

<b>1. Name of the project.</b>
<b>PRO-DI-GI Platform</b>  <b>Component 1: National virtual platform for e-training</b> <b>Component 2: Training for DI-GI skills and competences</b>
<b>2. Description of the project (objectives, main activities).</b>
<p><b>The project will be implemented in 2 components:</b></p> <p><b><u>Component 1: National virtual platform for e-training</u></b></p> <p><b>Main objective</b> The main goal of this component is to enhance the access and provide more opportunities for quality training, using the digital technologies' capabilities. The development and implementation of a virtual platform for e-training will provide flexible and accessible forms of training such as online distance training courses and e-resources for informal learning.</p> <p>The component is in line with the priority "Education and Skills" and the priority "Social Inclusion" of the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030", the Lifelong Learning Strategy, as well as one of the main priorities for improving the quality of the labour force in the draft Employment Strategy of Bulgaria for the period 2021 - 2030. The implementation of the component will contribute to achieving the set in the National Programme "Bulgaria 2030" indicator for increased participation of the population (25-64 years old in education and training until 7% in 2030 and will directly contribute to the implementation of the specific recommendations to Bulgaria within the European Semester in 2019 and 2020 to take action for improving employability by strengthening skills, including digital skills. The actions envisaged in the component will also contribute to the implementation of Objective 4 "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>The implementation of the activities will also contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the National Programme "Digital Bulgaria 2025" and the strategic document "Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2030", adopted by the Council of Ministers on July 21, 2020, area of impact 5 - Adaptation of the labor market - education, training and social protection.</p> <p>The component's goal and activities are in accordance with the European strategic documents - European Skills Agenda, The European Education Area, etc.</p> <p><b>The main challenges</b> addressed by the component are related to:</p> <p><b>Need of modernization and enhancement of the forms for training of adults (persons over the age of 16 ) through the use of digital technologies.</b> One of the main priorities of the national employment policy is to increase the quality of the</p>

labor force in accordance with the needs of the labor market. Various training opportunities are provided for the development of the skills and competencies of the labour force within the active labor market policy, financed by the state budget and the European Social Fund through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" (OP HRD). Different types of training courses are provided – training for acquisition and development of vocational qualification, training for acquisition key competencies, on-the-job training for acquisition of practical skills such as apprenticeship and training through work (dual system of training), internship and providing the first job in order to facilitate the transition from education and training to employment. The organization of training for the acquisition and development of vocational qualifications is regulated in the Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA). Vocational training is organised on professions from the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training, in accordance with the national training standards for acquiring vocational qualification. Training on key competences is organized in accordance with the European Reference Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. According to VETA, the forms of vocational training for adults (persons over 16 years of age outside the education system) are present, separate, distant, as it is determined by the training institution, in coordination with the applicant of the vocational training.

Despite the opportunities provided by law, practice shows that the predominant form of adult education is present, face-to-face in training courses. The organization of distance e-training is applied in rare cases, especially in training for key competencies, and in particular in training in foreign languages. The main reasons for not offering distance e-training are many. On the one hand, it is the lack of developed web platforms, electronic resources, tools, curricula and training content for conducting and evaluating online training in electronic form, the lack of pedagogical capacity of the training institutions to organize and conduct online training, the inability to monitor and control the quality of the conducted training in the electronic environment. On the other hand, some of the people wishing to study do not have the technical capabilities and access to the Internet, as well as the necessary digital skills to participate in online training.

At the same time, the development and extensive use of technology, the changes in socio-economic life, the demographic trends require continuous development and adaptation of knowledge and skills of labour force for higher employability and adaptability. This requires modernization of the adult training system by providing a new learning environment, such as provided by digital technologies, which will open new training opportunities, incl. informal learning, at any time and from any place. The COVID-19 pandemic and the following national and global socio-economic consequences have further emphasized the need to develop modern, faster and more convenient opportunities for training and self-learning.

The creation of a unified digital environment/platform for training and self-learning, in which e-learning opportunities will have to meet certain quality criteria, will also increase the quality of adult training in general.

#### **Low level of participation of the population (25-64 years old) in lifelong learning.**

Negative demographic trends in the country and the growing skills shortage show the need of more investment in skills acquisition, incl. digital skills, raising the qualification and retraining of the current and future labour force. At the same time, the participation of the Bulgarian population (25-64 years old) in forms of lifelong learning remains at very low level - only 2.5% in 2018 compared to 11.1% for the EU-28 according to Eurostat, and the reasons for this are

related to the lack of financial resources and time for participation in face-to-face training courses, difficult access to training opportunities, etc. The provision of training opportunities at any time and from any place through the use of digital technologies will support the training of employees who in other cases have to be absent from work for a long period of time in order to participate in training, as well as will facilitate the reconciliation of training, professional and personal life. By providing online forms of training tailored to the individual characteristics, the motivation of unemployed for learning and their employability and their subsequent inclusion in employment will be increased. It will make possible the training and activation of persons who are not in employment, as well as the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market, incl. people with reduced mobility or living in rural or remote areas. The online resources for informal learning will support people who want to learn, but do not have the opportunity to participate in organized training courses due to lack of funds, time and so on. Last but not least, online training will also support the development of people's digital skills.

**The specific objectives** of the component are:

- Modernization of the forms, methods and means of adult training through development and implementation of a virtual platform for e-training and organization of online courses for adult training and e-resources for informal learning.
- Increasing the access and quality of adult training, incl. by building a network of digital clubs / "access points" throughout the country, equipped with appropriate equipment and Internet, allowing persons who do not have personal equipment to use it for free; supporting the development of digital skills of teachers in training institutions for the development of electronic learning content and conducting online training courses;
- Increasing the participation of the population (25-64 years old) in lifelong learning and social inclusion by providing opportunities for distance e-learning.
- Digital skills development of individuals through their participation in online training courses and the use of electronic resources for learning.

**Contractor:** Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

**Partners:** Employment Agency, Ministry of Education and Science, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, State Agency for e-Government.

**The main activities will include:**

**Component 1 - Activity 1: Construction and development of a virtual platform for e-training of adults (persons over 16 years of age)**

The basic activity of the project is the creation of a virtual platform for e-training, which will provide opportunities for conducting online training courses for acquiring vocational qualifications and online training courses for acquiring key competencies, for which it is possible. Online training will be conducted through virtual classrooms, virtual libraries, virtual laboratories for practical vocational training and virtual laboratories for performing practical tasks in key competencies for which it is possible. The virtual platform for e-training will contain electronic learning resources (electronic learning materials, e-manuals, interactive lessons, e-tests, assignments, etc.), which will also provide opportunities for informal learning.

The virtual platform for e-training will be open to the inclusion of training organizations that are licensed to conduct vocational training (licensed vocational training centers) and to training organizations that can provide training on key competencies and are willing to conduct online courses for training.

The online training will be provided for persons over 16 years, for acquiring a degree of vocational qualification or in part of a profession and for acquiring key competencies for which it is possible. It will be possible to organize synchronous, asynchronous and blended training.

The virtual platform for e-training will be used to organize online training courses for the unemployed and employed, funded by the state budget for active labour market policy and by the ESF + under the Human Resources Development Programme.

Through the platform, the assignors of the training, such as The Employment Agency, employers, etc., as well as the control bodies (NAVET, etc.) will have access to the training and will be able to monitor and control its implementation. It will be possible to check the presence of the trainees, the implementation of the curriculum by days, success through access to the examination materials and tests, access to the materials and the questionnaires for evaluation of the training, etc. In this way, the compliance with the legislative regulatory requirements for the organization of training and the quality of the training will be monitored.

The virtual platform for e-training will provide opportunities for assessment/self-assessment and certification of acquired knowledge and skills as a result of training, as well as opportunities for validation of professional knowledge and skills and validation of key competencies acquired through non-formal training or informal learning, respecting the legislative regulatory requirements for that.

### **Component 1 - Sub-Activity 1.1. Implementation of basic functional modules**

The basic functional modules of the platform will provide modernization and upgrading of the existing forms for conducting vocational training and training for acquiring key competencies, by digitalization of the processes of synchronous teaching, as well as the creation of programmes and courses for asynchronous teaching of online training materials. The basic functionality also envisages the development of a module for electronic registration of profiles for training organizations, certification centers, persons wishing to be trained and persons wishing to validate their basic digital skills (a module for the purposes of Component 2 of the project).

#### **The basic functional modules of the virtual platform for e-training will provide the following capabilities:**

- Electronic module for registration of profiles for training organizations, certification centers, persons wishing to be trained and persons wishing to validate their basic digital skills and competencies. (a module for the purposes of Component 2).
- The module will contain unified tools for assessment and certification of basic digital skills and competencies, which will automatically generate tests and practical tasks for conducting examinations for assessment of basic digital skills and competencies acquired as a result of that training or as a result of non formal and informal learning. (Component 2)

- The module will register training organizations that wish to provide training in basic digital skills, as well as organizations that wish to perform assessment and certification (validation) of basic digital skills and competencies (so-called certification centers). Organizations that have registered a desire to be certification centers will not be entitled to assess and certify (validate) basic digital skills from the training they have provided. After registration, a list of training organizations and a list of certification centers for basic digital skills and competencies will be created. (for the purposes of Component 2)
- Persons wishing to be trained for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies will have to register in the module through an individual profile. After verifying the identity and approval of the person, he will receive an "electronic voucher" for training, which gives the right to participate in training for basic digital skills and competencies, and the person will be able to choose a training organization from the list. For persons who do not have access to the Internet or have difficulties with registration, assistance will be provided on the spot in the "Labour Office" directorates. (Component 2)
- Persons wishing to validate their basic digital skills and competencies acquired through non-formal or informal learning will have to register in the module through an individual profile. After verification of the identity and approval of the person, he will be entitled to take an exam for validation of basic digital skills and competencies, and the person will be able to choose a certification center from the list. (Component 2)
- Integration with the national electronic identification scheme and the e-authentication system to ensure that each person can register only once (impossibility to re-register with the same UCN).
- The electronic module will keep electronic lists with a complete history of the entered facts and circumstances for the training organizations, the certification centers, the trained persons, and the persons who have validated their basic digital skills and competencies, including an electronic archive with the issued certificates. (Component 2)
- Module for managing the generation of electronic vouchers for inclusion in training for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies (Component 2).
- The module will also contain a method for registration of successfully completed training by entering the certificates of attendance issued by the training organizations and a method for registration of successfully and unsuccessfully passed exams for basic digital skills and competencies by the certification centers. This will make possible the monitoring the successful completion of the training, and on that basis, the training organizations will be able to receive payment for the "electronic vouchers", as well as the passed exams for basic digital skills and competencies, on the basis of which the certification centers will be paid. (Component 2)
- There will be an opportunity to access the full functionalities of the platform from any type of devices with a large display size (computer, laptop, tablet)
- It will be possible to access only administrative and reference functionalities of the platform from mobile devices with Android and iOS operating systems, etc.
- When choosing training from the trainee, the system will not allow inclusion in training (repetition of the same training) for which there is already evidence that the person has passed. This will be possible after integration of data from the competent institutions NAVET, MES, National Database of The Employment Agency and others by Sub-Activity 1.3.
- Asynchronous training - training at own pace and in own time, limited within a pre-set time by the training organization.
- For this purpose, separate modules should be created with the possibility of customization

by the training organization.

- Technological possibility for determining the minimum and maximum duration for each module (training topic);
- Opportunity for the trainee to store his certificates in a personal professional portfolio in the platform and to share them from there with potential employers or other stakeholders for a certain period of time, according to the requirements of GDPR.
- During the exam - it will be held with the camera and microphone on/with the possibility for the camera to monitor the movements of the learner / or by two cameras - one for the face and additional one to monitor the hands and writing text / there will be tests in modules, to be passed for a certain time / there have be an indication for leaving the active tab /, as well as there have be a possibility to block browsing outside the platform, etc.
- There will be integrated anti-plagiarism software to control the import of texts.
- The practical exams, which will be conducted in the different specialties in an electronic environment, when this is applicable for the respective specialty, will take place through video-conferencing / video recordings of the practical activity, etc.
- There will be integration with a calendar for marking the schedule for conducting the training and its duration, for evaluating a given training, as well as for fixing deadlines for submitting projects / creative tasks / written works/tests, exams, etc.
- There will be an online diary in which to fill in: attendance, current results/assessments, submitted projects/materials, the progress of the trainee or group, notes from the teacher, as well as the opportunity for inquiries (individual and group) for hours spent in the system, submitted projects, etc., to which the trainee, the lecturer and the experts on observations and control will have access.
- The training platform does not allow access to assessment results/exams and does not allow automatic generation of a certificate or a document for completed training, provided that the minimum required number of learning hours is not reached (for example, less than 80% presence in the training platform).
- To be able to directly import / link to the results of the exam/test (and passed levels, where applicable, i.e. automatic generation of results in the platform, and if you successfully pass the minimum score - to automatically generate a certificate for successfully completed training/level);
- The training platform should not allow access to the next level of training (for training with separate modules/levels), provided that the minimum required number of learning hours has not been reached (with less than 80% attendance in the training platform) ;
- The system does not allow access to the next training material without completing the previous one (example: If a specific video/audio material or reading material has not been opened/read / watched or listened to, it cannot open the next one. it is not allowed to "skip" materials intended for learning, when the training is informal or for self-preparation.
- Possibility for the experts for monitoring and control to export all data from the system for all trainees for the whole period of training, including attendance hours by modules (where applicable) and total attendance hours, video / audio recordings, results of input, intermediate and output tests, thus the beneficiary will not need to apply any documents from the training, and the access itself, which will be given to the Managing Authority when generating a request for payment, will be a report of the training. This will eliminate the possibility of "errors" in the reporting in the number of school hours, the results obtained / grades and the certificates generated by the system for successful graduates;
- Possibility for the experts for monitoring and control to export the data for the monitoring

of the training/exam (date, duration) and the trainees - this will be a good audit trail during the verification and can be used to prove the performed training check in real time, as well as in the reporting of the training.

- The data will be exported in various secure or processing formats and in accordance with the requirements of GDPR.
- Access of the monitoring and control experts to the conducted tests for entry-level, on the basis of which the subsequent levels of training are determined;
- Opportunity for online presence of the experts in monitoring and control during the exams or to provide additional real-time recording by a video camera. The realized video recordings from the exams must be part of the generated documents from the whole educational process;
- If there are financial resources external experts to be engaged or experts with the necessary competence to conduct sampling tests and through them to certify the level of knowledge acquired by the trained persons after completion of the training (minitests within 3 days of the exam / or simultaneously on the day after/before the exam);

#### **Component 1 - Sub-activity 1.2. Implementation of management functional modules**

- Functionality will be implemented for a virtual classroom with virtual whiteboards for conducting synchronous training with a teacher/instructor:
- Closed video conferencing system that allows online courses with control of the presence and attention of participants;
- Sharing screens by the teacher and the trainees;
- Opportunity to group the trainees for group exercises;  
Organizing online resources and content through templates with pre-prepared interactive screens for virtual whiteboards;
- Possibility for individual and group control over the cameras and microphones of the trainees by the teacher;
- Synchronous training with a teacher, to be held on specific days and hours according to schedules - for this purpose the functionalities for a virtual classroom and virtual whiteboards will be used, in which the teachers and the trainees can participate.
- Rating system for training organizations, teachers and training resources and content, which is updated automatically, based on completed electronic feedback cards by the participants in the processes (teachers, trainees, employers, administration, auditors)
- Module for a billing system for accounting electronic vouchers and for payment (or additional payment for self-participation) for the respective training programs/courses; Integration with the national e-Payment system and other online payment instruments;
- Online access of the monitoring and control experts to the training platform, from where at least the following can be seen in real time:
  - Monitoring in the platform and full access to a register of logs of the persons involved in the training, as well as the names and/or the unique code of each of the persons present in the scheduled training, with the possibility to visualize a diary of events and actions for each individual, as well as the specific IP from which the trainee has entered, as well as the access of the administrators in real time to the exams/tests and the assessment;
  - Monitoring in the platform and full access to the duration (progression) of each user by name, with a specific date and time in which the person enters and spends in the platform, as it is consistent with the defined schedule of classes (specific number of training hours for

each module , if applicable);

- Automatic generation of a video archive for each user session of the learner or teacher when working in a virtual classroom, including video streams, shared screens and the virtual whiteboard, from the point of view of each learner in the group;
- Ability to visualize by name for each learner: total progress time, compared to the set hours for each module - visual progression in percentages, compared to the set from 1 to 100 (Example: if the module is set to run 100 hours from 01 to 31 March , and until March 28 there is no log / or there is a log, but there are no required hours of attendance, there is no way to cover the minimum of 100 hours for the remaining 3 days) and permanent access of the Managing Authority in real time to all statistics (for the whole period of training, according to the schedule) for attendance in the platform, the completed training/levels and the achieved results/training progress of the trainees, assessment and issued certificates;

### **Component 1 - Sub-activity 1.3. Building of an electronic portal with a training catalog**

Development of an electronic portal providing the following opportunities:

- Public access to information on the offered online training courses and e-content for informal learning, including information on the schedules for conducting training courses, ratings of the training courses and training organizations. The portal will be integrated with the virtual platform for e-training, and will contain a publicly available sample of data on scheduled online courses and data on training organizations, thus avoiding the need for manual updating of the same information in two systems;
- Tools for searching information by interested persons (unemployed, employed, employers, etc.), which will be organized on the principle of "Episodes of life" (e.g. "training", "meeting the requirements for official competence profile ", " retraining ", and alternatively with full-text search capabilities, combined with the application of filters by location, forms of training, time periods, etc .:
  - o Easy and convenient search for information and registration for participation in upcoming online training, with an automatic check for available vacancies in the training groups;
  - o Easy and convenient search for information about pieces of training in progress (topic and curriculum of the training course, training organization, place of conduct, start date, period of implementation, document certifying successful completion, etc.);
- Subscription for automatic notifications for upcoming online pieces of training or for upcoming training courses, in progress;
- Access to customer support and assistance in using the portal, registration in the virtual platform for e-training and others;

### **Component 1 - Sub-activity 1.4. Implementation of integration with external national systems and registers**

Implementation of integrations for automated verification of circumstances and download of structured data in real time from external information systems and registers, in compliance with the principle of one-time collection and multiple use of data regulated in the CAP and LEG. Integrations will be realized through application programme interfaces with the following information systems and registers:



- National database on the labour market (system of the Employment Agency);
- The information system for assessment of competencies My Competence;
- The platform for training providers of the Employment Agency;
- The electronic register of the vocational training centers of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, etc.
- For more secure electronic identification, a comparison of identification and biometric data will be realized through an automated reference in the national database "Bulgarian identity documents".

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 1.5. Implementation of interfaces with external systems for "Serious Games" and virtual laboratories**

Implementation of xAPI integrations for integration with standardized external systems and open-source tools, which provide the ability to manage "Serious Games" and virtual laboratories, and integrate them into the learning process.

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 1.6. Providing a resource for continuous development of the platform**

Providing expert capacity and resources for development and renewal of the platform, after its initial commissioning by the end of the project:

- Gradual implementation of additional functionalities and improvement of all modules of the platform, to cover changes in business needs, regulations and to improve the user interface for usability;
- Improvements in the architecture in order to increase the productivity and scalability of the platform, including assistance to the contractor of the activities for providing a systemic environment when performing migration of services, data recovery in case of disasters and accidents, etc. ;
- Regular updating of components and libraries developed by third parties and built into the platform to eliminate identified security vulnerabilities, defects, deficiencies or to provide support for newer versions of international technical standards and protocols or versions of operating systems, and browsers used by users.

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 1.7. Providing customer support**

Providing expert resources and technical means for organization and provision of support to users in the use and/or administrating the Platform for the following categories of users:

- Administrators and teachers (trainers, instructors);
- Mentors in digital clubs;
- Administrators, auditors and users of MLSP, contracting authorities, institutions exercising control functions;
- Citizens who are users or would like to become users of the Platform.

**Component 1 - Activity 2: Development of methodologies and electronic content**

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 2.1. Development of methodological manuals for teachers**

- Development of methodological manuals for online teaching and assessment of acquired

knowledge, skills and competencies.

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 2.2. Development of training materials for teachers**

- Development of curricula for organizing online training courses for acquiring of professions and key competencies for which it is possible;
- Development of template electronic training resources (electronic training materials, e-manuals, interactive lessons, e-tests, assignments, virtual whiteboard templates, etc.) that can be used by training organizations to integrate into their training programmes and courses;

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 2.3. Development of training materials for informal learning**

- Development of resources for informal learning (electronic training materials, e-manuals, interactive lessons, e-tests, assignments, virtual whiteboard templates, etc.).

**Component 1 - Sub-activity 2.4. Development of training materials for users of the platform**

- Development of materials intended for training to work with the platform itself and the acquisition of knowledge and skills for using the full tools and functionalities of the platform, for the respective user roles:
  - Administrator;
  - Teacher/trainer;
  - Auditor;
  - Expert in monitoring and control;
  - Learner.

**Component 1 - Activity 3: Conducting training for trainers**

- Training of trainers from training organizations to acquire digital skills to create digital content of the learning process, work with the digital platform for e-training, and conduct online training courses.
- Training of representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for managing the virtual platform and of representatives of the Employment Agency, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Science to work with the virtual platform in connection with the exercise of control functions.
- Training of mentors from digital clubs to work with the virtual platform in connection with providing assistance to trainees.

**Component 1 - Activity 4: Building, administering and maintaining a system environment**

Conducting a procedure under PPA to provide a cloud service provider and maintain a cloud environment for a virtual platform.

It is envisaged to use a ready-made solution for providing the cloud environment, which will have the necessary server power, sufficient storage space for information and the appropriate capacity to provide data traffic with which the virtual platform will operate.

The Ministry of Education and Science, the State Agency for e-Government, as well as companies specializing in this field are among the potential providers of the cloud service.

**Component 1 - Activity 5: Building and maintaining a network of digital clubs**

- **Sub-Activity 5.1.** - Construction and installation work - refurbishment and adaptation for

50% of digital clubs

- **Sub-Activity 5.2.** - Delivery and installation of equipment and furniture
- **Sub-Activity 5.3.** - Providing Internet connectivity
- **Sub-Activity 5.4.** - Providing consumables and technical support

"Digital clubs" ("access points") will be built/adapted in places throughout the country, which will be located in municipal buildings, regional information centers, libraries, community centers, "Labour Office" directorates, etc. The digital clubs will be equipped with modern computer equipment adapted to work with the virtual platform for e-training, broadband internet access and furnishing a hall / special place, if necessary, where interested persons will be able to use the equipment assisted by mentors for access to the virtual platform and participation in online training courses/ informal learning. The digital clubs will have free access for all interested persons, with priority being given to those who do not have their own computer equipment and internet and would not otherwise have access to the virtual platform for e-training.

Depending on the condition of the material base, 50% of the digital clubs in the country will be repaired and/or adapted.

An interactive map of digital clubs will be created and published on the virtual platform for e-training.

#### **Component 1 – Activity 6: Information campaign**

Regular creation of content for digital marketing, materials for the media and conducting information and advertising campaigns to raise awareness of employers and citizens about the opportunities for inclusion in online training and informal learning through the virtual platform for e-training, which will be conducted throughout the period of project implementation. Monitoring and analysis of the media coverage of the component's activities, the effectiveness of the campaigns and measuring the awareness and perceptions of the citizens from the target groups about the knowledge, accessibility and benefits of the project and the virtual platform for e-training.

#### **Component 1 - Activity 7: Organization and management of the component**

A team for organization and management will be formed and it will be responsible for the overall implementation of the component. The team will control and coordinate the communication with the contractors and will monitor the timely implementation of the activities according to the schedule, etc. The costs for organization and management of the component are related to the remuneration of the engaged administration staff - manager, technical assistant, accountant, as well as other expert or technical staff related to the management and quality implementation of the component's activities.

**State aid:** The platform will be open for use by all persons and organizations. In this regard, there is no selectivity and grounds for applying the provisions on state aid within the meaning of Art. 107 and 108 of the TFEU.

**Investments in the renovation and equipment of "digital clubs" will constitute "de minimis" aid in the event that these clubs operate.**

## **Component 2: Training for DI-GI skills and competences**

### **Main objective**

The main goal of this component is the acquisition and validation of basic digital skills and competencies of the labour force in accordance with the new requirements of the labour market and the extensive use of digital technologies in socio-economic processes. The component is directly related to the specific recommendations addressed to Bulgaria within the European Semester in 2019 and 2020, to take action to improve employability by strengthening skills, including digital skills. The activities in this component are in accordance with the set goals and priorities of the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030", the Lifelong Learning Strategy, the draft Employment Strategy of Bulgaria" for the period 2021-2030. A number of national strategic documents outline the digitalization of the sectors and the development of a data-based economy as a priority of Bulgaria's future development policies. In this context, improving the digital skills of the population is highlighted as a key factor. The national programme "Digital Bulgaria 2025" indicates the improvement of competencies in the field of ICT of the labour force and the increase of the number of qualified ICT specialists. The strategic document "Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2030", adopted by the Council of Ministers on July 21, 2020, defines as one of the three main priorities the building of human, scientific, organizational and institutional capacity for the development of "Industry 4.0" in Bulgaria.

The purpose and activities of the component are in accordance with the European strategic documents - European Skills Agenda, The European Education Area, etc.

**The main challenges** addressed by the component are related to:

### **The digital transformation of socio-economic processes and its impact on the labour market and jobs.**

The digital transformation and its impact on all economic and social processes is an issue that in the next decade will be of strategic importance for the development of the economic potential, improving the working conditions and quality of life. Digitalisation is increasingly entering all spheres of the economy and social life and the use of modern digital technologies is a factor in increasing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises, especially SMEs. It is expected technological progress and the so-called Fourth industrial revolution to bring to the closure or transformation of jobs with low or medium levels of skills and the emergence of new jobs with higher levels of skills and competencies. Technological unemployment is emerging, non-standard forms of employment are increasingly appearing. The extensive use of digital technologies also leads to professional transformation, to the need for continuous training or retraining of the labour force. Digital skills and competencies are becoming increasingly key to the pursuit of almost any profession, and according to a number of forecasts, 90% of jobs in the coming years will require such skills. Digital skills are also key to the use of digital platforms and new technologies for distance work, for training in an electronic environment, active participation in society, effective communication. There is a digital division of the population, digital inequalities between generations, digital illiteracy.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the imposed social constraints and the orders for physical distancing have created the conditions for even faster development of digitalisation in both the economy and public life, and a number of processes and services related to communication, employment, education, training and management were digitized in a very short time. The interaction of the citizens with the institutions was also difficult and it was necessary to introduce various electronic services of the institutions.

**Lack of skills and, in particular, low level of digital skills of the population and the labour force.**

According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) for 2020, Bulgaria ranks last in the EU. The overall level of basic digital skills in the country is among the lowest in the EU. The share of people with at least basic skills in the field of digital technologies is about 29% of the Bulgarian population aged 16-74, while the EU average is 58%. Only 11% of people have higher than basic skills, which is one-third of the EU average. Only 67% of Bulgarian citizens use the Internet (the EU average is 83%), while 24% have never used it, which is the highest in the EU. Internet users in Bulgaria mostly conduct video calls, activities on social networks, reading news online. Bulgarian Internet users do not prefer to use other online services, in particular online banking. Only 13% of internet users benefit from e-banking (compared to the EU average of 66%) and only 31% buy online (the EU average of 71%).

**Need to regulate the content of training of adults (persons over 16 years old) for acquiring digital skills and competencies.**

While the organization of initial and continuing vocational training of adults is organized according to a regulation defined in a number of legislative acts (Vocational Education and Training Act, Employment Promotion Act, etc.), training in key competencies is organized freely, based on the European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning 2018, which provides general guidelines for the types of key competences and their content. The National Employment Action Plan, adopted annually by the Council of Ministers, regulates the duration of training on key competencies as a minimum number of training hours, incl. for the training on digital competence, and the price of the training for unemployed and employed persons, when the training is financed with funds from the state budget. The Employment Agency maintains a register of training providers, incl. for training on digital competence, which meets general criteria for teaching staff, curricula, etc. Guidelines of the Employment Agency for the development of curricula on key competences, which are developed on the basis of the European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, are applied. The register of training providers and the guidelines are applied only in training organised for unemployed and employed persons with training vouchers under the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" with funds from the ESF. In this context, unified regulations regarding the content and objectives of training on digital skills, incl. unified tools for entry-level assessment and assessment of training outcomes have not been developed. With the adoption of the European Digital Competence Framework DigComp2.1, a need appeared to regulate the content of training on digital skills by levels and areas of digital skills and to harmonize it with the European requirements in order to achieve transparency, comparability and recognition of the skills. This will increase the quality and effectiveness of digital skills training and create opportunities for their recognition, complementarity and upgrading.

**The specific objectives of the component are:**

1. Improving the employability of the labour force, incl. of disadvantaged groups on the labour market, through the acquisition and validation of basic digital skills and competencies, in order to reduce skills shortages and discrepancies with job requirements;
2. Improving the access and use of opportunities for job search and registration in electronic platforms, distance work, participation in online distance training courses and informal learning through the use of electronic resources, use of electronic services, incl. banking services, services of the institutions at local, regional and national level (National Revenue Agency, National Social Insurance Institute, Employment Agency, Agency for Social Support, municipalities, etc.), etc.
3. Increasing the access and participation of the population aged 25-64 in lifelong learning through the acquisition and validation of digital skills and competences.

**Contractor:** Employment Agency

**Partners:** Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training.

**Activities:**

The project starts with the fastest launch of Component 2 - Training for Di-Gi skills. It is scheduled to begin in early December 2021, and initially, the training will start in a real environment based on a unified curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy together with the Ministry of Education and Science. Operationally, immediately after the construction of an electronic module for registration to the virtual platform for e-training (under Component 1), the training will continue to be implemented in a real environment through registration in the "electronic module for registration for basic digital skills".

**Component 2 - Activity 1. Conducting training for basic digital skills.**

**Component 2 - Sub-activity 1.1. Elaboration of a unified curricula for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies, developed jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science**

The curricula will also include a module/topic for acquiring knowledge and skills for the use of electronic services provided by institutions and the use of mobile devices for access to electronic services.

The elaboration of the curricula will be carried out by a working group with the participation of experts from Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, external IT specialists and others.

**Component 2 - Sub-activity 1.2. Elaboration of unified training resources and assessment tools**

- Elaboration of unified training resources (learning materials) for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies in accordance with the curricula elaborated under Sub-activity 1.1;

- Elaboration of unified tools for assessment of basic digital skills and competencies according to the European Digital Competence Framework DigComp2.1.

The elaboration of training resources and assessment tools will be outsourced following a public procurement procedure.

### **Component 2 - Sub-activity 1.3. Conducting training for registered unemployed and employed for acquiring basic digital skills**

The training for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies will have a total duration of at least 55 training hours. The curricula will be developed in accordance with the European Digital Competence Framework DigComp2.1. for the acquisition of a basic level of digital skills and competencies and will include as minimum modules and topics for the acquisition of basic skills in the following areas:

- Using a personal computer, creating and managing files and directories;
- Search for information on the Internet;
- Use of reference sources of information and informal learning (wikis, useful information portals, etc.);
- Use of e-mail;
- Using applications for calls and video conferencing;
- Electronic word processing;
- Working with spreadsheets;
- Creating letters and documents.

Training organizations wishing to provide training for acquisition of basic digital skills and competencies will need to register in the electronic module of the virtual platform for e-training (created under Component 1). The registration will be done by filling in an electronic application. Based on the completed applications and after checking the circumstances, a list of training organizations will be created, from which the trainees will be able to choose a training organization.

Target groups of the training will be unemployed registered in "Labour Office" directorates and employed persons who do not have any digital skills and competencies. The persons from the target groups wishing to be trained for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies will register in the electronic module of the virtual platform for e-training (Component 1) by filling in a registration form with basic information (names, e-mail address and contact phone number, labour market status, etc.). After the approval of the person, an "electronic voucher" for training will be generated, which will enable the person to participate in training for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies in a training organization of his choice from the list of training organizations in the module. For persons who do not have access to the Internet or have difficulties with registration, assistance will be provided on the spot in the "Labour Office" directorates.

The training will be conducted according to the unified curricula (developed under Sub-activity 1.1) and training resources (developed under Sub-activity 1.2), in face-to-face form in groups of up to 12 people, in compliance with the ordered anti-epidemic measures. After the construction of the virtual platform for e-training (Component 1), the training will be able to

be conducted in electronic form from a distance. After successfully completing a training course, the training organization will issue a certificate of attendance, based on the total number of training hours (minimum 80% attendance). The training organization will enter the certificate of attendance in the electronic module, thus certifying that the person has successfully completed the training course.

**Component 2 - Sub-Activity 1.4. Provision of scholarships and transport costs for the unemployed persons participated in training for basic digital skills and competences**

Providing scholarships and covering transport costs for the unemployed persons participated in training for basic digital skills and competences organised under the Sub-activity 1.3. The scholarships and transport costs will be provided for the period of training in order to reduce the barriers to accessing training.

**Component 2 - Sub-Activities 1.5. and 1.6. Assessment and certification (validation) of basic digital skills and competencies.**

Assessment and certification (validation) of basic digital skills and competencies will be provided to:

- persons who have passed training for acquisition of basic digital skills and competencies (under Sub-activity 1.3);
- persons who have digital skills and competencies acquired through informal learning.

The assessment of basic digital skills and competencies will be conducted by taking an exam. The exam will consist of: a written exam - a test and a practical task and it will be carried out through the developed unified assessment tools (under Sub-activity 1.2). The assessment of the acquired digital skills and competencies will be conducted by certification centers, which will check the acquired digital skills and competencies and the achievement of the respective basic level in accordance with the European Digital Competence Framework DigComp2.1. The selection of a certification center will be done by the persons themselves, randomly, from the list of certification centers in the electronic module in the virtual platform for e-training (Component 1). Certification centers will not have the right to validate basic digital skills and competencies of persons participating in training courses organized by them.

After successfully passing the exam for assessment of basic digital skills and competencies, the persons will receive a certificate of acquired key competence: "Digital skills for beginners: computer work, word processing, spreadsheets" (according to the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, key competence 4 - Digital competence).

The data of the persons to whom certificates have been issued will be entered in the electronic module of the virtual platform for e-training (Component 1). In this way, it will be possible to track the share of persons registered for training who have successfully acquired basic digital skills and competencies and have received a certificate (effect from the training), and it will be possible to track the share of persons who have validated basic digital skills and competencies as whole. An electronic archive of the issued certificates will be maintained in the electronic module.



**Component 2 - Sub-Activity 1.7. Remuneration costs for staff from the “Labour Office” directorates (LOD) for providing support**

Experts from each of the 107 “Labour Office” directorates will be available to help the persons from the target groups throughout the country. They will provide support in the process of registration, issuance of electronic voucher, certificate or other issues related to training and validation of basic digital skills.

**Component 2 - Activity 2. Information campaign**

Raising citizens' awareness of the need to acquire basic digital skills and competencies, informing about the opportunities for validation of basic digital skills and competencies, as well as informing training organizations about the possibility to participate in the project for provision of training and validation of basic digital skills and competencies.

**Component 2 - Activity 3. Organization and management of the component**

A team for organization and management will be formed, which will be responsible for the overall implementation of the component. The team will control and coordinate the communication with the contractors, it will monitor the timely implementation of the activities according to the schedule, etc. The costs for organization and management of the component are costs related to the remuneration of the engaged administration staff - manager, technical assistant, accountant, as well as other expert or technical staff related to the management and quality implementation of the component's activities.

**State aid:** The training of employed and unemployed persons will not be considered state aid within the meaning of Art. 107 and 108 of the TFEU, as these training courses will not be related to specific jobs and will not lead to distortions of competition.

The lists of training organizations and certification centers will be open to new organizations, due to which there is no selectivity in the entry of the above organizations in the lists and accordingly there is no state aid within the meaning of Art. 107 and 108 of the TFEU.

**3. Beneficiary.****Component 1: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**

Online training courses for unemployed and employed persons, funded by the state budget for active labor market policy and by the ESF under the Human Resources Development Programme will be organized via the virtual platform for e-training.

The main final beneficiaries - users of training services will be the persons over 16 years. The virtual platform for e-training will have a free access, and for access to online training and e-learning resources each user of the training services will have his own universal e-profile and access code.

**Component 2: Employment Agency**

Final beneficiaries of the training services will be registered unemployed and employed persons without any digital skills and competencies.

Final beneficiaries of the validation services will be registered unemployed and employed persons who have digital skills and competencies acquired through non-formal training or informal learning.

#### **4. Time schedule for project implementation, incl. activities, stages <sup>1</sup>.**

##### **Time implementation of the project 2021-2026**

**The preparatory activities will start in April-May 2021.**

**Actual implementation 01.07.2021 - 30.06.2026**

##### **Component 1:**

**In the period: 01.07.2021 - 01.09.2021**

- Formation of a team for organization and management of the activities during the whole period of the component, preparation and announcement of procedures for conducting of public procurements;

**In the period: 01.09.2021 - 28.02.2022**

##### **➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following activities:**

- **Activity 1:** Construction and developing a virtual platform for e-training
- **Activity 2:** Development of methodologies and electronic content
- **Activity 3:** Conducting training for trainers

##### **➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following activities:**

- **Activity 4:** Building, administering and maintaining a system environment
- **Activity 5:** Building and maintaining a network of digital clubs

##### **➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following activities:**

- **Activity 6:** Information campaign

**In the period: 01.03.2022 - 30.06.2026**

Implementation and realization of the activities under Component 1 of the project, according to **Annex 1 - Detailed time schedule for actual implementation and realization of activities.**

##### **Component 2:**

**In the period: 01.07.2021 - 01.09.2021**

- Formation of a team for organization and management of the activities during the whole period of the component, preparation and announcement of procedures for conducting

<sup>1</sup> The time schedule will be relevant for the setting of intermediate targets within the Recovery and Sustainability Plan and is directly related to the release of tranches of financial support from the Recovery and Sustainability Fund.

public procurements;

**In the period: 01.09.2021 - 28.02.2022**

➤ **Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following activities:**

- **Activity 1 – Sub-Activity 1.2:** Development of unified training resources and assessment tools assessment tools
- **Activity 2:** Information campaign

**In the period: 01.12.2021 - 30.06.2026**

- Implementation and realization of the activities under Component 2 of the project, according to **Annex 1 - Detailed time schedule for actual implementation and realization of activities.**

**Actual startup and conducting training courses:**

**01.12.2021 to 30.06.2026**

**4.1. When can the implementation of the project start at the earliest after its approval?**

01.07.2021

**5. Indicative financial resource by activities, incl. sources of funding (SB, European funding, private funding, IFIs).**

**The project total value will be BGN 279 512 819, of which:**

**Component 1: BGN 87 546 136**

<b>Activity / Sub-activity</b>	<b>Budget (BGN)</b>
<b>Activity 1 - Construction and development of a virtual platform for e-training</b>	<b>24 717 312</b>
Sub-Activity 1.1. - Implementation of basic functional modules	3 702 528
Sub-Activity 1.2. - Implementation of management functional modules	4 161 024
Sub-Activity 1.3. - Building an electronic portal with a training catalog	564 480
Sub-Activity 1.4. - Implementation of integrations with external national systems and registers	552 960
Sub-Activity 1.5. - Implementation of interfaces with external systems for "Serious Games" and virtual laboratories	1 797 120
Sub-Activity 1.6. - Providing a resource for continuous development of the platform	5 529 600
Sub-Activity 1.7. - Providing customer support	8 409 600
<b>Activity 2 - Development of methodologies and electronic content</b>	<b>1 680 000</b>
Sub-Activity 2.1. - Development of methodological manuals for trainers	324 000
Sub-Activity 2.2. - Development of training materials for trainers	600 000
Sub-Activity 2.3. - Development of training materials for informal learning	576 000
Sub-Activity 2.4. - Development of training materials for users of the platform	180 000
<b>Activity 3 - Conducting trainings for trainers</b>	<b>3 585 312</b>
Sub-Activity 3.1. - Training of mentors from digital clubs	700 416
Sub-Activity 3.2. - Training of trainers	2 884 896
<b>Activity 4 - Building, administering and maintaining a system environment</b>	<b>11 612 904</b>

Sub-Activity 4.1. - Building a system environment	6 620 178
Sub-Activity 4.2. - Management, administration and maintenance of the system environment	4 992 726
<b>Activity 5 - Building and maintaining a network of digital clubs</b>	<b>42 288 192</b>
Sub-Activity 5.1. - CIW for 50% of digital clubs	7 957 200
Sub-Activity 5.2. - Delivery and installation of equipment and furniture	29 038 992
Sub-Activity 5.3. - Providing Internet connectivity	2 736 000
Sub-Activity 5.4. - Provision of consumables and technical support	2 556 000
<b>Activity 6 – Information campaign</b>	<b>3 162 416</b>
Promotion activities	3 162 416
<b>Activity 7 – Organisation and management of the component</b>	<b>500 000</b>
Organisation and management costs	500 000
<b>Component 1 - Total Budget (BGN)</b>	<b>87 546 136</b>

#### Component 2: BGN 191 966 683

Activity / Sub-activity	Budget (BGN)
<b>Activity 1 - Conducting training for basic digital skills</b>	<b>189 714 683</b>
Sub-Activity 1.1. – Elaboration of a unified curricula for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies, developed jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science	0
Sub-Activity 1.2. – Elaboration of unified training resources and assessment tools	100 000
Sub-Activity 1.3. - Conducting training for registered unemployed and employed for acquiring basic digital skills	150 000 000
Sub-Activity 1.4. - Provision of scholarships and transport costs for the unemployed persons participated in training for basic digital skills	3 000 000
Sub-Activity 1.5. - Assessment and certification (validation) of basic digital skills and competencies acquired through training	25 000 000
Sub-Activity 1.6. - Validation of basic digital skills and competencies acquired through informal learning	5 000 000
Sub-Activity 1.7. - Remuneration costs for staff from LOD for providing support (Total for 55 months 6 013 348.58 and Reserve 10% 601 334.86)	6 614 683
<b>Activity 2 – Information campaign</b>	<b>1 752 000</b>
Promotion activities	1 752 000
<b>Activity 3 – Organisation and management of the component</b>	<b>500 000</b>
Organisation and management costs	500 000
<b>Component 2 - Total Budget (BGN)</b>	<b>191 966 683</b>

#### 5.1. Indicatively allocate the financial resource according to the type of expenditure:

- Construction / rehabilitation of infrastructure (CIW) – 2.85%
- Physical capital (purchase of machinery and equipment) – 10.49%
- Human capital (skills development, retraining...) – 54.95%
- Labor (wage costs, consulting services ...) – 23.51%
- Technology (costs for acquisition of intangible fixed assets - patents, software...) – 8.20%

6. Indicators							
<b>6.1. Result indicator (s)</b>							
Result indicator (s)	Base value	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
<b>Component 1</b>							
Developed and implemented virtual platform for e-training of adults	0	0	0	1			
Number of digital clubs created in places and equipped with modern equipment and internet access	0	0	760				
Number of trained mentors from digital clubs	0	0	760	1 520			
Number of trained teachers from training organisations	0	0	0	1 854	2 781	3 500	3 708
Number of developed online training courses	0	0	100				
Number of developed e-resources for informal learning	0	0	50				
Developed and implemented electronic portal with training catalog	0	0	1				
<b>Component 2</b>							
Number of persons participated in training for basic digital skills and competences	0	0	100 000	200 000	300 000	400 000	500 000
Number of persons with validated basic skills and competences	0	0	10 000	30 000	50 000	80 000	100 000
<p>Contracted resources until 2021:</p> <p><b>Component 1:</b> BGN 87 377 314</p> <p><b>Component 2:</b> BGN 191 966 683</p>							
<b>Note: Values are cumulative and do not include baseline values.</b>							
<b>6.2. Effect indicator (s)</b>							
<b>7. Does the implementation of the project require a procedure under the Public Procurement Act?</b>							
Yes							
<b>7.1. If a procedure under the Public Procurement Act is required, what part of the activities</b>							

and the financial resource will be a subject of the public procurement?																				
<b>Component 1:</b> BGN 87 046 136 <b>Component 2:</b> BGN 1 852 000																				
<b>7.2. If a procedure under the Public Procurement Act is required, what is the indicative schedule for its implementation?</b>																				
<p>The preparation for the award of the public procurements by the organization and management team will take about 3 months from the start of the project.</p> <p><b>Component 1:</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Type of tender procedure</th> <th>Tender procedure period</th> <th>Conclusion of contract</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 1:</b>  Constructino and development of a virtual platform for e-training of adults</li> <li><b>Activity 2:</b> Development of methodologies and electronic content for training</li> <li>▪ <b>Activity 3:</b> Conducting training for trainers</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </td> <td>           01.09.2021            -            28.02.2022         </td> <td>01.03.2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 4:</b> Building, administering and maintaining a system environment</li> <li>▪ <b>Activity 5:</b> Building and maintaining a network of digital clubs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </td> <td>           01.09.2021            -            28.02.2022         </td> <td>01.03.2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 6:</b> Information campaign</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </td> <td>           01.09.2021            -            28.02.2022         </td> <td>01.03.2022</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Component 2:</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Type of tender procedure</th> <th>Tender procedure period</th> <th>Conclusion of contract</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 1 – Sub-Activity 1.2:</b> Elaboration of unified training resources and assessment tools</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </td> <td>           01.09.2021            -            28.02.2022         </td> <td>01.03.2022</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Type of tender procedure	Tender procedure period	Conclusion of contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 1:</b>  Constructino and development of a virtual platform for e-training of adults</li> <li><b>Activity 2:</b> Development of methodologies and electronic content for training</li> <li>▪ <b>Activity 3:</b> Conducting training for trainers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	01.09.2021 - 28.02.2022	01.03.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 4:</b> Building, administering and maintaining a system environment</li> <li>▪ <b>Activity 5:</b> Building and maintaining a network of digital clubs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	01.09.2021 - 28.02.2022	01.03.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 6:</b> Information campaign</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	01.09.2021 - 28.02.2022	01.03.2022	Type of tender procedure	Tender procedure period	Conclusion of contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selection of a contractor for implementation of the following component's activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity 1 – Sub-Activity 1.2:</b> Elaboration of unified training resources and assessment tools</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	01.09.2021 - 28.02.2022	01.03.2022
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**8. Demarcation and complementarity.**

**8.1. If similar projects have been implemented (regardless of their source of funding), describe how this project builds on / complements the achievements of previous projects.**

**Component 1:**

The proposed virtual platform for e-training of adult is innovative in its nature and so far no other similar activities have been implemented with national or European funds.

After the construction of the platform, online training courses will be conducted through it with funds from the national budget and ESF +, and the platform will guarantee the quality of

the conducted trainings courses.

**Component 2:**

This project will provide free and publicly available training for the target groups of people to acquire the necessary basic digital skills and competencies that will have a positive and adequate impact on their professional and career development, as well as in their personal and social life.

Until now, the European Social Fund has not funded operations for acquiring of basic digital skills and competences that are synchronized with the European Digital Competence Framework DigComp2.1. Under the HRD OP 2014-2020, training for acquiring vocational qualification, training for acquiring key competencies, specific training in enterprises and on-the-job training are mainly financed.

**8.2. If similar projects are envisaged for the implementation of similar projects under the Partnership Agreement programs, the centrally managed instruments of the EU or the Fair Transition Fund, outline the demarcation with this project.**

**Component 1:**

This project will finance the construction and implementation of national virtual platform for e-training with funds from the European Fund for Reconstruction and Sustainability, with opportunities for distant online training in an electronic environment, electronic content for training and e-resources for training and informal learning, building digital clubs with equipment and internet, adapted to the virtual platform, building administrative and methodological capacity of the training institutions, elaboration of online tools for assessment and self-assessment and certification, developing an online portal with a training catalog.

The concrete online training courses for the unemployed and employed persons will be funded by the European Social Fund through the Human Resources Development Programme or other Structural Funds.

**Component 2:**

The Human Resource Development Programme 2021-2027 will provide support in the following areas:

- **Support for basic digital skills of citizens** - need to develop citizens' basic digital skills: targeted actions to increase the digital literacy of the population, incl. to use online services, such as electronic banking, social services, etc., increasing the skills of Bulgarian citizens in the field of the digital technologies. The active civil participation in the social processes also requires the possession of soft skills, digital skills, STEM skills, transferable competencies, basic skills.
- **Support for digital skills of the labour force** - adaptation of the labour force to the changing labour market and the future of labour - emergence of new occupations, needs for new skills, development of flexible forms of employment. The digitalization of the economy and the work places will lead to the emergence of new occupations, as well as to the closure of jobs exercising routine tasks and requiring a low level of qualification.
- **Digitization of the services of the Employment Agency**



- **Support for the digitalization of the work environment in the enterprises** - the flexibility of the work processes also leads to the loss of the work environment in an office or production plant and can cause occupational and social isolation, which is accompanied by health risks.
- **Digitalization in the social services** - support for the development of mechanisms to support socially vulnerable groups for access to services in the digital environment and in the context of the future approaches to the provision of information and services - incl. teleassistance, introduction of various forms of electronic tools and resources.
- **Skills of those working in the social sphere** - Digitization of work processes and investments to increase the capacity of specialists carrying out social activities in the context of digitalization, including when providing the services.

**The demarcation with the measures financed by the ESF + will be carried out at the level of a representative of the target group.**

**9. Does the project directly contribute to the implementation of any of the Council Specific Recommendations addressed to Bulgaria in the framework of the European Semester in the period 2017-2020? Please describe how.**

**Component 1:**

The realization of Component 1 of the project will directly contribute to the implementation of the Specific Recommendations of the Council addressed to Bulgaria within the European Semester in 2019, and in particular to the implementation of the recommendation to undertake actions in 2019 and 2020 to improve the employability by strengthening the skills, including the digital skills. The virtual platform for e-training will expand the access and training opportunities at any time and from any place with available internet, which in turn is expected to increase the participation of the population in lifelong learning to acquire and enhance knowledge, skills and competencies and respectively the employability.

**Component 2:**

The implementation of Component 2 of the project will contribute to the achievement of the indicator set in the National Programme "Bulgaria 2030" for increasing the participation of the population (25-64 years) in education and training to 7% in 2030 and will directly contribute to implementation of the specific recommendation to undertake actions to improve employability by strengthening skills, including digital skills, addressed to Bulgaria within the European Semester in 2019 and 2020. The actions envisaged in the project will also contribute to the implementation of Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**10. Does the project contribute to the implementation of reform in a given sector? Please describe how.**

**Component 1:**

The reform is aimed at the transition from traditional forms of training "on the spot", face-to-face in the classroom to online training via a virtual electronic platform and modernization of the adult training system (people over 16 years) by creating a digital environment and digital

methods of training and informal learning. The construction of a unified digital environment / platform for e-training and informal learning, in which e-training opportunities will have to meet quality criteria, will also increase the quality of adult training in general.

The component will contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Development of Education, Training and Learning, and in particular to the achievement of the two objectives in the field of lifelong learning - expanding opportunities for lifelong learning and creating conditions for participation in various forms of lifelong learning, and achieving by 2030 a level of participation of the population aged 26-64 in education and training of 7.5% (compared to 2.5% in 2018). The component will contribute to the reform in the sector of lifelong learning and validation.

Progress / achievement of the goals for increasing participation in forms of lifelong learning will be achieved through various policy instruments. The contribution of the policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the field of adult training is significant through funding of training for employed and unemployed persons under the annually developed National Employment Action Plan and under the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development". The building of the virtual platform for e-training will support this process by providing new training opportunities in the changed environment, incl. in connection with the spread of COVID 19 and the restrictions on conducting face-to-face classes. The opportunity to learn online will make the training more accessible to a wide range of people from different target groups - online trainings require less financial resources, they are adapted to the needs of people with disabilities, give employees the opportunity to combine work and study, they are appropriate for training of unemployed persons from remote settlements, etc. The virtual platform will provide not only a technical opportunity to conduct training in an online environment, but also a new training environment, contributing to improvement of the quality of training offered by applying quality standards for training resources and additional opportunities for effective control over its implementation. The platform will also provide electronic resources for informal learning.

The implementation of the component will contribute to the implementation of the Employment Strategy objectives for improvement of the labour force quality characteristics and encouragement of the investments in training.

The planned activities in the component are also related to the vision and the objectives of "Education and Skills" priority and "Social Inclusion" priority of the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030". The main objective of the "Education and Skills" priority is to increase the quality of human capital. With regard to the policy in the field of improving the skills of the working age population, the emphasis is on the effective provision of opportunities for lifelong learning and building of a system of incentives and effective mechanisms for professional development. The indicators for this priority include the indicator: "Population (25-64 years old) participating in education and training, %", as the set target value is 7%. Achieving the objectives of the "Social Inclusion" priority to reduce the social inequalities and the active social inclusion of the vulnerable groups are also linked to skills development.

## **Component 2:**

The reform is aimed at developing a unified training content and unified training resources for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies and development of unified tools for validation of basic digital skills and competencies.

The component will contribute to increasing the digital skills of the labour force by providing opportunities for unemployed and employed people who are digitally illiterate to participate in training for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies. There will also be an opportunity for validation of basic digital skills and competencies acquired through non-formal training and informal learning.

The component is in line with the strategic guidelines for development at European level presented in the European Digital Transformation Strategy<sup>2</sup>, the new European Skills Agenda, which includes as an aim to improve people's digital skills, the Council Recommendation on "A Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee ", in which the digital skills of young people in the early career transitions will be a special focus.

The component is in line with national strategic documents, in particular with the "Education and Skills" priority and the "Social Inclusion" priority of the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030", as well as with one of the main priorities for improving the quality of the labour force, set in the draft Employment Strategy of Bulgaria for the period 2021-2030. The implementation of the component will contribute to achieving the set in the National Programme "Bulgaria 2030" indicator for increasing the participation of the population (25-64 years) in education and training up to 7% in 2030 and will directly contribute to the implementation of the specific recommendation to undertake actions to improve the employability by strengthening skills, including the digital skills, addressed to Bulgaria within the European Semester in 2019 and 2020. The actions envisaged in the component will also contribute to the implementation of Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The implementation of the component will contribute to the improvement of the quality characteristics of the labour force, and in particular to the improvement of the digital skills (Goal 7 of the National Programme "Digital Bulgaria 2025" and area of impact 5 – "Adaptating the labour market - education, training and social protection" from the strategic document "Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2030", adopted by the Council of Ministers on July 21, 2020).

**11.Does the project contribute to development of any of the aspects of the sustainable economic development? Please describe how.**

The actions envisaged in the project will contribute to the implementation of Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**12.Does the project contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030? Please describe how.**

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the European Commission - Building a Digital Future for Europe, COM (2020) 67.

**Component 1:**

The component will contribute to the implementation of priority 1 "Education and skills" and priority 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030", as well as to the achievement of the indicator set in the national programme to increase participation of population (25-64 years) in education and training up to 7% in 2030.

**Component 2:**

The component is in line with national strategic documents, in particular with the "Education and Skills" priority and the "Social Inclusion" priority of the National Development Programme "Bulgaria 2030", as well as with one of the main priorities for improving the quality of the labour force set in the draft Employment Strategy of Bulgaria for the period 2021-2030. The implementation of the project will contribute to achieving the set in the National Programme "Bulgaria 2030" indicator for increasing the participation of population (25-64 years) in education and training up to 7% in 2030 and will directly contribute to implementation of the specific recommendation to undertake actions to improve the employability by improving skills, including digital skills, addressed to Bulgaria within the European Semester in 2019 and 2020. The actions envisaged in the component will also contribute to the implementation of Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The implementation of the component will contribute to the improvement of the labour force quality characteristics, and in particular the digital skills (Goal 7 of the National Programme "Digital Bulgaria 2025" and area of impact 5 – "Adapting the labour market - education, training and social protection" of the strategic document "Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2030", adopted by the Council of Ministers on July 21, 2020).

**13. Does the project contribute to the implementation of the objectives and priorities set out in the Integrated National "Energy and Climate" Plan? If yes, please describe how.**

In developing this project idea, the recommendations and conclusions have been taken into account, according to the Integrated Plan in the field of energy and climate of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030.

The use of techniques and technologies creates preconditions for energy efficiency and environmental protection, and the implementation of the project activities will partially contribute to the realization of Bulgaria's energy efficiency goals - incl. energy savings.

The project proposal is in line with and does not contradict the principles of DNSH, as it would not lead to harm to the environment.

## Annex 1

### Detailed time schedule for actual implementation and realization of activities

Activity / Sub-Activity	Preparation and conducting procurement	Start Date	Term (months)	End Date
Component 1 - Construction and development of a virtual platform for e-training				
Activity 1 – Building and development of a virtual platform				
1.1. Implementation of basic functional modules	04.2021 – 02.2022	01.03.2022	6	31.08.2022
1.2. Implementation of management functional modules		01.09.2022	7	31.03.2023
1.3. Building an electronic portal with a training catalog		01.03.2022	10	31.12.2022
1.4. Implementation of integrations with external national systems and registers		01.03.2023	12	31.03.2023
1.5. Implementation of interfaces with external systems for "Serious Games" and virtual laboratories		01.04.2023	12	31.12.2023
1.6. Providing resources for continuous development of the platform		01.01.2024	30	30.06.2026
1.7. Providing customer support		01.09.2022	46	30.06.2026
Activity 2 – Development of methodologies and electronic content				
2.1. Development of methodological manuals for trainers	04.2021 – 02.2022	01.03.2022	52	31.08.2022
2.2. Development of training materials for trainers		01.03.2022	52	30.06.2022
2.3. Development of training materials for informal learning		01.03.2022	52	31.08.2022
2.4. Development of training materials for users of the platform		01.03.2022	52	31.08.2022
Activity 3 – Conducting trainings for trainers				
3.1. Training of mentors from digital clubs	04.2021 – 02.2022	01.07.2022	48	30.06.2026
3.2. Training of trainers		01.07.2022	48	30.06.2026
Activity 4 – Building, administering and maintaining a of a system environment				
4.1. Building a system environment	04.2021 – 02.2022	01.03.2022	6	31.08.2022
4.2. Management, administration and maintenance of the system environment		01.03.2022	52	30.06.2026
Activity 5 – Building and maintaining a network of digital clubs				
5.1. CIW for 50% of digital clubs	04.2021 – 02.2022	01.03.2022	6	31.08.2022
5.2. Delivery and installation of equipment and furniture		01.03.2022	9	31.12.2022
5.3. Providing Internet connectivity		01.09.2022	46	30.06.2026
5.4. Provision of consumables and technical support		01.09.2022	46	30.06.2026
Activity 6 – Information campaign				
6.1. Promotion activities	04.2021 – 02.2022	01.03.2022	52	30.06.2026
Activity 7 – Organisation and management of the component				
7.1. Organisation and management activities		01.03.2022	52	30.06.2026
Component 2 - Training for Di-Gi skills and competences				
Activity 1 - Conducting training for basic digital skills				
1.1. Elaboration of a unified curriculum for acquiring basic digital skills and competencies, developed jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science.		01.12.2021	55	30.06.2026
1.2. Elaboration of unified training resources and assessment tools	04.2021 – 12.2021	01.12.2021	3	28.02.2022
1.3. Conducting training for registered unemployed and employed for acquiring basic digital skills		01.12.2021	55	30.06.2026

1.4. Provision of scholarships and transport costs for the unemployed persons participated in training for basic digital skills		01.12.2021	55	30.06.2026
1.5. Assessment and certification of basic digital skills and competencies acquired through training		01.12.2021	55	30.06.2026
1.6. Validation of basic digital skills and competencies acquired through informal learning		01.12.2021	55	30.06.2026
1.7. Remuneration costs for staff from LOD for providing support				
<b>Activity 2 – Information campaign</b>				
2.1. Promotion activities	04.2021 – 12.2021	01.12.2021	55	30.06.2026
<b>Activity 3 – Organisation and management of the component</b>				
3.1. Organisation and management activities		01.07.2021	60	30.06.2026

