

Sexuality Education in the WHO European Region



THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



MACEDONIA (FYROM)



Status of sexuality education

Three national strategies are partly related to sexuality education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, though to date it has not become a teaching subject. A few elements of sexuality education are incorporated into various other school subjects. Despite the assistance from international organisations and advocacy efforts from local non-governmental organisations, the implementation of sexuality education in the country is a slow process that has often been met with resistance and a lack of governmental support.





Laws and policies

There are three national strategies that are (partly) related to sexuality education: the 'National Strategy for Youth' (2015–2025), the 'National Strategy for HIV' (2012–2016) and the 'National Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health' (2010–2015). These strategies support the improvement of knowledge and education about sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

In 2011, a Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education was adopted by the Parliamentary Commission on equal opportunities, and the same Commission then recommended piloting sexuality education in schools. However, this has not led to a related action plan.

Implementation of sexuality education

There is no separate school subject entitled sexuality education in the FYR of Macedonia. Some elements thereof are included in various other school subjects, such as Life Skills Education (LSE), biology, sociology and citizenship. The development of an LSE programme was initiated and financed by the UNICEF country office in Skopje. LSE is mandatory but is offered only during 'living-room' or 'advisory classroom' sessions/hours. LSE comprises 36 teaching hours annually for all areas of the subject, and starts in the first grade (age 6 years). Teachers decide which components to include in these lessons. The educational sub-objectives that might be considered as sexuality education are delegated for learners¹ aged 12 or over.

The extent to which sexuality education is taught varies across the country. Since teachers themselves can select the components of LSE to be taught, most of them avoid themes that they are not comfortable with teaching, i.e. those related to SRH. **According to a 2014 study, only 7% of teachers from the capital city reported having talked about sexual orientation in LSE classes; 9% had addressed oral contraception, 15% condom use and 35% HIV prevention.**⁹

Training of teachers on sexuality education

Few teachers have been trained specifically to teach LSE. Training-of-trainers courses on LSE teaching are available, after which participating teachers are obliged to teach fellow teachers using the course content supplied to them. However, sexuality-education topics are rarely made part of this training. The governmental Bureau for the Development of Education designs the teaching materials, and teachers receive guidelines on how to conduct workshops with their colleagues.



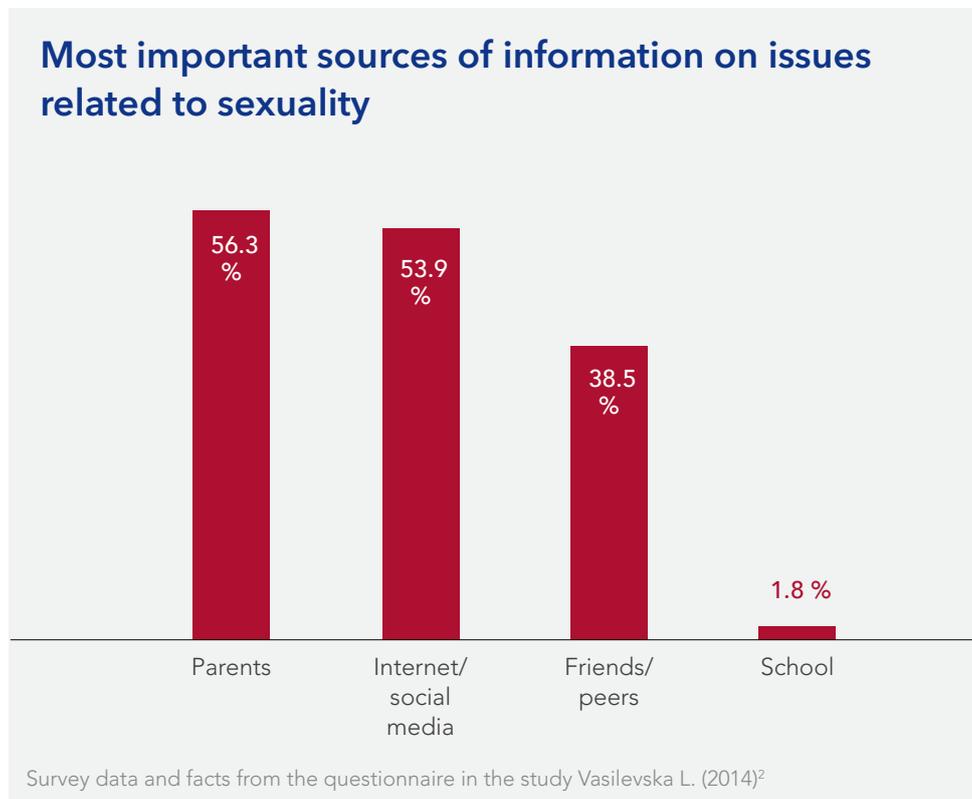
Sexuality education outside the formal school setting

Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide comprehensive, non-formal peer sexuality education. The Health Education and Research Association (HERA, IPPF member association) developed a curriculum for this. HERA also organises workshops on SRH issues. Furthermore, there is a ‘Sexy Hood’ radio show covering various sexuality issues, which is produced by HERA. NGOs and international organisations such as UNFPA, EGAL, HERA, HOPS and Stronger Together develop and implement programmes for underserved and at-risk groups of young people, including Roma, sex workers, drug users and migrants.

Challenges

Social taboos and conservative views hinder the implementation of sexuality education in the FYR of Macedonia. Sexuality education often lacks government support, and, in many cases, it is portrayed negatively in the media and in public campaigns conducted by the government.

Most important sources of information on issues related to sexuality





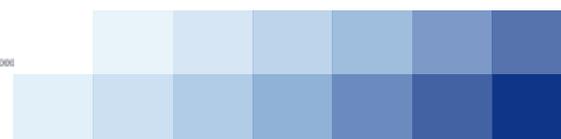
Macedonia (FYROM)

Country facts

Total population ³	2 066 000
Population aged 15–19 years (% of 15–19-year-olds in total population) ³	137 000 (6.6 %)
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) ⁴	N/A
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24 years) ⁵	49.4
Gender Inequality Index rating ⁶	0.160
Births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years ⁷	17
% of 15-year-olds who have had sexual intercourse ⁸	boys: 36 % girls: 3 %
Average age of mother at birth of first child ⁹	26.6

N/A: not available

For references go to last page



References / Definitions

- 1 **Learner:** a child or young person who is enrolled or attends classes in school, including primary (basic/elementary), secondary (middle) and high school.
- 2 Vasilevska L. Access to SRHR information in primary and secondary schools conducted among students and teachers. Skopje: HERA/Centre for Vocational Education and Training; 2014.
- 3 Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 2016 [online database]. New York: United Nations Statistics Division; 2017 (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A22>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 4 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Government expenditure on education:** current, capital and transfer spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Range in the region is approx. 2.0–8.5.
- 5 Human development data, 2015 [online database]. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2017 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Youth unemployment rate:** percentage of the labour force population aged 15–24 years that is not in paid employment or self-employed, but is available for work and has taken steps to seek paid employment or self-employment.
- 6 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Gender Inequality Index:** a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It varies between zero (when women and men fare equally) and one (when men or women fare poorly compared with the other in all dimensions).
- 7 Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15–19). Washington (DC): World Bank; 2016 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 8 Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC 2016 study report (2013/2014 survey). Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/growing-up-unequal.-hbsc-2016-study-20132014-survey>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 9 Mother's mean age at first birth. Index Mundi [data from CIA world factbook, various years] (<http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/fields/mother's-mean-age-at-first-birth>, accessed 25 March 2017).