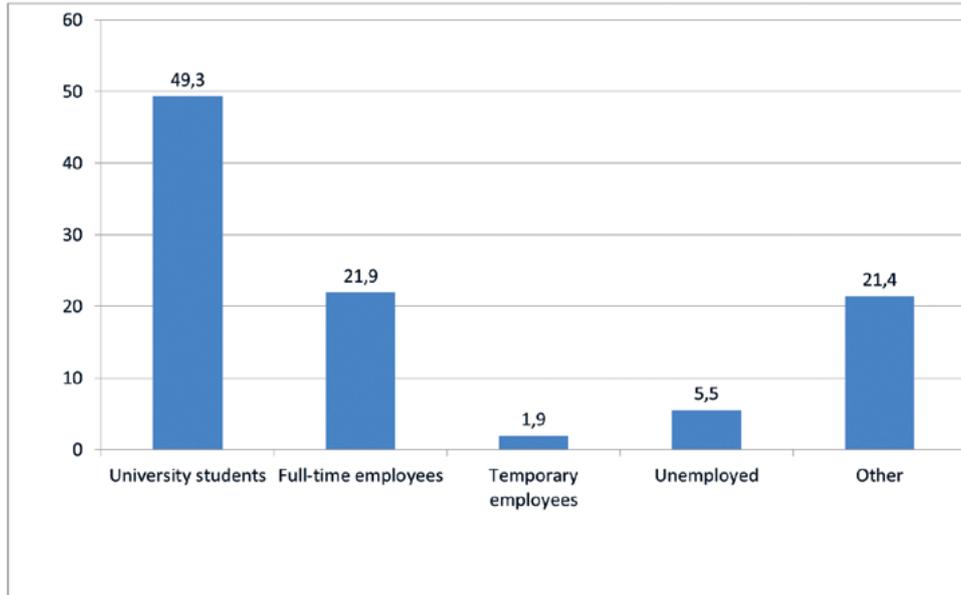
20 young people (5.5%), not studying or working at that moment, also accepted to participate in the survey.

**Figure 3.** *Distribution of students by grade*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 416

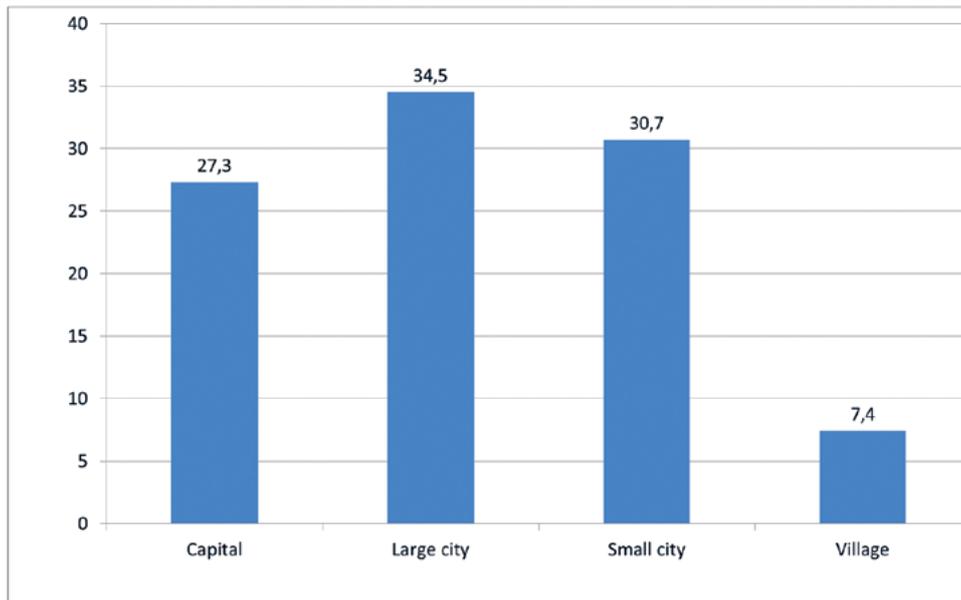
**Figure 4.** *Distribution by occupation of respondents above the age of 18*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N =365

Taking into consideration the respondents' **place of residence**, most of them live in the capital or in a large city. The distribution of survey respondents is as follows: 210 (27,3%) living in the capital, 265(34,5%) in a large city, 236 (30,7%) in a small city, and 57 (7,4%) in a village.

**Figure 5.** *Distribution of participants by place of residence*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 768

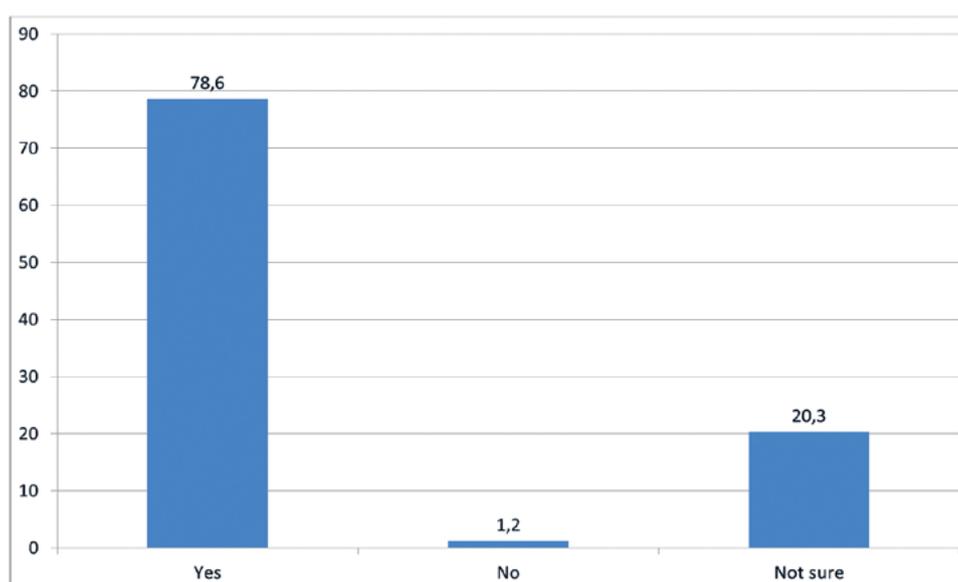
## Understanding Human Rights

Some of the questions the study poses, through the focus groups and the online questionnaire, aim to explore how familiar young people are with the concept of human rights as well as their understanding of this and its significance in their life.

The findings show that the vast majority of young people (78,6%) are fully acquainted with the concept of human rights, and they demonstrate a complete understanding of its meaning. Only a small part of the participants (1,2%) do not fully understand the concept, and 20% say they are uncertain in their understanding of what exactly human rights are (Fig. 6).

The fact that more than one fifth of the young people do not have knowledge and understanding of human rights reveals the existence of educational deficits and the necessity of greater efforts in both formal and non-formal training in human rights in order to address these needs.

**Figure 6.** *Do you know what human rights are?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 770

When asked to name some of the basic rights that citizens are entitled to, most of the respondents in the online survey give good examples of civil rights and liberties. They present their ideas of human rights by providing detailed lists of rights, *such as freedom and equality before law, the right to life and personal security, freedom of expression and the rights to express an opinion, to vote, to association and membership in civil society organizations, to education, healthcare, work, property, and others.*

It was underlined in the discussions that every person has rights and they cannot be taken away from a person.

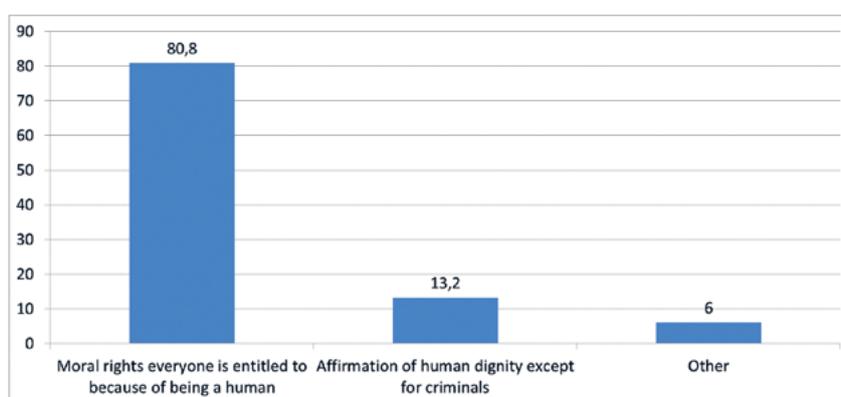
*What comes first to my mind when speaking about rights is that citizens are obliged to fulfil the norms and show respect for the rights of others. — A student from Gotse Delchev*

When asked which rights they are acquainted with, the participants in the focus groups name *the right to life, freedom of speech, the right to express an opinion, the right to choose, the right to vote*

and stand as a candidate in elections, the right to associations, coalitions and parties, the right to peaceful life. The list also includes the right to self-defence, the right to access resources (water and food), the right to be educated, the right to work, the right to personal development in the desired direction.

Two fifths of the children and young people (620 persons, 80,8%), who completed the online questionnaire, agree that human rights are *moral rights that everyone is entitled to because of being a human*. This shows that there is an understanding of human rights as a moral claim based on moral values. Therefore, students and young people realize that the meaning of the right to life is that no one is allowed to deprive anybody else of their life. The right to life and the rest of the rights are inviolable due to the presumption that they are inherent to everyone because of being a human, and no other reason to justify their existence is needed.

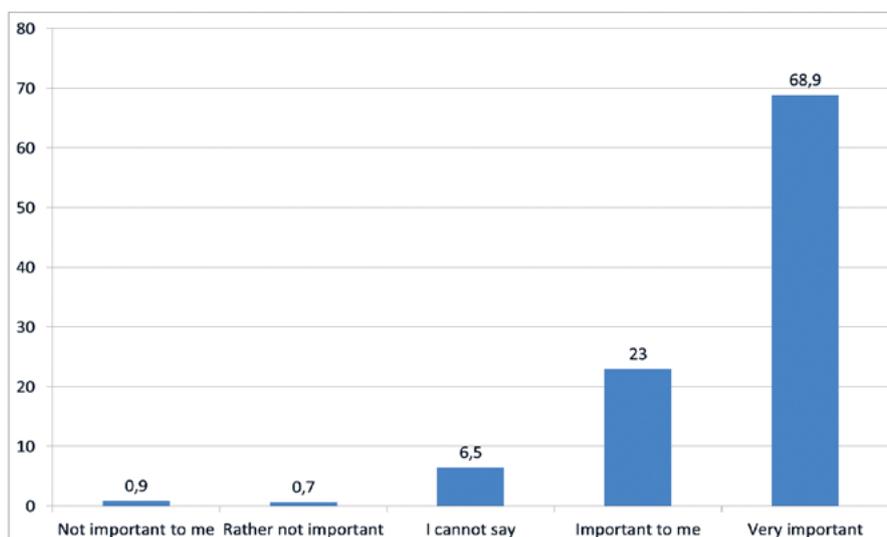
**Figure 7.** How do you understand human rights?



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 767

The vast majority of the respondents consider human rights, on a personal level, to be important or very important to them (Fig. 8). This means that over 90% of the young people have an understanding of human rights as determining fundamental standards necessary for living a decent life that are also universal: thus, they are a part of humanity where all people are equal, and no discrimination between people should be allowed.

**Figure 8.** To what extent are human rights important to you?



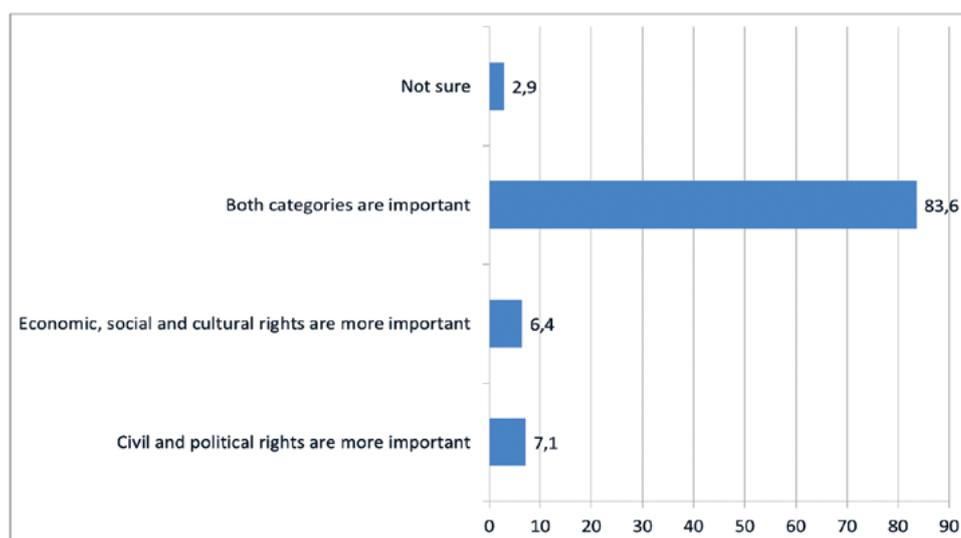
Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 765

Regarding the categories of rights, study participants were asked to determine **the importance of economic, social and cultural rights compared to civil and political rights**.

One of the children shared: *Civil rights help us maintain harmony in the city, so they help each of us develop and live in a more peaceful environment, while social and cultural rights are related to our personal development and supporting life as a whole. Through the right to study and work we achieve personal development and improve not only our own lives but the lives of others as well.*

The answers of the participants of the online survey tend to be similar: 83.6% of them believe that both categories of rights are important, and a smaller part give precedence to civil and political rights (7.1%) or to economic, social and cultural rights (6.4% – Fig. 9).

**Figure 9.** *Human rights are often divided into two categories: civil and political rights (e.g. the right to vote and freedom of expression) or economic, social and cultural rights (e.g. the right to work, and the right to education). With which of the statements do you agree?*



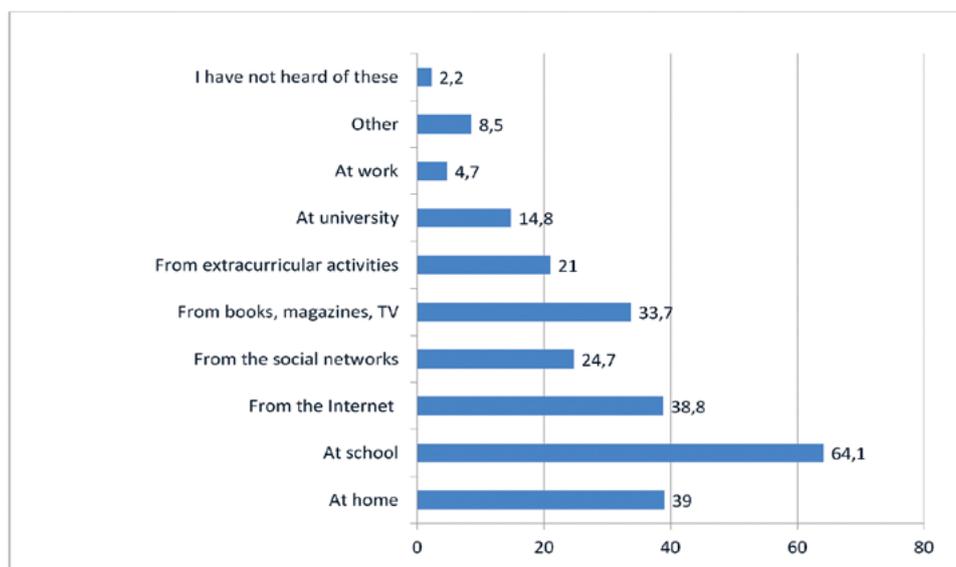
Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 763

## Sources of Knowledge about Human Rights

An important focus area of the study are the sources of information of human rights for young people (Fig. 10).

For most of the children and young people, school is the main source of information about human rights (64.1%), followed by family (39%), and online sources (38.8%) and platforms. Television, books, other printed matter and digital channels are also frequently mentioned (33.7%).

**Figure 10.** *How did you learn about human rights?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 765.  
(Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.)

Participants in the focus groups share that they obtain information about human rights mainly from the internet, news websites, television, movies and various situations in daily life. 11th-grade survey respondents point out that information about human rights is included in the school curriculum, but for most of the students in the group discussions school is just one source of information.

According to some of the students, human rights are often mentioned in the news, sometimes with regards to the European Union. The young people would like to have more information about human rights; however, this information should not be boring, it should be presented in an interesting way, and should be taught at school.

*There should be human rights classes at school and they should talk to us about the most important rights. There must be classes on this, even if they are 2 or 3 per year, but the topic should be presented clearly and simply, with plenty of examples from daily life. — A student from Gotse Delchev;*

*Human rights should be taught at school but in an interesting way. It would be best if there were school programs which helped us learn about them in a way that was easy but not burdening. — A student from Varshets;*

*Speaking about the right to education, it would be very nice if there were programs in each school in Bulgaria for studying rights in general, and for training young people so as to prepare them for life. — A university student from Blagoevgrad;*

*If we study the rights and obligations of citizens properly, each of us will be better prepared to leave school. We will be able to look for a job in a more informed way and we will be successful in society as a whole. — A university student from Blagoevgrad.*

The majority of the students who participated in the focus groups think they need more information and more accessible sources, so that they can learn about their rights.

Friends are a major source of information for young people; they seek information about their

rights from different institutions, the Internet and books. Many of the children and young people believe that, in general, visibility is given to the rights and obligations of citizens; there are also campaigns for protection of women rights and child rights.

*We get introduced (to human rights) at school but we do not really study much about this. There is some discussion on the topic in philosophy classes after 8th grade. — A student from Montana*

All participants definitely want to be more informed about their rights because they think the lack of knowledge makes people disoriented and helpless, but they only realize it when they face a concrete situation.

*It is rather people are not informed about their rights in order to fight for them and defend them. — A student from Montana;*

*If we do not know our rights, it will be very difficult to cope with someone circumventing them. There are people, who are looking for those who do not know their rights, so as to abuse them. — A university student from Blagoevgrad;*

*If we know, it is 100% certain we will fight for our rights, but those who are uncertain and do not know their rights – there is no chance for them. — A student from Gotse Delchev;*

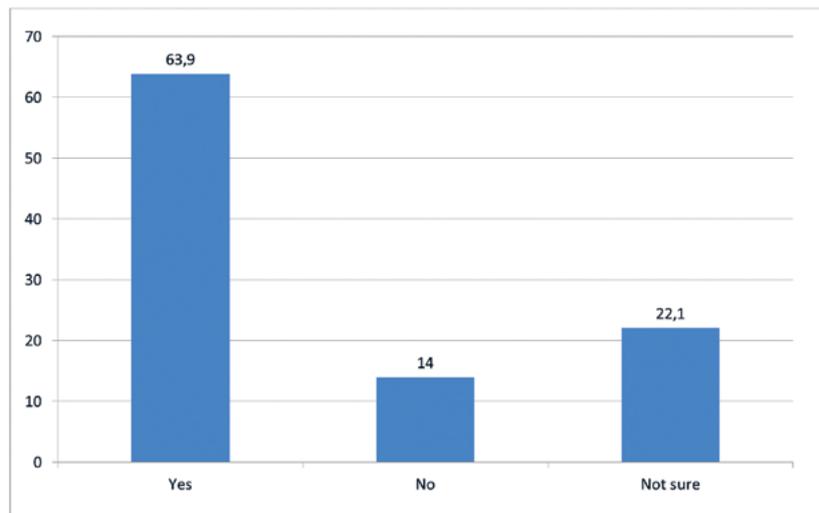
*Rights do exist, but people should get familiar with them. Those who are familiar have dug into this, those who have read about this, have learned; others pay to understand and learn about them. — A student from Gotse Delchev;*

*It is our own fault because we are not familiar with our rights, and we do not know how to protect ourselves. — A student from Varshets.*

## Human Rights and Bulgarian Legislation

Most of the children and young people (63.9%) have knowledge and understanding of human rights as part of Bulgarian legislation. However, the rest of the respondents in the online survey do not see the connection (14%), or they are not sure how to answer (22.1% – Fig. 11). Thus, for more than one third of the young people it is not really clear how human rights form part of the national constitutional and legislative framework, and how the administrative and judicial system apply human rights standards and sanction their violations.

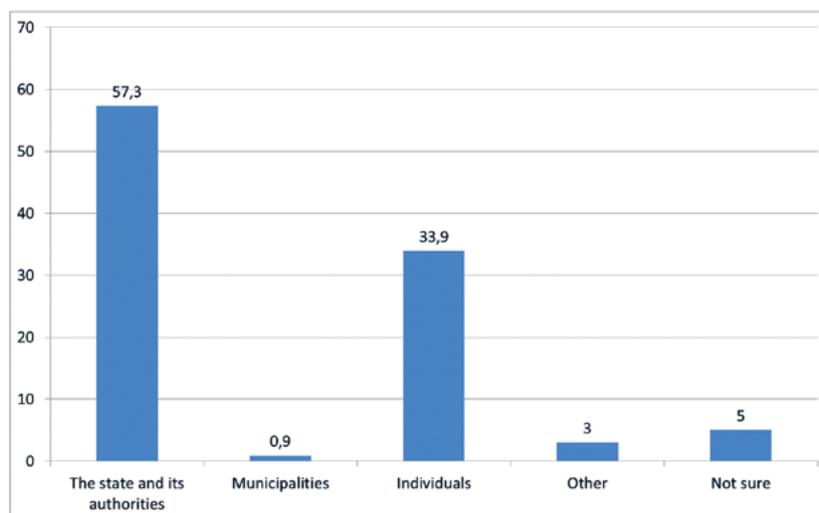
**Figure 11.** *Do you think human rights form part of Bulgarian legislation?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 764

When asked *Whose responsibility is it to ensure respect for human rights?* (Fig. 12), most participants (57.3%) say the state is responsible for this – in particular, the police, the public prosecutor's office, and the court. One third (33.9%) of the young people highlight that the responsibility lies with the citizens themselves. Some of the participants express the opinion that the family environment is also important because it bears responsibility to teach respect for human rights.

**Figure 12.** *Whose responsibility is it to ensure respect for human rights?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 765

Students say that often when ordinary citizens seek their rights, they do not receive enough attention; on the contrary, it seems that those with higher social status demonstrate having more rights than ordinary people. Human rights are respected, though limited for ordinary people, while those in high positions seem to have more rights.

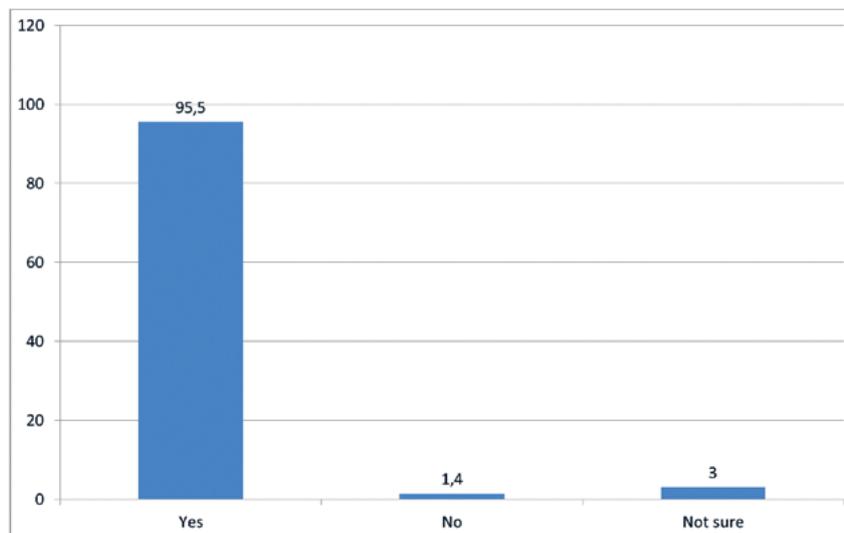
Focus group participants say that if people are acquainted with their rights, it is less likely for them to allow violations.

*I know my rights and I can feel when they are violated. But if I decide to act, I might violate the rights of the other person; that is why I cannot take action by myself. An institution will observe the situation objectively, considering not only my point of view but that of the other person as well, and it will decide how to proceed. — A student from Varshets*

## Human Rights Violations

Regarding human rights violations in Bulgaria, participants in both the online survey and the focus groups give one of the most straightforward answers in the study. 730 of 764 respondents in the survey (95,5%) say there are human rights violations in Bulgaria.

**Figure 13.** *In your opinion, are there human rights violations in Bulgaria today?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 764

Some of the examples of human rights violations, mentioned by the participants, include violations of the right to vote, freedom of speech and expression; also, issues related to the right to work; and the lack of equality of people. Children and young people believe that there can be negative consequences for Bulgarian citizens if they enjoy their right to speak freely and their opinion is not *politically correct*, or those in power do *not approve it*.

There were critical voices among focus group students (both from school and university students) saying that *Human rights exist on paper but in reality, they are not respected. Whether someone has rights depends on their power and position.* The young people also share:

*As a whole, freedom of expression is restricted; as we know, most media do not allow journalists to tell the whole truth, or make them speak what is convenient.*

*In general, human rights in Bulgaria are very rarely respected. We live in a country where power is above all and even if we try to seek respect for our rights or take action, we are nothing if the other person is more powerful.*

Some of the other participants, however, say that when thinking on this, they can see that many of their rights are protected.

The young people believe that respect of freedom of expression is the major issue because it is restricted and there is censorship, either explicit or implicit, and this is best illustrated by the content of the national TV channels and the newspapers.

Probably due to these issues, most of the study participants believe the idea of **human rights protection** is very close to them: *When I hear the phrase 'human rights', I suppose someone should be protecting them*, a student from Montana says.

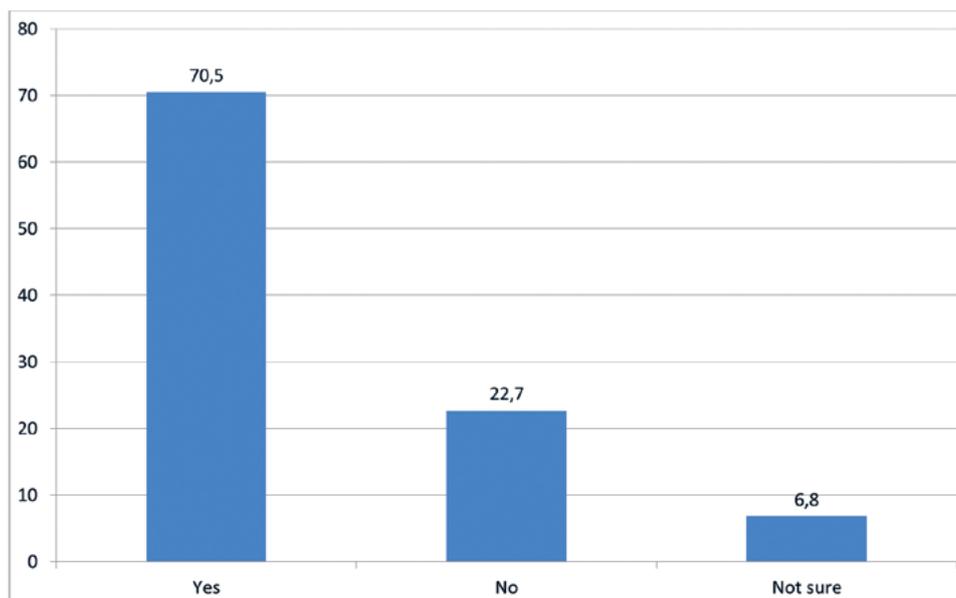
Similarly, the answers to the question *Do you believe human rights are universal, i.e. that they apply to all people in all countries?* also tend to be pessimistic about the respect of human rights (Fig. 14). Nearly 23% of the young people say that human rights are not universal, apparently referring to weaknesses in the implementation of human rights in reality.

The focus group discussions reveal that the young people believe some countries to be much more advanced in terms of respect of human rights, but the situation in Bulgaria is different. The participants point out that there are many examples of people in high-ranking positions being acquitted, regardless of their crimes. According to the young people, human rights should be universal and *we should all be equal before the law*.

The greater part of the respondents in the online survey (70.5%) have a clear understanding that human rights are universal in their nature and apply equally to all people around the world, at any time, independent of personal status related to race or ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, language, religion, political or other beliefs, social background, and others.

Other students share that in no country are there in reality equal rights for all citizens, nor equality of people.

**Figure 14.** *Do you believe human rights are universal, i.e. that they apply to all people in all countries?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 766

It is difficult for the participants in the focus groups to agree on the question related to violation of human rights in terms of police violence (Fig. 15). It reads: *According to you, is it appropriate for the police to use any means, including torture, in order to obtain information from persons suspected of being involved in serious crimes?*

In fact, this question was lively debated in the focus groups. Most of the young people make it clear they think the police do not have the right to use violence; moreover, they say that *people are innocent until proven guilty and in general, they must not use violence, people must not be beaten*. According to them, *in this way some rights are violated, and if you violate a few small rights, you start violating more significant rights as well and A policeman and a citizen should have equal rights*.

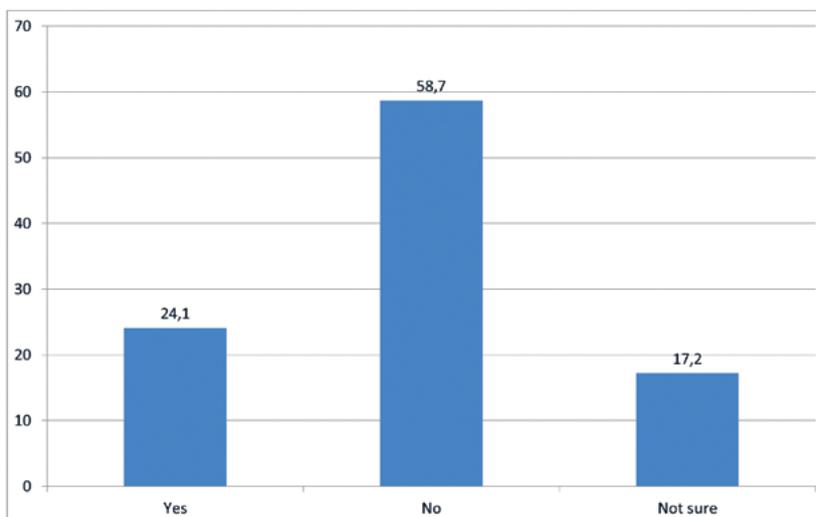
Most of the students think that the police have no right to use violence at all.

Some of the participants, though, believe police violence is acceptable: *It is not correct, but it is necessary in order to tackle something greater than the individual*. This group thinks that when it is necessary, the police should have extended rights in order to be able to prevent crime, especially if innocent people may be affected.

A small part of the youngsters give arguments that if using torture is necessary, then it is justified; for example, if there is firm evidence that the suspect will commit a terrorist act or something else that poses a danger to people.

About a quarter of the participants in the online survey say that using different methods – even torture – is justified with regards to suspects.

**Figure 15.** *According to you, is it appropriate for the police to use any means, including torture, in order to obtain information from persons suspected of being involved in serious crimes?*

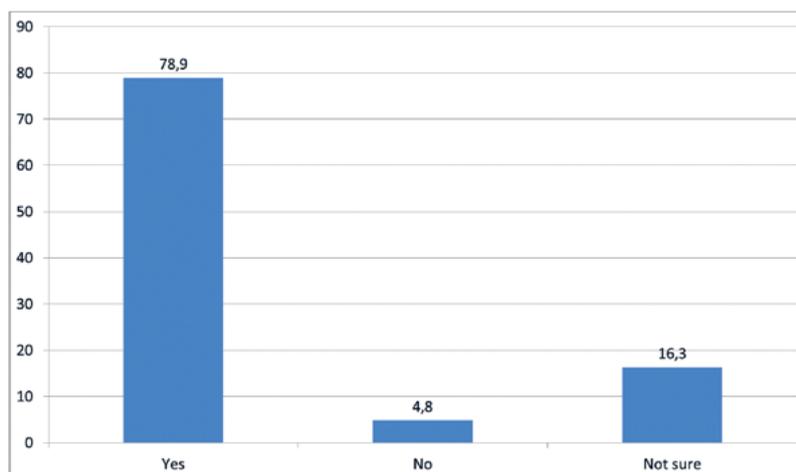


Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 767

## Human Rights and Foreign Policy

The survey contains a question about the extent to which, according to the young people, human rights are important in Bulgarian foreign policy. The majority of the respondents believe human rights are important in the foreign policy of the country. Only a small amount of the respondents (4,8%) do not think so, and a significant proportion of the participants (125 or 16,3%) cannot give an answer.

**Figure 16.** *Do you believe that human rights should be a part of Bulgarian foreign policy?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 766

During the focus group discussions, this particular question was not entirely clear to the participants, and therefore they were uncertain how to answer.

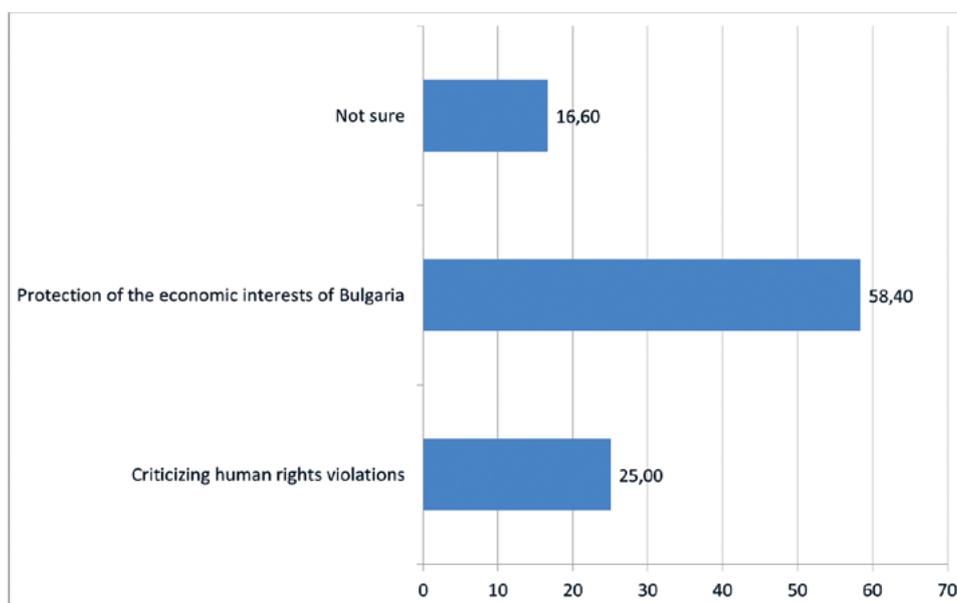
Following the provided clarifications, some of the participants said that Bulgaria should not take a stand on issues related to human rights situations in other countries. The state should focus primarily on the implementation of human rights in Bulgaria instead of ‘looking’ at what is happening abroad.

Many of the young people, however, believe Bulgaria should be interested in what is happening abroad, and its foreign policy should be based on the principles of human rights.

Here is what a respondent shared: *If we all remain silent, nothing will ever change*, i.e. Bulgaria should do what is necessary regarding human rights in other countries, as well as accept outside criticism related to human rights violations in Bulgaria.

This topic is explored further with the question: *Which of the two is more important with regards to Bulgaria’s relations with other countries: criticizing human rights violations abroad or being focused on the protection of its own economic interests?* It is interesting to find out that more than half of the participants in both the focus groups and the online survey answer that the economic interests of the country should be considered a priority in the foreign relations of the country (Fig. 17).

**Figure 17.** *Which of the two is more important with regards to Bulgaria’s relations with other countries: criticizing human rights violations abroad or being focused on the protection of its own economic interests?*



Percentage distribution of respondents, N = 764

Only a quarter of the respondents (25%) say with certainty that if it is necessary to criticize human rights violations, Bulgaria should do so by sending clear messages for the importance of these values.

Again, a significant amount of the young people (16%) do not know how to answer.

### III. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show that the vast majority of young people are fully acquainted with the concept of human rights and they have a complete understanding of its meaning. Many of the students and the young people do not have difficulty naming various rights they are entitled to as citizens.

Most of the participants in the online survey offer really good examples of civil rights and liberties, and consider human rights to be important or very important to them on a personal level. It is encouraging to find out that a very large group of the participants understand human rights as a universal fundamental standard for decent life. The young people also are aware of the importance of both civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights.

Still, one fifth of the respondents do not have sufficient information about what human rights are. This reveals existing educational deficits and the necessity for greater efforts in both formal and non-formal human rights training in order to address these needs. The obtained results are consistent with the findings of international research showing that a large percentage of the Bulgarian students do not have sufficient preparation in terms of their knowledge about human and civil rights.

Two thirds of the students are aware that human rights form part of Bulgarian legislation. The problem is that the remaining one third do not understand how exactly human rights are included in the national constitutional and legislative system, and they do not feel convinced that it is the responsibility of the state and its authorities to ensure that human rights in Bulgaria are respected.

A trend, which is observed throughout the study, is the high sensitivity of young people to inequality and lack of justice in society. This sensitivity can be seen in a variety of examples of how differently ordinary citizens are being treated by institutions and those possessing power and resources, and how difficult it is for ordinary people to exercise their rights.

The general opinion (95.5%) is that human rights in Bulgaria are violated in a number of ways. The examples of human rights violations, given by the participants, include violations of the right to vote, freedom of expression, problems related to the right to work, as well as the lack of equality of people. The belief that people are afraid to express their opinion freely and publicly due to possible negative consequences is strongly emphasized. The major issues are connected to freedom of speech; according to respondents, both the national TV channels and the press are under censorship.

Participants in the study, make it clear that it is important for citizens to be familiar with their rights because it becomes less likely to allow violations. Young people realize that human rights should be protected and citizens should be familiar with the competent state institutions and their work in this field; additionally, citizens should know when and how to ask for assistance if they need it.

It is complicated for some of the young people to comprehend the concept of universality of rights. For instance, about a quarter of the respondents believe that police violence is acceptable in some cases if the end justifies the means.

It is difficult for young people to think of human rights as priority values in the foreign relations of Bulgaria. Even though the majority of them believe that human rights should be an important part of Bulgarian foreign policy, more than half of the respondents in the online survey are convinced that the country's economic interests should be considered a priority in its relations with other countries, regardless of their human rights situation.

For most of the participants in the survey, school is the main source of information about human rights, followed by family, the internet, television, books, and other printed matter. However, students believe that there should be greater awareness of human rights, and human rights education should be included to a larger extent in school curricula. Also, they need more accessible sources in order to find information about human rights and learn about them.

The findings of the study may serve as guidance for taking concrete action to improve awareness among children and young people about human rights.

In the last years, there has been a qualitative change in terms of human rights education policies which are related to the long-awaited introduction of civic education as a separate subject in the 2020-2021 school year.

Despite the fact that the majority of the answers in the online survey refer to the school as the place where children and young people gain most of their knowledge about human rights, the responses of participants in the discussions make it clear that human rights education is not sufficiently covered in school. Moreover, it is not clearly presented and interactive enough, and it does not address the needs of the 21st century students.

Recent studies show a positive change in the development of human rights education, but also reveal that students' economic status determines students' educational preparation and their opportunities for training and education. This dependence makes it absolutely essential to find a solution of how human rights education can be realized at different levels and regardless of socio-economic factors.

According to some researchers, the mistrust of most teachers in the opportunities for implementation of civic education in school is nurtured by the lack of awareness of the nature of civic education and of good methodological materials which would help them improve their teaching methods.

Unfortunately, these methodologies and initiatives are still sporadic, and they can hardly cover enough children and guarantee training in human rights that develops learners' social and personal skills for fighting for their own rights and protecting the rights of others.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING POLICY CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Transforming human rights education into a key sphere of influence regarding democratic education of children and young people**

Specialists in the field of education seem to be unanimous that human and child rights make a field of knowledge that should have stronger presence in modern Bulgarian schools. It is a matter of urgency to integrate it in general education in order to achieve one of the goals of civic education: meaningful introduction of young people to important topics about social life and their place in life.

The fields of human rights and child rights should be included to a greater extent in school curricula. This is related also to both improving the quality of teaching and the creation of multidisciplinary approaches and interactions with regard to human rights education.

### **Use of interactive methods in civic and human rights education**

Civic and human rights education should be introduced through both formal and non-formal education with the use of interactive methods, such as discussions, experience-based learning, exercises, and group activities that enhance the cooperation between students and the dialogue between them and the teacher. The examination of facts, the exploration of diverse points of view, critical view of events, and experience analysis are some of the various teaching methods.

Training should be supported with appropriate and quality learning materials, manuals, exercises and case studies. It should provide students with sufficient theory and practice with a strong emphasis on practice. Training should be related to reality – case studies that reflect real situations should be selected, and teaching (of both theory and practice) should be based on real facts and should be guided by them. It is important to observe case studies of human rights situations that are common in reality and recognized by students as part of their experience. It would be useful to include in the program situations from practice, so that trainers can present and discuss them with students.

### **Creation and translation of new and available methodological materials and other important teaching aids and literature on human rights**

It is necessary to create accessible manuals and materials to be used by teachers and informal youth facilitators who are involved in human rights education.

Finding relevant existing materials, developed by NGOs within different projects, and publishing them on digital platforms to ensure free access, could be useful for both formal and non-formal training.

Development of methodological materials should include the use of digital resources which allow training, self-tuition, and assessment of the knowledge obtained. It is important to create a greater

number of human rights teaching materials designed to engage and motivate; they should be suitable for distance learning as well.

The identification of situations related to the violation or protection of human rights and their adaptation for the goals of the education process is also a part of the preparation of teachers. It is necessary for human rights education to be provided with such a set of educational materials on various media (printed, audio, video, and digital) which contain descriptions of specific situations from practice.

## **Increasing the capacity of teachers for teaching human rights**

It is important to introduce measures and a plan to qualify rapidly large groups of teachers to become experts in civic and human rights education. Continuous teacher training on a regular basis is necessary in order to prepare teachers to insert elements of civic and human rights education into their subject areas.

Teachers' preparation determines not only the extent to which the education system prepares children and young people for acquiring the minimum level of knowledge about society but for internalizing democratic values and demonstrating in practice behaviour of active citizens who respect the rights of others and accept differences.

Teacher training should also include the use of information and communication technologies, methods for working with children with special educational needs and in a multicultural environment.

An important part of teacher training is connected to the modernisation of existing methodologies for teaching human rights in formal and non-formal education.

## **Cooperation of schools with non-governmental organizations and civil society**

In the field of civic and human rights education, non-governmental organizations are those who bring innovative ideas, establish models, and 'wake up' the Bulgarian system of formal and non-formal education. Human rights training and civic education training could rather benefit from the coordination between formal education systems and non-governmental organizations working in the field.

A targeted policy and coordinated public effort are needed for the efficient exchange of information and the successful coordination of projects and initiatives taking place at local and national level.

## **Opening up of the school to the community and strengthening its relations with other institutions**

Civic and human rights education should be open to the community in order to be relevant to practice and people's lives and realities. Schools should strengthen their relations with the institutions in areas such as culture, social welfare, justice, economics, and others. The so-called *out-of-school* education is a tool for enriching the learning process by going out into the community. This is a form of *outdoor* learning that creates links between the school, the community and young people.

Schools should ensure public support for their education activities by strengthening relations with

parents and institutions. Thus, it is a good idea to develop programs for planned inclusion of young people in community activities in coordination between the school and the relevant institutions. In this way human rights education will not remain merely within the theoretical postulates.

It is necessary for schools to strengthen relations with other institutions as well in order to interact with them in terms of human rights education. Museums, community centres, courts, municipal institutions, and other formal and informal structures should support schools and human rights education of young people.

### **The connection between civic and human rights education in school and social life and practices of young people**

Human rights education should help young people understand their own experiences and observations of life in society by encouraging them to uphold democratic values, promote equality and respect of human dignity, tolerance for others, and empowerment of minorities.

Young people should learn to view situations from a human rights perspective and be able to decide if there is a violation of particular rights and which are the institutions they can contact if they need to.

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