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Bulgaria

**National report on the Development and State of the Art
of Adult Learning and Education**

Sofia, May 2008

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

During the last 2 decades the Adult Education Policy in the Republic of Bulgaria has been progressively developing. The prospect of joining the EU has become the main incentive for development, among others also in the field of lifelong learning and adult education. This is even more valid after the 1 January 2007 when Bulgaria became a full member of the European Union, because the country has to constantly adapt all its policies to the *acquis communautaire* and to prove its willingness for further development.

In order to visualize the socio-economic context within which the Bulgarian adult education policy has been evolving and to better understand the interconnections between education and employment, some significant economic and demographic data are needed.

Demographic development

The population of Bulgaria has declined steadily over the last 17 years. According to the census of 1 March 2001, Bulgaria then had a population of about 7.9 million. The most recent data (at the end of 2007) show that the calculated resident population of Bulgaria was fallen at 7.6 million persons¹. Between 1990 and 2006, the number of Bulgarians fell by just over 1 million. The main reason for the decline is the negative natural increase of the population, i.e. the significantly greater number of deaths compared to that of live births. Another reason which is worthy mentioning is emigration. Net emigration was about 680 000 people from 1989 to 2006².

¹ National Statistical Institute, Bulgaria

² Net emigration means here the number of emigrants minus number of immigrants. Data are from Eurostat, early 2007

Population by sex and years as of 31.12

Years	Total	Males	Females
1990	8 669 269	4 269 998	4 399 271
1995	8 384 715	4 103 368	4 281 347
2000	8 149 468	3 967 423	4 182 045
2001	7 891 095	3 841 163	4 049 932
2002	7 845 841	3 816 162	4 029 679
2003	7 801 273	3 790 840	4 010 433
2004	7 761 049	3 767 610	3 993 439
2005	7 718 750	3 743 327	3 975 423
2006	7 679 290	3 720 932	3 958 358
2007	7 640 238	3 699 689	3 940 549

In terms of the distribution of the population between urban / rural areas can be stated that 70 per cent of the population live in towns and cities, and 30 per cent in rural areas.

Major trend in the demographic development of Bulgaria is the ageing of the population which results in changes in its age structure, namely the breakdown of the population by categories under, at and over working age. This has been also influenced by the changes in legislation fixing the age limit for the population at pension age³. At the end of 2007 at working age are 4 817 thousand persons or 63.0% of the total population. In comparison with 2006 its significantly number decreased by less than 3 thousand persons. At the same time the proportion of young people (under working age) has been constantly decreasing and fell from 21.6 per cent in 1990 to 14.5 percent in 2007. Average life expectancy is rising, if only slowly. Life expectancy of women is 76 years, and that of men is 69 years.⁴

³ In 2006 the population at working age includes the persons aged 16 years until the completion of 63 years for men and 16 years until the completion of 58 years and six months for women.

⁴ Average data for the 2004 - 2007 period, National Statistical Institute, Bulgaria

Population under, at and over working age

Years	Total	Working - age status		
		Under working age %	At working age %	Over working age %
1990	100	21.6	55.5	22.9
1995	100	19.1	56.6	24.3
2000	100	16.8	58.3	24.9
2001	100	16.3	59.2	24.5
2002	100	15.9	60.1	24.0
2003	100	15.5	60.8	23.7
2004	100	15.1	61.6	23.3
2005	100	14.8	62.4	22.8
2006	100	14.6	62.8	22.6
2007	100	14.5	63.0	22.5

A significant factor in demographic change in Bulgaria during the last 20 years has been emigration. Net emigration has considerably decreased with another rise after the EU accession of Bulgaria which is the case in almost all of the new EU Member States. Bulgaria suffers from a heavy brain drain of the young and the well educated. In fact a lot of people go to European countries or the USA either for education or for work, but as the statistical figures show, this does not cause a constant stream of emigration and population loss⁵.

⁵ See also: August Gachter (2002): The Ambiguities of Emigration: Bulgaria since 1988. (International Migration Papers, 39).

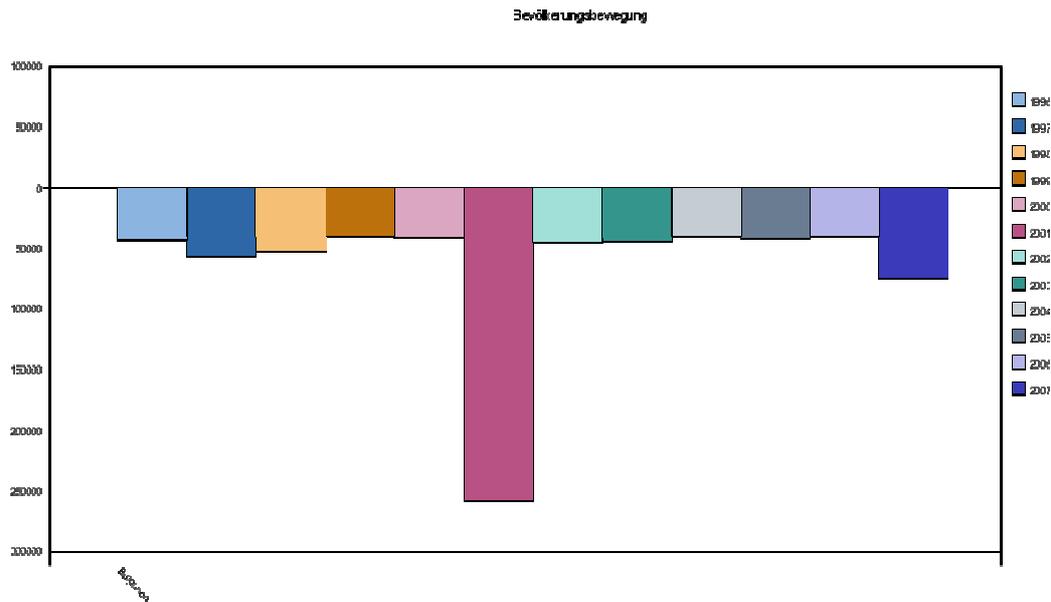


Chart © Eurostat, 2007

Source: Eurostat, Census, 2007

Educational attainment

According to a number of usual statistical indicators, the educational attainment in the Republic of Bulgaria is today at EU level, and in some respects it is even higher.

Currently, three quarters of the working population aged 25-64 years have completed upper secondary (srédno obrazovánie) or higher education (see Appendix Tables 2, 3 and 4). This is more than the average of the EU15 countries (62 per cent)⁶. On the other hand, the proportion of adults of working age (25-64 years) who have completed at most primary education is 29 per cent (in 2002) in Bulgaria, appreciably lower than in the then in the EU15 states (38 per cent).

Economic Development

The Bulgarian economy has grown considerably in recent years, and Bulgaria has been coming closer to EU average indicators since 1998.

GDP per head of population is rising: in 2003 it stood at 2249 euros and has risen since then to 2500 euros in 2004 and nearly 2800 euros in 2005. This is definitely a positive

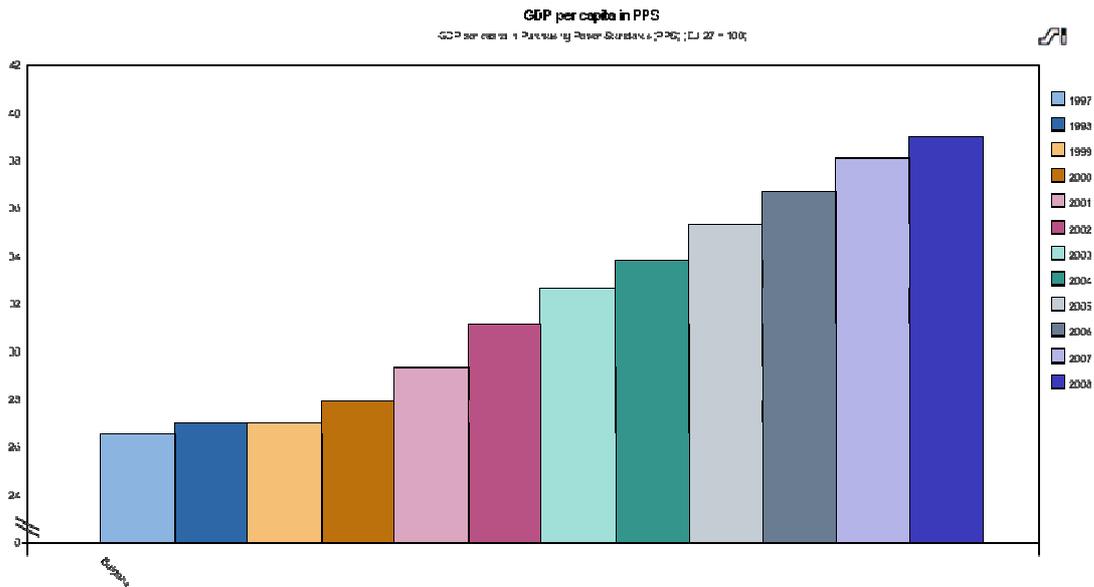
development in comparison with the very low level of 1996/1997 when it was at 1250 USD. However, people's purchasing power is yet far below that in the other EU countries: if average purchasing power in the 27 EU Member States is given an index of 100, Bulgaria only reached 39 in 2008.

In terms of economic sectors GDP in Bulgaria consists of 9.3 per cent contribution by agriculture, 30.4 percent by industry and 60.3 per cent by services (in 2005). Average monthly income per person in Bulgaria was at the end of the 4Q of 2007 233 Euro which very low compared to the average incomes in the other EU member states, but still considerably higher than the income at the end of 2003 – 127 Euro per person (data from the National Statistic Institute, average for public and private sector).

The productivity of labour in Bulgaria has also risen consistently in recent years. This is one of the key factors in economic growth. In terms of a EU25 comparison: Labour productivity in Bulgaria was 29,2 per cent of the EU25 average in 1997, and has ever been growing since, to 35,9 per cent in 2008. ⁷

Also investments have grown continuously since 1998, as a result of the structural changes in the economy. In 2003, the private sector of economy contributed already 73 per cent of total economic value creation. The national infrastructure, particularly the energy supply, is being expanded to meet EU norms. This complements investment by Bulgarian and foreign enterprises. Financial institutions have now achieved greater stability. Loans are easier to obtain, and more importantly, rates of loan interest have gone down. In 2003, assets worth over 7 billion leva were invested. This was 5 per cent more than in 2002, and 30 percent more than in 2000 (after allowing for inflation). According to the annual statistics of the Bulgarian National Bank the flows of the foreign direct investments (FDI) in the country are continuously increasing - from 137,3 millions of Euro in 1999 to 6108,9 in 2007 (see Appendix, Table 6). All these figures indicate that the interest of foreign and domestic investors in the Bulgarian economy is rising which is to great extent due to the relative stable socio-economic and political environment in the last 10 years.

⁷ Eurostat Data, 2008. Labour productivity is measured as GDP in PPS per person employed, relative to EU25 (EU25 = 100)



Last but not least, when speaking about economic indicators, inflation should be considered, as well. In the early 1990ies, inflation rates of 30 to 120 per cent were usual, and currency erosion led to a hyper inflation in 1996/1997 with inflation rates of up to 300 and 600 per cent two years running. With the introduction of the currency exchange rate in 1997 tying the Lev to the DM, the previous galloping inflation was brought under control. Inflation rates in recent years were around 5-6 per cent with a slightly rising tendency (6,1% in 2005 – 7.6% in 2007).⁸ This trend can be partly observed in most of the new EU Member State and the growth of their economies. At the same time they have to bring both into a balance in order to meet the EU requirements for entering the Euro zone and adopting the Euro.

Labour Market Development

Accordingly to data of the National Statistics Institute, the average annual wage in Bulgaria in 2007 was 5 174 Leva (2 645 Euro), or about 220 Euro a month (compared to 180 Euro in 2006 and 112 Euro in 2000). These data are based on employment and service contracts.

A total of 2,4 millions of people were working under labour contract in 2007, the greatest part of which in the private sector – 1,9 millions and around 500 000 in the public sector. According to the annual Labour Force Survey of the National Statistic Institute in Bulgaria, the number of people in the labour force in Bulgaria fell from 3.5 million in 1998 to 3.3

⁸ Data from Eurostat and National Bulgarian Bank

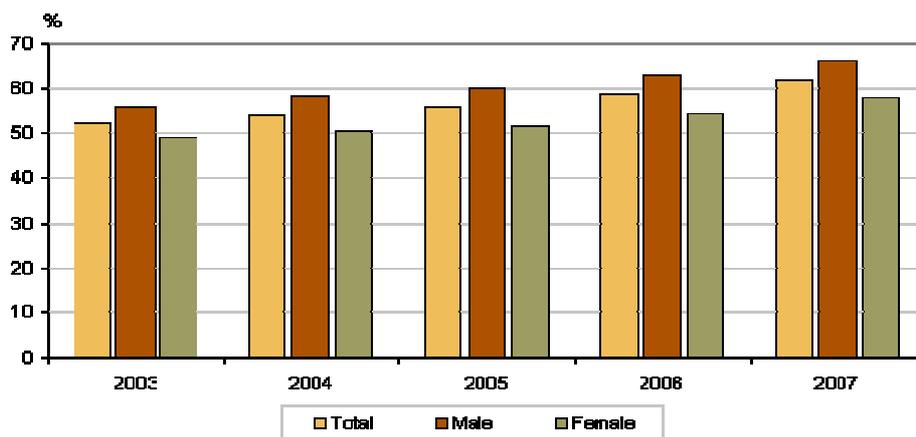
million in 2005 and rose again to 3,45 in 2007. There is also a positive trend in the development of the coefficient of economic activity (activity rate⁹) - from 60.7 per cent in 2000 to 61.8 per cent in 2004 and 66.3 per cent in 2007. In general, the activity rate among men is higher (70.6 per cent) than among women (62.1). A considerable difference is being observed between the economic activity of the urban and the rural population. The activity rate of urban population rose from 2003 to 2007 from 53.5 to 68.5 per cent, whereas the activity rate of rural population remained by and far at the same level of 38.6. in 2003 to 40.8 in 2006 (for the age group 15+) and was then followed by rapid increase to 60 per cent (for the age group 15-64) in 2007.

Age structure of the labour force. Since society is ageing as a whole, the age structure of the labour force is also changing. As already stated above, there is an increase in the proportion of older people among the working population, both for women and for men. In the years 1998 to 2005, the proportion of people aged 55 years and over in the labour force rose from 7.3 to 12.2 per cent.

Labour force and educational attainment. Generally, the higher a person's education, the more probably he/she is part of the labour force. Bulgarian data are as follows: The highest labour force activity is found among people who have completed higher education (86.7 per cent in 2007). They are followed by people who have completed upper secondary middle education 74.9 in 2007). Even lesser likely to be permanent members of the labour force are people who have only completed eight-year basic education (38.3per cent in 2007). Only 21.7 per cent of people with at best completed primary education (four years) are part of the labour force.

Employment: The rise in employment since 2002 is evidence of the upturn in the economy – from its lowest rate of 49.7 in 2001 it reached 61.7 in 2007. While the most highly participating in the labour market were people in the age groups 25-34 years (69.4 per cent), 35-44 years (77.1 per cent) and 45-54 years (72.1 per cent), the employment rate of the age groups 15-24 was only 24.5 and people of the age group of 55-64 years were participating in the labour market with 42.6 per cent.

⁹ Number in the labour force as a proportion of the population aged 15-64



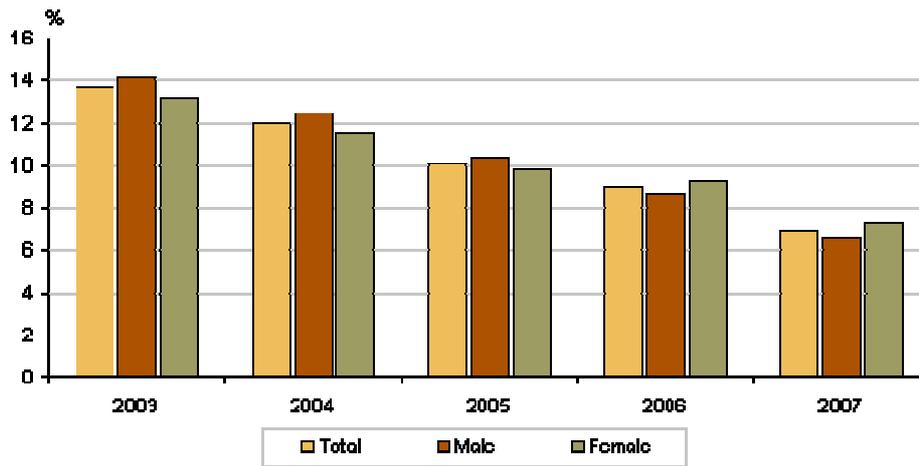
Employment rate of persons of 15 - 64 years of age by sex for 2003 - 2007

Educational attainment among those in employment. The level of education has decisive influence on labour market integration. Employment rates (i.e. share of those employed measured against the total group) are as follows:

Employment rate by level of education		
	2003	1Q 2006 ³⁵
Higher education	67.9	69.1
Middle education (12 years)	55.7	58.4
Basic education (eight years)	22.0	21.2
Primary education or less	9.5	8.3

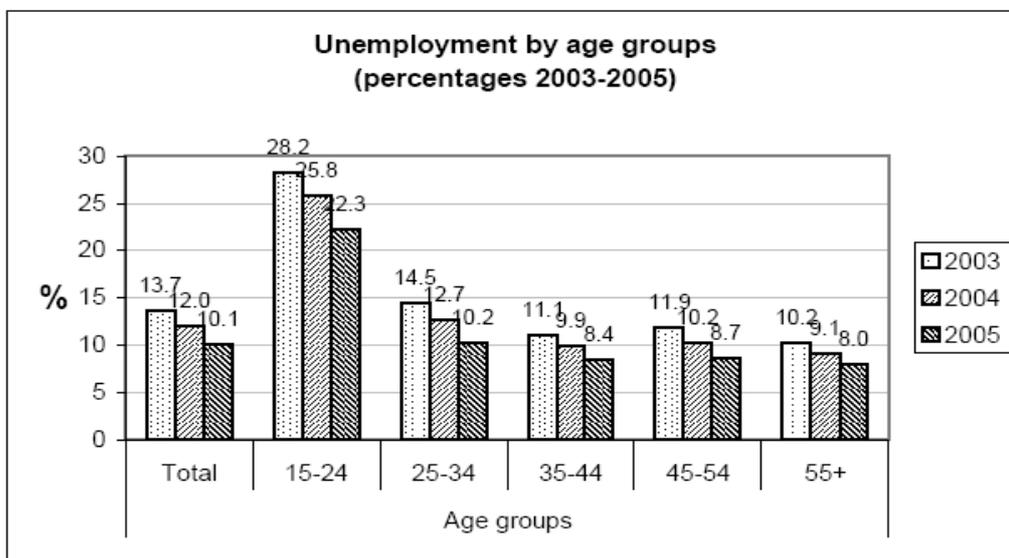
As a general trend, since 1998 the proportion of people with higher levels of education among those in employment has been rising, while the proportion of those in employment with low levels of education has been falling. (Both trends by 4-5 percentages points for the period from 1998-2003.)

Unemployment: In line with the above described employment developments in Bulgaria, the unemployment rate first rose sharply between 1998 and 2002 (as a results of privatisation and the restructuring of the economy) and since then is rapidly and continuously declining. The data below show that form nearly 14 per cent in 2003 the unemployment rate fell to 6.9 per cent in 2007.



Unemployment rate by sex for 2003 - 2007

Unemployment is still a problem especially of the young. As the Figure¹⁰ below shows, other age groups have been relatively close to the overall unemployment rates of 13.7, 12.0 and 10.1 per cent in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005. However, the unemployment rate for those aged 15-24 are nearly twice than the overall unemployment rate.



Several main labour market problems can be identified after this short data analysis:

- **High unemployment among young people** despite the overall upward trend of employment: Unemployment among young people remains especially high: 32 per cent in 1998, 28 per cent in 2003 and 15.1 per cent in 2007

¹⁰ NSI employment data 1/2006 table A-II-6.

- **High unemployment among those with low levels of education.** One out of five of those with eight-year basic education and one out of three of those with at most primary education are unemployed.
- **Higher unemployment in rural areas** than in towns and cities: according to the figures from 2007), 11.4 per cent of the rural population are unemployed, as against 5.6 per cent of the urban population.
- **High unemployment among the Roma.** According to the last census, (2001), only 41 000 of a total of 249 300 Roma 46 over 14 years of age were then in regulated employment, and 137 200 were unemployed. Hence over half of all Roma (aged 15 years and over) were without jobs. Roma thus accounted for a third of all the unemployed in the country.
- **High long-term unemployment:** The long-term unemployed accounted for 57 per cent of unemployed in 1998, for 65.5 per cent in 2003 and for 59.7 per cent in 2005. The number of those unemployed for three or more years sank from 2003 to 2005 from 38.2 to 34.0 per cent, but it is with 113 700 anyway very high.
- **Considerable regional differences.** Unemployment in the various administrative regions of Bulgaria reveals large differences, ranging from 2 per cent in Blagoevgrad (south-west) and 22.5 per cent in Vidin (north-west) in 2005.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

POLICY, LEGISLATION AND FINANCING

Education at all its levels not only provides competencies for personal and professional development, but also educates people to share common identities while in the same time contributes to the enlargement of the European space of education. More compelling, rising demand for qualified young persons requires innovative strategies to mobilize new resources and stimulate the education system to be responsive. To this end, it is an honour and challenge for the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria to be entrusted with the educational policy of the country, as well as with the coordination of the overall process of further improvement in the area of education, training and science.

One of the main responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Science is to develop the legal basis of the education system in all its levels and forms. Having in mind its widely

recognized importance for the stability of the society, the institution pays great attention on its development in compliance with the European trends, while at the same time is trying to preserve its main achievements - accessibility and democratic character. With this in mind, and in order to be able to contribute to the overall modernization of social life in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science has defined its prime objective – “*Quality and Accessible Education and Training for All*’. Three strategic priorities stem from this objective:

- Establishing a provision for knowledge society and quality of education;
- Improving the access to education;
- Opening the education system to the world through mobility enhancement.

These priorities are fully in line with the overall European trends oriented towards fulfillment of the EU Lisbon’s strategy target for 2010: “*Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*”.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

In the framework of the development of education and training in the European Union context, Bulgaria is establishing its education policy in compliance with the shared ambitions for progress and prosperity.

Deep roots and rich history

The Bulgarian education system has a long-standing and rich history. Bulgarian people have always recognized education, both historically and traditionally, as a specific public value and have exerted efforts to provide their children with good quality education.

Main objectives

Education is a crucial factor for the cultural advancement and human resource development in Bulgaria. Equal access to high quality education is recognized as a priority for the Bulgarian authorities.

Other objectives in this field are as follows:

- Modernization of the curricula and syllabi to make them relevant to the labour market requirements;
- Large scale implementation of ICT at school and providing Internet access;

- Identification of individual children's talents and relevant career guidance.

Administration and management in education

The administration of the Bulgarian education system is carried out by the Council of Ministers. The management bodies of the public education system are the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the Minister of Education and Science, the Regional Inspectorates of Education and the heads of kindergartens, schools and servicing units, higher schools. The management of education is carried out at three levels – national, regional and institutional (school / higher school).

Modernisation of education in Bulgaria

Basic principles for modernization of the Bulgarian education system:

- **quality of education** as a function of the quality of teaching, financing, teachers' qualification and school equipment;
- **active partnership** among all parties involved - teachers, parents, employers, trade unions, non-governmental organizations;
- **competition** among the schools / higher schools based on provision of high quality and attractive education regardless of the form of ownership of the school / higher school;
- **openness**, i.e. making the education system flexible with respect to the labour market economy.
- **equal access to the education system** with a view to an adequate integration of all disadvantaged groups.

Basic Legislation and Strategic Documents

Public Education Act (1991), further amended and supplemented, providing for:

- Democratic principles and traditions development, underlying the role of the Constitution of our country and meeting the European trends;
- Free of charge education, compulsory up to age of 16, secular;
- Setting-up of state educational requirements, which should be met by the education and training of pupils;
- Definition of the administrative structure and the functions of the governing bodies at national, local and school level.

Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act (1999), further amended and supplemented:

- It defines the compulsory, compulsory elective and free elective subjects, as well as the issues concerning the general educational minimum and the curriculum;

Vocational Education and Training Act (1999), further amended and supplemented:

- It regulates the issues concerning vocational training of pupils – its objectives, principles, stages, organization, and management.

Higher Education Act (1995), further amended and supplemented:

- It regulates the organisation, functions, management and financing of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria.

On June 7, 2006 the National Assembly adopted the *National Programme for Development of School and Pre-School Education (2006 – 2015)* drafted by the Ministry of Education and Science. The programme is based on the conception of the child (student) as the main value of the education system. It defines *equal access to education* and *high-quality and efficiency of education* as main objectives and traces some specific measures to achieve them. Those measures concern improvement of secondary education structure, retaining of all students up to the age of 16 in school and reducing the number of drop-outs of the system; establishing of an effective internal assessment system through the widespread use of tests and the introduction of a system of standardized national external assessment; optimizing the school network by active policy towards gradual decrease of the undersized and mixed grades classes and bounding the network to the labor market demands and the socio-economic characteristics of the region; sustainable modern knowledge based school curricula for general and vocational education which comply with labour market requirements; introducing modules and options for early professional orientation and entrepreneurship in school curricula; support for lifelong learning activities; decentralization of the system management through delegating of powers to the school principals in financing, human resource management and teaching process innovation fields; introduction of a development-stimulating funding system as well as unified standards; working out a differentiated system of teacher's payment bounded with the quality of teaching and the students' results; promoting valuable partnership in schools' management by attracting parents and business in the process.

In the field of vocational education and training a *National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Education (2005 – 2010)* has been approved by the Bulgarian government. The purpose of the strategy is to define the priorities related to the development of the continuing vocational education within the lifelong learning context.

STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Pre-primary (pre-school) education:

- It comprises children from the age of 3 to the age of 6 / 7, respectively;
- Kindergarten attendance is not compulsory;
- **The main objective** of pre-school education in Bulgaria is to provide an opportunity for each child to develop to a full extent his/her potential and to be prepared for school education by being introduced to the respective environment, by receiving guidance on fundamental human values and developing skills for adapting to studying and to attending school.
- The kindergartens are preparatory institutions, where children from the age of three up to their enrolment in first grade in primary school are brought up, trained and educated. Pre-school education is organized and carried out in accordance with the state education requirements.
- Compulsory preparation of children for school a year before they enrol in first grade of primary school (since 2003/2004 school year) is organized in preparatory groups at kindergartens or preparatory classes at school, free of charge.
- The children in the preparatory groups who do not speak Bulgarian language well are provided with additional instruction, according to a specialized methodology, so that they reach a level of proficiency comparable to that of the rest of the children.

School education

School education in Bulgaria begins at the age of 7, completed in the year of entering in the first grade. Six years old children may also enter school, if their physical and mental development allows that by virtue of their parents / guardians.

According to the degree, school education is divided into *basic* (awarded after the completion of the basic level of education) and *secondary* (awarded after completion of the upper secondary level of education);

According to the education content it is *general* and *vocational*. On the basis of this principle schools are divided into general and vocational.

Structure of the school education:

The current structure consists of:

- **Basic (single structure) education (I – VIII grade)**

primary school stage (I – IV grade);

lower secondary stage (V – VIII grade).

- **Upper secondary education (IX – XIII grade):**

upper secondary general education (with non-specialized and specialized schools);

vocational education and training (incl. post-secondary education)

Types of schools (I – XII grade):

- primary schools (I – IV grade);
- lower secondary schools (V – VIII grade);
- basic schools (I – VIII grade);
- secondary schools (IX – XII grade);
- profiled secondary schools;
- comprehensive schools (I – XII grade);
- vocational secondary schools (VIII/IX – XII/XIII grade);
- vocational schools – from VII/VIII grade with a duration of training up to 3 years, from grade IX – with a duration of training up to 4 years and vocational colleges upon completion of secondary education – with a duration up to 2 years;
- sports schools;
- art schools;
- special schools (for children with special educational needs);
- schools in the field of culture.

Upper secondary general education is provided at non-specialized schools (3 or 4 years course of study) and at profiled (specialized) schools (4 or 5 years course of study). Pupils may enter profiled (specialized) schools and vocational upper secondary schools upon completion of VII or VIII grade and taking entrance examinations, which correspond to the specialization of the respective school (Bulgarian language and Literature, Mathematics, Humanities, etc.) or be admitted on the basis of submitted documents according to the requirements of Ordinance № 11 of March 28, 2005 on Admission of Pupils in Public and Municipal Schools.

The National Programme for Development of School and Pre-school Education (2006 – 2015) foresees the following changes in the current educational structure:

- completion of basic education after VII grade;
- VIII grade – a year of intensive foreign language and computer studies and/or vocational training for all pupils.
- Upper secondary education (VIII – XIII grade):

first upper secondary stage (VIII – X grade): the end of this stage will mark the completion of compulsory education.

second upper secondary stage (XI – XII grade): pupils will acquire knowledge and skills further developed and specialized. Pupils will also have the opportunity to prepare for their future higher education. At the end of this stage they will sit for national matriculation examinations, in order to complete their secondary education.

Vocational education and training (VET)

- **Main objectives** – acquisition of vocational qualification and legal capacity for practicing a given profession (incl. the regulated professions). The VET system requires continuous improvement of the acquired vocational qualification, development of a motivation system for successful realization of the learners in the society, as well as development of general culture based on national and universal values.
- **The VET system** in Bulgaria prepares the citizens for professional realization by establishing conditions for acquiring professional qualification and its continuous improvement. It includes professional guidance, vocational education, and vocational training. These three parts of the VET system are implemented by professions and

specialties, which are included in *the List of the Professions in VET*. This List is elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as with the sectoral ministries and the stakeholders at national level, and next approved by the Council of Ministers.

- **There are state educational requirements (SER) for acquisition of a qualification in a given profession (standards)**, approved by the Minister of Education and Science. They are elaborated (in cooperation with the social partners), by the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), which is independent state body to the Council of Ministers. A new element in these standards (since 2007) is a text in English, which contains the name of the profession, the specialties included in this profession, the professional direction (by ISCED 97), and the learning outcomes, that shall be achieved after training in this profession. These SER are obligatory for both the institutions within the vocational education system and the vocational training system itself.
- **The professions and the specialties** in VET are classified by professional fields, by degree of education, and by degree of professional qualification.
- **Four degrees of professional qualification** in the vocational education and training system are available:

I degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing of routine activities, accomplished under constant conditions:

- *input level*: VI grade completed;
- *output level*: basic education completed (for pupils), or VI or VII grade completed (for learners up to age of 16);

II degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing of complex activities, accomplished under variable conditions:

- *input level*: VII grade or basic education completed;
- *output level*: X or XI grade completed, rights for sitting for matriculation acquired for completion of secondary education, or secondary education completed;

III degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing of complex activities, accomplished under variable conditions, as well as taking responsibility for the other people’s work:

- *input level*: VII grade or basic education completed;
- *output level*: secondary education completed or acquired right for sitting for matriculation; it is determined by the state educational requirements for acquisition of a qualification by professions;

IV degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing of complex activities, accomplished under variable conditions, as well as taking managerial responsibility for other people’s work and for distribution of resources:

- *input level*: secondary education completed.

- **Framework programmes for acquisition of a vocational qualification (since 2002):**

Framework programmes „A” for initial vocational training for acquisition of I degree of vocational qualification;

Framework programmes „B” for vocational training for acquisition of II degree of vocational qualification;

Framework programmes „C” for vocational education for acquisition of II or III degree of vocational qualification;

Framework programmes „D” for vocational training for acquisition of IV degree of vocational qualification;

Framework programmes „E” for initial vocational training for acquisition of qualification in a part of profession;

Framework Programmes „F” for further vocational training for up-to-dating or extension of already acquired vocational qualification, as well as for acquisition of I, II, and III degree of vocational qualification (since 2004).

- **The evaluation of learning outcomes** in vocational training for acquisition of a vocational qualification is performed by state examination procedure by using national examination programmes, approved by the Minister of Education and Science. These

programmes are obligatory for both the vocational education and for the vocational training systems.

- **Vocational Training Centres** are not included in the Education Act: they are very important education institutions for the adult education sector. These are for which licences have been issued since 2002/2003. They may be run by the state, the local authorities or private providers and are licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) to teach vocational courses for specific occupations stated in the licence. They are by nature addressed primarily to adults rather than children and young people. The CPOs are entitled to award certificates of vocational training at Levels 1 to 3, in the same way as the vocational schools and colleges in the formal system. Following European standards (as used for example by Eurostat) such courses should be regarded as formal education. However, shorter trainings and courses (for example concerning only a “part of a profession”), are regarded as belonging to non-formal education. By April 2007, NAVET had issued more than 400 licences.

Higher education

Bulgarian higher education is also facing important challenges. Actually, the process of modernization of the Bulgarian higher education has two parts: integration in the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) and integration in the European Research Area. Another concern of ours is the overall system reform oriented towards better compatibility with the labor market requirements. The main goals of the reforms process are:

- Provision for and guarantee of the academic autonomy of the higher education institutions;
- Development of a mechanism for quality assurance of higher education;
- Equal access to higher education for all within a lifelong learning context;
- Development of a system for efficient public funding and adequate resource provision for higher education;
- Involvement of employers and students in developing quality assurance policies.

Bulgaria is one of the first countries that have accepted the principles of Bologna declaration. The degree structure was firstly introduced by the Higher Education Act (1995). The

document was further amended and supplemented in 1999 in compliance with the Bologna principles:

- **Structure of the higher education system**

The system of higher education provides training after completed secondary education and comprises the following degrees:

Bachelor's educational and qualification degree. According to the curriculum the acquisition of that degree requires:

- a) minimum 180 credits with a duration of the studies of at least three years leading to the Professional Bachelor in ... degree;
- b) minimum 240 credits with a duration of the studies of at least four years leading to the Bachelor's degree.

Master's educational and qualification degree. The requirements for the acquisition are as follows:

- a) minimum 300 credits according to the curriculum with a duration of the studies of at least five years;
- b) minimum 120 credits for holders of Professional Bachelor in ... degree;
- c) minimum 60 credits for holders of Bachelor's degree.

Colleges organize training for the acquisition of the Professional Bachelor in ... educational and qualification degree that provides specialized vocational training in the respective professional sectors and specialities.

Holders of the Professional Bachelor in.... educational and qualification degree can continue their training for the Master's educational and qualification degree only in the same professional sector in compliance with the terms and conditions laid down in the Rules of the higher school or in the State Requirements.

Studies for Bachelor's degree organized in compliance with the curriculum provide multi-profiled training or specialized vocational training in professional sectors and specialities.

Studies for Master's degree provide profound fundamental training combined with profile-oriented training within a given speciality.

Studies for *Doctor's educational and scientific degree* are carried out in scientific specialities.

- **The European Diploma Supplement and ECTS** were introduced in 2004;

- **Distance education** is legally regulated;
- **Joint degree programmes** (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's) – provided within the academic autonomy's framework, in partnership with foreign higher education institutions. Graduates receive Bulgarian and foreign diplomas.

Access to higher education

- admission of students and doctoral students – by competitive examination based on preliminary approved by the state number of places for students / doctoral students;
- higher schools may hold a general entrance examination or recognise the results of the entrance examination given at another higher school.
- higher schools by virtue of decision of their academic councils may admit applicants without entrance examination provided that the applicants have successfully passed the state matriculation exams within the approved by the state number of students.
- facilitated conditions and order of admission of students from disadvantaged groups;
- citizens of Member States of the European Union and of the European Economic Area shall be admitted to Bulgarian higher education institutions under the terms and procedures, provided for Bulgarian citizens (since 2007);

Quality assurance

- At institutional level – internal systems for quality evaluation and control have been introduced by law.
- At national level – the external quality evaluation and control is performed by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA), which is an independent body of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. The NEAA's criteria and recommendations are to a great extent in compliance with the Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, elaborated by ENQA.
- Post-accreditation monitoring and control (since 2005);
- NEAA – member of the Central European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies and candidate for membership in the ENQA.

The institutions

According to the Higher Education Act, the system of higher education includes universities, specialized higher schools and colleges, which may be public or private.

- *The universities* provide Bachelor's and Master's programmes, as well as programmes for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor. Universities offer opportunities for studying various disciplines in Humanities, Natural and Social Sciences, Engineering, Arts. They are also involved in wide-ranging scientific research, development and manufacture, artistic and creative production, sports and health.
- *The specialized higher schools* offer higher education for acquisition of Bachelor's degree, and post-graduated training as well, provided in a single, core field of knowledge.
- *The colleges* in the higher education system are structural units of the higher educational institutions or are independent higher educational institutions.

Academic autonomy

According to the Higher Education Act, the higher education institutions shall enjoy academic autonomy. It shall be such autonomy where the intellectual freedom of the academic community and the creative nature of academic instruction, research and artistic creation shall find expression as supreme values.

Within the academic autonomy's framework, the higher education institutions have the opportunity to cooperate with each other, with business organizations, as well as with European higher education institutions for developing joint degree programmes.

SOME EDUCATION STATISTICS

Some general education statistics:

- In the beginning of the school year 2006/2007 there were 2 551 general education schools. Out of these 250 were primary schools, 1 700 basic schools, 19 lower secondary schools, and 170 upper secondary and 412 secondary general schools. In comparison with the previous school year because of closure or transformation the total number of general education schools decreased by 80.
- In the 2006/2007 school year the number of pupils in all kinds of general education schools was 700.8 thousand, of which 143.1 thousand in rural areas. In comparison

with the previous school year the number of pupils in general education decreased by 24.8 thousand or 3.4 %. In general education schools the number of girls was higher than the number of boys - 50.6 % of the total number of pupils. In comparison with the 2002/2003 school year the total number of the pupils in general education schools has decreased by 124.9 thousand or 15.1 %. For primary and pre-secondary education this reduction was 19.0 % and 20.7 % respectively and for secondary education there was an increase of 4.4 %.

- The newly enrolled pupils in first grade of the general education schools for the 2006/2007 school year were 68.7 thousand. Together with those repeating the grade the number of first graders came to a total of 69.1 thousand. Most often (in 90.8 % of cases) children enrolled in first grade in the year in which they reach the age of 7.
- The available data show that during the 2002/2003 school year 74.5 % of the pupils in general education schools were studying a foreign language while in the 2006/2007 school year they have already been 93.4 % of the total number of pupils.
- In 2006 70.9 thousand pupils graduated from basic education, and 36.0 thousand pupils from secondary education.

Some VET statistics:

- In 2006/2007 school year VET was carried out in 458 vocational secondary schools, 5 vocational schools and 23 vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education.
- In 2006/2007 school year the total number of the pupils in VET was 194.7 thousand. Compared to the 2002/2003 school year it has decreased by 7.8 thousand or 3.9 %. Boys were predominant in VET and were 61.7 % of the total number of pupils.
- In 2006, 512 pupils in vocational schools and classes with enrolment after VI and VII grade or after completed basic education have acquired first level vocational qualification. In the vocational colleges with enrolment after completed secondary education 819 people have acquired fourth degree vocational qualification in the same year.

- During the 2006/2007 school year the total number of teachers working in VET schools was 18.8 thousand, of which 71.3 % were women. The highest relative share is that of teachers with a Bachelor's and Master's degree (88.8 %).

Some higher education statistics:

- In the beginning of the academic year 2006/2007, 39.2 thousand students - Bulgarian citizens were enrolled in universities and specialized higher schools and another 9.6 thousand were enrolled in colleges. 2.1 thousand foreign citizens were enrolled in universities and colleges.
- In the 2006/2007 academic year the number of the students was 226.9 thousand and 218.2 thousand of them were Bulgarian citizens, or 96.2 %. The number of students - Bulgarian citizens, has increased by 14.2 thousand (7.0 %) in comparison with the 2002/2003 academic year and by 11.8 thousand (5.7 %) in comparison with the 2005/2006 academic year. The number of foreigners has increased by 460 (5.6 %) compared with the previous 2005/2006 academic year.
- In the 2006/2007 academic year the highest relative share was that of students in the field of Business and Administration - 50.4 thousand (24.4 %), followed by the one of students in the field of Engineering and Engineering Trades - 35.9 thousand (15.8 %). The lowest share of students was in the fields of Transport Services - 0.9 %, Natural Life Sciences - 0.6 %, Veterinary - 0.6 %, and Mathematics and Statistics - 0.4 %.
- The number of the academic staff in the universities and specialized higher schools has decreased to 21.3 thousand during 2006/2007 or by 234 persons. 13.2 thousand regularly employed were 62.1 % of the totals. The structure of the academic staff by academic rank was the following: professors - 2 217 or 10.4 % of the total number, associate professors - 6 726 or 31.6 %, assistants - 9 121 or 42.8 %, senior lecturers and lecturers - 3 216 or 15.1 %, research associates with teaching duties - 20 or 0.1 %.

THE REFORMS IN BULGARIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The 2008 is the most important year in many aspects. Education became a topic of serious and concerned discussions, which highlighted the main challenges for the system. The years 2006 - 2007 were a period of outlining priorities and making first steps towards achievement of the goals set, the last twelve months were a time of key changes which have marked the

development of school education for years ahead. The system accepted responsibly the important steps that have been taken.

The team of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has the ambition to consolidate the achievements and build on them so that the education process actors feel the first positive effects of the changes. Major focal points will include passing of a new law in the field of school and pre-school education, and building of a dynamic career development model for the Bulgarian system of tertiary education and science.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

National Programme for Development of School and Pre-school Education (2006-2015)

For the first time a programming document setting out the main principles and measures for system's development in the next 10 years has been passed. As set out in the programme, every year on 1 October the Minister of Education and Science shall introduce in the National Assembly a report on National Programme's implementation in the previous year and on the main measures to be implemented in the next school year. The reports submitted have been discussed in the parliamentary Education and Science Committee.

Improving school education financing mechanisms and enhancing cost efficiency

Introducing a unified per student cost standard

From 1 January 2007, all state and municipal schools, kindergartens and service units are financed on basis of unified per student cost standards. The standard is unified but also differentiated in order to take account of the objective geographic and demographic characteristics, and municipalities are grouped into four categories. Following cooperation with the social partners, the unified standard was increased significantly.

In 2009, depending on the budget allocations for education, the standard per child/student should go above BGN 1400.

Introducing a delegated budgets system

The delegated budgets system is the second key component of the new school education financing model. In 2007, financing authorities applied the system on an optional basis and MES encouraged through various measures its wider implementation in schools. At the end of 2007, over 600 municipal schools in 45 municipalities, as well as all state schools financed from the MES budget (500) operate delegated budgets.

From 1 January 2008, the system is implemented in all 3062 state and municipal schools. The delegated budget enhances school principal's financial independence in school's management. He/she is given the powers of a second level spending unit, the right to make compensated changes of the revenues and expenditure plan, to manage school's funds, to determine individual remunerations, teachers' workload and the number of students in groups and classes, as well as to decide alone the personnel strength.

The following changes have been undertaken towards ensuring proper introduction and implementation of the system and efficient management of delegated budgets:

- Pursuant to the 2008 State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria Act (SBA), the municipalities have developed formulas for allocation to the schools of the funds received on basis of the unified standards. The municipalities are obliged to allocate not less than 80% of the funds on basis of the unified standards and the other 20% they can distribute, taking account of the objective factors for inequalities in the access to education. To help the municipalities, MES and the Ministry of Finance (MF) have prepared guidance documents and other materials for development of the formulas.
- MES has prepared and delivered to school principals a manual for introduction, operation, assessment and control of delegated budgets in the education system.
- An assessment of delegated budgets implementation has been made in fulfilment of the 2008 SBA and in accordance with the criteria approved by the Council of Ministers. Results show that over 97% of the municipalities have fulfilled properly the requirements of the law. Additional funds were allocated to these municipalities as an incentive for proper system implementation.
- The Institute of School Principals provided training on delegated budgets management to all school principals of state and municipal schools.

A major task for MES in 2009 is to contribute for the sustainability and irreversibility of the delegated budgets system in schools by making system's positive effects felt by the school principals and the teachers. As agreed with the social partners, a possibility for state and municipal schools to retain and include in their next year budget the excess of revenues over expenditures at the end of the previous budget year was included in the 2008 SBA. This measure encourages efficient management of budget funds and makes it possible to keep management effects for those to whom funds were initially allocated.

Programme-based financing of the school education system

Owing to the serious system optimization and the savings made, in 2007 we managed for the first time to allocate BGN 171 million for financing of school education programmes, while not increasing the budget for education as a percentage of GDP (these are almost 75% of the absolute increase of expenditure on education in 2007). These processes were not easy ones, but thanks to the assistance and understanding of education process actors, we can now boast of good results – the funds were spent for achievement of specific goals along 14 lines of action. In 2007, MES prepared the following programmes, which the Council of Ministers approved:

- Consolidation of the school network;
- Modernization of the resource base of schools;
- The school – a student territory;
- Qualification;
- ICT in school;
- Energy efficiency;
- Fuller outreach of children and students in compulsory schooling age (BGN 30.4 million);
- Differentiated pay.

These programmes made it possible for schools to prepare projects and apply for financing of certain activities, which could hardly be implemented with the funds from the maintenance subsidy.

In 2008, the funds for national development of school education programmes were increased by 30% up on the 2007 amount.

A new programme “Introduction of a national standardized external assessment system” has been approved in addition to 2007 programme updates.

In order to better meet the different needs and capacities of municipalities, the module “Providing breakfast and milk to all I – IV grade students” of the programme “Fuller outreach of children and students in compulsory schooling age” was decentralized. To this end, one should also mention the programme “With care for every student”. The principle of funding projects under the programme “Modernization of the resource base of schools” was changed for municipal schools. In these schools, projects will be implemented within the programmes “Co-financing of municipal investment projects targeting improvement of the resource base of schools”.

Introducing the components of a national external assessment system

The first components of a national external assessment system were introduced in the period 2005-2007:

- National external assessment after IV grade was first introduced in 2007.
- The examinations after VII grade were organized for the first time in a test format. To replenish the pool of test examination tasks, MES has organized on a monthly basis national competitions for compiling tests and test questions on Bulgarian language and literature and Mathematics with the participation of teachers and students from all schools. The first national test solving competition for VII graders was organized.
- State school-leaving examination (Matura) was piloted in April 2007 pursuant to the requirements of the Public Education Act. Five percent of the XII grade students took part in the pilot Matura. It was organized in a test format.

The external assessment system was developed further in 2008:

- An external assessment after IV grade was carried out again and the knowledge and skills of students who have completed V grade were tested for the first time. Like in the past year, results had no effect on students’ marks but provided a good and objective measure of the level of achievement of state educational requirements and contributed for the implementation of a more efficient educational policy. The external assessment carried out in the school year 2007/2008 made it possible to follow students’ achievements in two consecutive IV grades. In the next year, the scope of external assessment will be extended to cover VI grade students.

- For a second year running, the examination after VII grade was in a test format. In the past three years, MES pursued a consistent policy targeting a wider choice of schools and forms of learning for students. It is manifested in the increased planned number of students to be admitted on basis of examinations after VII grade. This number was increased as follows: in 2006 – 26 000 students, 1000 classes; in 2007 – 27 560 students, 1060 classes; in 2008 – 33 587 students, 1198 classes.
- The second national test solving competition for VII graders was organized. For the first time the three top ranking students in the national round of the competition were given the option to use their results as an examination mark for the respective subject and not sit for an entry examination.
- At the end of the school year 2007/2008, for the first time in decades, school-leaving examinations (Matura) were organized for all students completing XII grade.

The Matura was carried out following serious preparatory work, including an information campaign:

- On the insistence of the Minister of Education and Science the tertiary education institutions announced as early as February their decision concerning the admission to tertiary education institutions on basis of the Matura examination marks. A total of 41 tertiary education institutions accepted the Matura, including 36 which acknowledged Matura examination marks as university entry examination for certain specializations and 5 included these marks only as a component of the final ranking score. Information about the specializations and the method of recognition of Matura results was published on the Matura site.
- The National Assembly passed amendments to the Public Education Act aimed at improving the regulation of the secondary school-leaving examination and ensuring its implementation.
- Experts provided detailed information on the secondary school-leaving examination to parents and students during reception days and hours in the Regional Inspectorates of Education.
- MES opened a hotline where parents and students can ask questions about the Matura and get information and assistance from ministerial experts.
- A special information site integrating the Matura information has been launched (www.zamaturite.bg).
- Test compiling competitions for all 15 Matura school subjects were organized for teachers and students.

- All schools having XII grade classes were provided with information boards with the most important Matura dates.
- A leaflet containing answers to Matura FAQs was prepared and published in three national newspapers.
- Debates and discussions on the Matura involving representatives of all stakeholders was organized.

Applications for Matura examination were filed by 76 080 secondary school graduates from 1071 schools (in the school year 2007/2008 XII graders were 79 334 in number). Applications for Matura examination were filed also by 157 students with special educational needs (SEN). 72 951 students sat for the school-leaving examination. 1854 students sat for optional examinations. Over 12 000 teachers invigilated at the examinations. Fourteen national assessment commissions comprising 1382 assessors were set up for all school subjects. 145 823 examination papers were assessed. A commission of 320 people was set up to classify and declassify examination materials; technical commissions of 135 people were also formed.

The following main conclusions can be drawn up on the basis of Matura results:

- The system and the students accepted smoothly the state school-leaving examination. The Matura was organized and carried out without any notable problems.
- The test format presented no difficulties for the students.
- On national level, the Matura examination marks for Bulgarian language and literature are similar to the marks in the diplomas for completed secondary education of 2007 school-leavers.
- Very high, including maximum results, were registered in all subjects.
- Education and training in special-field secondary schools is at very high level – Matura results are higher than the marks in the diplomas for completed secondary education of 2007 school-leavers.
- There are sizeable differences in Matura results by types of schools.
- There are notable differences in Matura results at municipal level.
- Sizeable differences between the Matura results and the marks in the diplomas of completed secondary education of 2007 school-leavers are registered at school level (in History and Philosophy the difference is more than one unit).

- Students have difficulties in particular with the tasks to create a text and to state a thesis and support it with arguments.
- The results for the school subjects, which are most closely related to self-understanding, forming a scale of values and an attitude to the other people, the country, and the world, are not satisfactory.

Lowering the number of students in compulsory school age who are out of school or are dropping out

The implementation of two major measures for preventing the drop out of students continued in the first two, as well as in the third year and the scope of these measures was broadened.

Providing free access to learning content

- Until the school year 2007/2008 the State provided free textbooks and school aids to I – IV grade students in state and municipal schools. In January 2008, the Council of Ministers expanded the right to free textbooks and school aids to cover also V – VII grade students and private school students from I to VII grade.
- In order to take account of the needs of different schools and to enhance competition in the supply of free textbooks, their purchase was decentralised by delegating it to the municipalities which at their option granted the right to the schools.
- The set up of electronic learning courses in all general subjects, which are made available to the students in the national education portal, continued in the reference period. Development of new electronic aids for students will be financed from Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”.

Providing free transportation

Over 700 motor vehicles have been procured in the period 2005-2008 in order to guarantee equal access to education of commensurate quality through free transport to the central schools, as follows:

- 2005 – 219 motor vehicles.
- 2006 – 153 motor vehicles.
- 2007 – 237 motor vehicles.
- 2008 – 95 motor vehicles.

Information and Communication Technologies in school

Serious efforts for strong set-up in of Information and Communication Technologies in school were made in the period 2006-2007:

- 2006 was proclaimed a year of e-learning.
- Information Technologies began to be taught as early as in V grade.
- E-learning courses have been developed.
- 3000 portable computers, 2000 multimedia projectors and 3000 multifunctional units (copier-printer-scanner-fax) have been purchased and made available to Bulgarian schools.
- Towards introduction of IT training in V grade, training has been provided to over 95 000 teachers of basic computer literacy, over 3000 heads of computer labs, over 2000 teachers of Information Technologies.
- The national education portal has been launched (www.start.e-edu.bg).
- Electronic register of the diplomas for completed secondary education has been set up and all diplomas issued at the end of 2006/2007 school year have been registered therein.
- Over 98% of the schools in the country have been provided with high-speed network connection to the Internet.

In the period 2007-2008, MES continued to pursue an active policy in respect of Information and Communication Technologies, the more important measure undertaken including:

- All teachers in the 31 biggest Bulgarian schools were provided with portable computers, a wireless (WiFi type) network was build and phased-in implementation of the Electronic School Register was launched, aiming to incorporate gradually all schools in the country.
- New computer configurations and peripherals have been purchased – 4500 portable and 3100 desktop computers, 3000 multimedia projectors have been made available to schools with over 300 students, whereby the ratio of the number of students using one computer improved to 11.5:1.
- A project for top up financing of national Information and Communication Technologies programmes has been approved within Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”. It includes activities for procuring of cheaper or free Internet access from the home for 20 000 teachers and specialized software for the schools; providing e-content development and foreign language training to teachers; upgrading the information system of education with new modules and application

components; financing of activities for licensing and adaptation of valuable foreign language learning content; building a national ICT helpdesk and call centre; development of electronic aids in Humanities for I – III grades, etc.

Making the school a more attractive territory for the student and ritualizing school life

MES makes targeted efforts to make school not just a place where students learn new things, but an attractive territory where they discover and express themselves, manifest and develop their talents, build a sense of belonging to a community, and spend their leisure time.

National programmes

- *The School – a Student’s Territory Programme*

A special The School – A Student’s Territory Programme including two modules – Ritualizing School Life and Developing Out-of- School and School Activities was first approved in 2007. It finances projects targeting development of extracurricular and out-of-school activities and ritualization of school life such as:

- activities related to the celebration of school fests, traditions and school anniversaries.
- activities related to development of a school uniform element with a school distinguishing symbol.
- development of extracurricular and out-of-school activities.

In 2008, funds for ritualizing school life and for the financing of projects for development of school uniforms have been increased sizeably. A new module “National Student Competitions and National and International Olympiads” has been developed and allocated budget funds.

In 2007, a grant aid scheme “Let’s Make School an Attractive Territory for Young People” was launched within Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”. It finances activities for development of extracurricular and out-of-school activities. 251 contracts with beneficiaries were signed within the scheme (out of 689 project proposals submitted). As this grant scheme enjoys wide interest, it will be reopened in 2008.

- *Modernization of the Resource Base of Schools Programme*

- *Sports in School Module*

In 2007, significant funds were allocated for the building up of an environment for student sports development. The Sports in School Module is implemented along three lines: activities for rehabilitation and routine maintenance of outdoor grounds and facilities; activities for construction of outdoor sports grounds with artificial pavements; activities for modernisation of gymnasiums.

- *Rehabilitation of School Furniture and Technical Equipment*

In 2007, several schools were provided with new furniture. New equipment for teaching Chemistry, Physics, Biology has been provided as well.

- *Building of Accessible Architectural Environment Module*

In 2007, activities for adapting the architectural environment to the needs of the people with disabilities were carried out in 55 schools.

The 2008 module budget is important for construction of platforms and adaptation of sanitary rooms, and for building of accessible architectural environment in infrastructure-specific facilities (lifts and hydraulic facilities) in about 40 schools.

The schools which will benefit from the Modernization of the Resource Base Programme in 2008 are state schools. For municipal schools these activities are included in the programme “Co-financing of municipal investment projects targeting improvement of the resource base of schools”.

Holidays, rituals, awards, initiatives involving students

Over the last years, MES has shown the necessary consistency and insistence in establishing traditions for the uniform celebration of national holidays and holidays important to the school education system, including by introducing new holidays:

- A tradition has been set up to open the school year on the same day in all schools by raising the national flag and under the sounds of the national anthem. To that end, national flags, pylons and CDs with the national anthem have been made available to all schools.
- On May 24th Bulgaria celebrates the Day of the Slavic Alphabet and Culture. The Cyrillic Alphabet was created by the Saint brothers Cyril and Methodius in 855. On MES' initiative 24 May is celebrated with a school parade of brass bands from all over the country.

- A day of students' self-government is organized on 9 May in MES and in all schools across the country.
- An active campaign to improve the attractiveness of vocational training by organizing national competitions by professions was launched for the first time. 15 competitions were organized in the 2007/2008 school year according to a schedule of events approved by the Minister of Education and Science.
- The first National Fashion Performance Show of models of school uniforms and school-leaving celebration clothes made by students from 12 vocational schools of clothing and fashion design across the country was organized in May 2007. In May 2008, MES organized for a second year running a fashion performance show of school uniforms under the motto "School Clothes Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow".
- 2008 was declared a year of key competences. Competitions on the following key competences were organized: "Native Language Communication", "Mathematical Competence and Basic Knowledge of Natural Sciences and Technology", "Social and Civil Competences". Competitions on other key competences like "Foreign Language Communication", "Learning Skill", "Digital Competence (ICT)", "Enterprise and Entrepreneurship", "Cultural Awareness and Creativity" are to be organized for Bulgarian students.

Improving teacher's prestige and social status

MES focuses its main efforts on designing a career development model for teachers and a model of differentiated teacher pay.

Developing and introducing a differentiated teacher pay model

In 2007, MES developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, and the social partners a differentiated pay model which was put to broad-based discussion and was piloted in 27 educational institutions across the country. The model was included in the National Differentiated Pay Programme approved with Council of Ministers' Decision No. 541/07.08.2007.

- Module One – pedagogical specialists.
- Module Two – heads of kindergartens, schools and service units.

In 2008 a wider outreach (97%) has been achieved compared to 2007, which calls for the following conclusions:

- The psychological barrier has been overcome because the principle of voluntary participation has been preserved.
- Pedagogical staff's motivation to participate in the differentiated pay has been improved.

Developing a career development model for teachers

The model developed by MES has been examined with the social partners and put to broad-based discussion. It envisages five positions of teachers' career development – junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher, principal teacher, and teacher – methodologist. The main objectives of this model include: enhancing teachers' motivation for full-fledged participation in the teaching process; ensuring career development in accordance with the personal plans, capacity and ambitions of every teacher, linking the respective position to higher responsibilities but also with corresponding pay by integrating the model in the differentiated pay system. The new system will be implemented by the end of 2008.

Determining teacher salaries on a decentralized basis

In 2008, in line with the decentralization of the administrative and financial management of schools, a number of principal changes were made in the method of determining the pay of school education system employees.

The pay of school education system employees is no longer determined centrally. The average gross monthly salaries were eliminated as an external limit of the teacher pay in a school. The new ordinance on the salaries of the employees in the units within the public education system sets out only the general salary structure rules and minimum salaries by position levels. The mechanisms applied to determine individual teacher salaries are negotiated in the collective labour contract and/or in internal salary rules, and individual salaries are determined by the school principal. Mechanisms have been set up to pay for the additional teacher load above the minimum rate – the amount is either included in the basic salary or given as an additional labour pay.

Qualification activities (in-service training; training in new subjects, ICT and foreign languages)

- In the 2006/2007 school year, 24 214 teachers were included in routine qualification activities and in the period August 2007 – August 2008 their number was 26 017.

- In addition to routine qualification, in the first two years the main focus of qualification activities was placed on providing teachers with training on “Man and Nature” for V and VI grade, as well as on the training of basic ICT skills.
- Special focus was placed on foreign language teachers. On basis of the National Programme for Qualification of Pedagogical Staff, which the Council of Ministers approved in 2007, 1455 teachers with lower than higher education were provided with training for the professional qualification of a foreign language teacher. 1150 teachers with higher education continue their qualification training for acquiring the professional qualification of a foreign language teacher. The training is scheduled for completion in November 2008. Qualification courses for improving the knowledge, skills and competences of foreign language teachers were organized and carried out according to the requirements of the Common European Framework of Languages, as follows: 200 teachers of Spanish; 100 teachers of Russian; 60 teachers of French.
- The project “Improving the qualification and building an environment for career development of teachers, professors in high schools and school principals”, which has been approved within Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”, will be launched by the end of 2008. Implementation of project activities will make it possible to tailor professional competence development to the demand of highly qualified teachers in priority areas:
 - introductory qualification for newly appointed teachers.
 - routine and upgrading qualification for key competences – qualification courses for foreign language teachers and certification by accredited external institutions.
 - ICT and digital competence qualification courses.
 - Qualification courses for teachers from vocational schools, with focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Improving the managerial competence of school principals

The Institute of School Principals became effectively operational on 1 November 2006 and launched a qualification programme for school principals. The qualification programme started with training of current school principals. From November 2006 till July 2007 all 2924 school principals completed short-term courses on managerial skills improvement, including on delegated budget management.

Over the period September 2007 – July 2008, training was provided to 2336 school principals. 67 newly appointed school principals also received training. By the end of 2008, 720 school principals and 200 heads of kindergarten will receive training within two national programmes.

Consolidation of the school network. Central and protected schools.

In the past few years MES and the municipalities have made serious efforts to consolidate and restructure the school network and to cut down the number of smaller size and merged classes. The consolidation process is a demonstration of the principle of ensuring an opportunity for every child to receive access to quality education, and of the goals of improving education cost efficiency.

Consolidation of the school network

Due to the decreasing number of students, a special Consolidation of the School Network Programme has been approved in support of municipal efforts to consolidate the school network and strengthen central schools. 64 municipalities applied with 78 projects for funding from the Consolidation of the School Network module. 47 municipal programmes were selected within the measure “School restructuring and set up of central schools”. In 2007, municipalities closed a total of 74 schools with funding from the programme and in 9 municipalities closing of more than 1 school was financed. 22 municipal programmes are selected within the measure “Cutting down the number of classes”. 64 classes were closed, resulting in improved rate “number of students per class”.

The programme continued in 2008 and total funds were increased three times. 126 municipal programs for consolidation and 5 projects of Regional Inspectorates of Education for consolidation of the network of special schools have been submitted for the programme. 123 municipal programmes for consolidation and 5 projects for consolidation of the network of special schools with a total value of BGN 1.4 million have been selected. In 2008, the number of schools closed with funding from the programme is 296 and the number of transformed schools is 13. Six special schools were also closed. In 2008, municipalities received funding for consolidation of the school network and set up of central schools.

In 2008, the programme scope was expanded to include a new module “Consolidation of the school internal structure” which finances the payment of compensations for termination of

labour relations resulting from changes in the personnel structure and composition. Funding for the module is provided on a monthly basis.

Additional instruments were provided in 2008 within the policy for ensuring equal access to education and as a corrective of the school network consolidation – additional financing for central schools and regulation of the protected school status.

Central schools

May 2008 amendments to the Public Education Act regulate a mechanism for additional financing of central schools for transport, canteen meals and semi-boarding education. This opens up additional opportunities for strengthening of central schools, in parallel to the support provided along the line of school network consolidation.

Protected schools

MES has developed and put forward for discussion the protected schools concept – closing these schools would impair the access to education. The Minister of Education and Science introduced in the parliamentary Education and Science Commission possible criteria for giving a protected school status and the after effects of designating a school a protected one. The protected school status was regulated in the Public Education Act.

Integrating children with special educational needs and children for whom Bulgarian is not their mother tongue

Notable progress was registered in 2006-2007 in respect of the integration of children with special educational needs and of children for whom Bulgarian is not their mother tongue:

- the targeted policy pursued in the past few years resulted in higher number of children and students with special educational needs integrated in kindergartens and schools – in 2007 they were 4380 compared to 1593 in 2006 (about 175% up). The number of kindergartens and schools providing integrated training to children and students with special educational needs is increasing steadily – 770 schools and 183 kindergartens in 2007 against 130 in 2004, or about 631% up on 2004 and 40% up on 2006.
- Serious efforts have been made also to build accessible architectural environment in kindergartens, schools and service units. The number of institutions with such environment is increasing and in August 2007 stands at 184 – 153 schools, 22 kindergartens and 9 service units. In 2007, projects for ensuring architectural access to

children and students with special educational needs in another 55 schools and service units were developed and approved under module “Building an accessible architectural environment” of the national programme “Modernization of the school resource base”.

- The 28 resource centres for integrated education of children and students with special educational needs set up in 2006 were successfully launched and in 2007 they employ 635 resource teachers and specialists.
- Active policy for deinstitutionalization of children from special schools and consolidation of the network of special schools is pursued.
- Fifteen homes for raising and educating children deprived from parental care (HRECDPC) and 31 special schools were closed in the period 2006-2007, including: 13 auxiliary schools for mentally retarded students, 2 schools for children with speech problems, 1 hospital school; 1 health improving school; 12 sociopedagogical boarding schools (for students with deviational behaviour); 1 auxiliary instructive boarding school (for mentally retarded students with deviational behaviour); 1 day kindergarten for children with physical disabilities. The students from the closed special schools have been directed mainly to integrated education in a mainstream educational environment.
- From 1 January 2007 HRECDPCs have been transformed into special social service institutions (childcare homes) under the Social Assistance Act and their management was delegated to municipalities.
 - The Centre for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities set up with Council of Ministers’ Decree No. 4/11.01.2005 became operational in 2006.
 - According to data from the Regional Inspectorates of Education, in the 2006/2007 school year 16 577 Roma students were trained in 262 receiving schools outside Roma quarters with 578 semi-boarding groups. In the 2006/2007 school year, 95 students studied Roma as their mother tongue.

Active work in the field continued in 2008:

- In 2008, the number of children and students educated on an integrated basis in kindergartens and schools is 5573 (1193 up on 2007). The integrated education of these children and students is supported by 883 resource teachers, psychologists, speech therapists and hearing rehabilitators.

- Over 500 pedagogues receive training on working with children with disabilities in a mainstream educational environment.
- Implementation of activities for deinstitutionalization of children from special schools and consolidation of the network of special schools continued. 7 special schools have been closed – 3 auxiliary schools and 4 sociopedagogical boarding schools. Thus by the end of the 2007/2008 school year special schools in Bulgaria have been reduced to 100.
- Free textbooks for students with special educational needs and Braille textbooks for children with impaired sight have been provided.
- Special efforts have been made to provide the necessary conditions, assistance and technical means for the students with special educational needs to have no problems when sitting for the secondary school-leaving examination:
 - longer examination hours;
 - accessible architectural environment, separate rooms;
 - consulting teachers and other specialists (psychologists) depending on the type of disability and student's individual needs;
 - oral examination for students with disabilities which prevent them from sitting for a written examination;
 - adapted text (for example, larger characters) and technical devices (Braille machines, Braille printers, Braille paper, magnifying glasses, audiotapes, discs with special computer programs).
- Methodological guidance has been developed for the complex pedagogical assessment teams in the Regional Inspectorates of Education.
- A seminar was organized to train resource centre directors on preparing of programmes for development of integrated education in the respective region, on building up partnership with parents and the society in general.
- Seminars and working meetings were organized with a view to achieve a change of attitudes towards support for the integration of children with special educational needs.
- Two information campaigns were organized in support of the integration of children with special educational needs and towards changing public attitudes, as well as two national conferences with international participation on the education of children with special educational needs and on inclusive education.

- Four training seminars on assessment of educational needs and building of supportive environment in kindergartens and schools were organized with experts, pedagogues, and parents, representatives of other institutions and of non-governmental organizations.
- In the second half of 2007, the Centre for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities opened up an opportunity for implementation of various activities under 4 programmes.

HIGHER EDUCATION

During the last years, the experts of the Ministry of Education and Science took an effort in reaching relative agreement on the main challenges, facing by the system of higher education, and the measures for overcoming them, taking into account current trends in Europe and throughout the world. Back in 2006, the Ministry initiated a broad public discussion on the key elements of the future Strategy for the Development of Higher Education, which is to form the basis for a new Law on Higher Education. Part of the measures proposed became part of the Law for Amending and Supplementing the Law on Higher Education of May, 2007. The main goal of the amendments was to create opportunities for competition among universities and thus increase the quality of higher education. Part of the amendments had the immediate aim of strengthening external control over the activity of universities in terms of compliance with the law and spending of public funds in a transparent manner.

Changes in the model of financing of higher education

- One of the most significant changes, stimulating the competition among universities, has been the substantial increase in the number of students enrolled each year. For the academic year 2008/2009 the universities offered places for 58 802 students (out of which 50 581 in state universities, incl. military academies, and 9914 – in privately owned universities). This is an increase of over 6000 places in comparison with the year 2007/2008 and of over 15 000 places in comparison with the year 2006/2007. The places for doctoral students in universities and scientific institutes have increased by 46 % in comparison with the year 2007/2008 – 1403 (1049 full-time students and 354 part-time students), while in the year 2006/2007 the number of those students was 963. The increased number of students to be accepted in universities gives opportunities to more people, completing their secondary education, to

make a choice in accordance with their personal preferences, capacities and ambitions and decreases the number of students, enrolling in illegal structures, encourages universities to offer attractive educational environment and creates potential for full abolishment of entry examinations and the introduction of the state matriculation examinations as an “entrance” to higher education.

- With the amendments of the law, the universities also received more powers in determining tuition fees. This year the Council of Ministers approved again the proposals of universities for their tuition fees, as they were made, adhering to the following two principles: fees should be lower than 30 % of the differentiated normative allowances for students and should not exceed two average monthly salaries for the country, as determined by the National Institute of Statistics.
- In order to increase the accountability and responsibility of universities for the spending of public funds, the Law on Higher Education stipulated that the state subsidy for universities should be based on the number of students actually enrolled and not on the number of places announced. Along with this, a financial sanction is imposed on state universities, which do not work within the capacities, determined by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. In 2008 the Ministry of Education and Science has exercised control over the number of students accepted, the universities’ adherence to their pre-determined capacity and undertook measures for bringing institutions into compliance.

Changes, related to the institutions, offering higher education

The Law on Higher Education introduced an express prohibition for teaching to be done outside the main units and branches of the universities, created in accordance with the law.

Increasing transparency in the management of universities through the creation of boards of trustees

The Law on Higher Education provides for each state university to create a board of trustees, comprising persons from outside the university. Up until now, 16 state universities have created their boards.

Improvement in the accreditation regime and in the quality control over the higher education

- The availability of academic staff and proper material conditions was introduced as an absolute condition for the accreditation of universities.
- A prohibition was introduced for one and the same member of the academic staff to take part in the accreditation of more than two universities.
- An obligation was introduced for an opinion poll of students to be done at least once a year, with the results being announced publicly.
- Each member of the academic staff is now obligated to develop and announce a description of his/her course.
- There is now a requirement for the evaluation of knowledge and skills of students to be done in writing, unless the specifics of the respective field do not allow that.

Improvement of the access to education and the living conditions of students

The Law on Loans for Undergraduate, Master and PhD Students

In July 2008 the National Assembly adopted the Law on Loans for Undergraduate, Master and PhD Students. The draft was developed with the support of the Ministry of Finance and the Association of Banks in Bulgaria and was subject of a broad discussion.

- Undergraduate, Master and PhD students shall have the right to apply for loans if they:
 - have not attained 35 years of age;
 - are currently studying towards obtaining a Bachelor (Bachelor or Professional Bachelor), Master or PhD degree in a state or privately owned university or scientific organization in the Republic of Bulgaria, created and functioning pursuant to the law;
 - have not been suspended or have not left their degree programmes;
 - have not already obtained the same degree.
- Loans shall be given for the whole or part of the period of education for covering tuition fees and/or living allowance. The right to use a loan for living allowance shall arise in case of

having or fully adopting a child during the study period and shall belong to the parent, exercising parental rights, or, if those are the two parents, to only one of them.

- Loans for students shall be granted with the financial support of the state in the form of:

- guaranteeing the loan, including the principal and the interest;
- covering the payments for the whole or part of the loan in the cases, determined by law;
- bonus for good management.

- The following concessions for students are provided for:

- loans are granted without any collateral or fees, commissions or other expenses;
- low interest rates – the base interest rate of the Bulgarian National Bank, increased by two points;
- long gratuitous period – from the signing of the loan agreement until one year after the first date, offered for the last state examination or thesis defense, or after the end date of the PhD programme. During the gratuitous period students shall not repay the principal or the interest on the loan;
- long repayment period – 10 years from the end of the gratuitous period;
- opportunity for advance repayment without fees, commissions or additional interest;
- release from the obligations under the loan – by virtue of the law.

- Loans shall be given by banks, having concluded a standard contract with the Minister of Education and Science. Those banks will be included in a special electronic register, maintained by the Ministry of Education and Science.

- The new National Council on Student Loans chaired by the Minister of Education and Science, provided for in the law, was established. A standard contract to be offered to the banks is in a process of elaboration.

Improvement of the conditions in student dormitories

- In 2007 the central state budget provided additional (beside the funds for capital expenses, included in the transfers to state universities) funds for repairs and rebuilding of student dormitories. Additionally, after consultations with universities and the Ministry of Finance,

BGN 40 million from the state budget surplus were given at the end of the year for repairs, building, modernization and improvement of the material conditions in state universities.

- In 2008 the Council of Ministers adopted a programme for tied financing of repairs of student dormitories, amounting to BGN 50 million. Over 10 student dormitories will be repaired with these funds until the end of this year.

Increase of the scholarships for undergraduate, Master and PhD students

- In 2008 the Council of Ministers increased the maximum amount of student scholarships from 90 to BGN 120.
- PhD students' scholarships were almost doubled – from BGN 250 to 450. A one-time bonus of BGN 1000 is provided for if the student submits his/her dissertation on time and another one-time bonus of BGN 1000 is given if the student defends his/her dissertation within one year after submission. Each university will be given BGN 4000 for the conduct of the defense procedures.
- Under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme additional funding of BGN 10 million will be provided for student scholarships, BGN 2 million for practical internships and training in companies and organizations, as well as another BGN 4 million for supporting PhD, post-doctoral, other post-graduate students and young scholars.

Preservation of state property, managed by higher schools

A law, prohibiting the restitution of lands, managed by higher schools, is being drafted. After the draft is elaborated, it will be open for public discussion and will be submitted for adoption to the Council of Ministers.

Creation of electronic registers

- During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education and Science created four electronic registers:
 - Register of current undergraduate, Master and PhD students and students, who have left their programmes;
 - Register of academic staff members in the universities;

- Register of certificates of recognition of higher education;
- Register of higher education diplomas.

- In accordance with the Law on Student Loans two more registers will also be created – a register of banks, included in the loan system, and a register of loan agreements.
- Drafting of an Ordinance for protection of higher education diplomas with hologram stickers.

Legislative and policy frameworks of ALE

The legislative and policy environment of adult education and learning

Against the above described background it is important to show how Adult Education is integrated in the general, vocational and higher education system in Bulgaria. In general, the legislative framework in Bulgaria clearly places emphasis on vocational training, although adult education is defined much broader – political, cultural, active citizenship education. The main laws can be summarized as follows:

- **Vocational Education and Training Act** - governs both vocational training in the formal school education system (targeted mostly at young people at school) and vocational education and training outside this system, i.e., non-formal vocational training and in-service training for adults, regardless of whether this is provided by state or non-governmental bodies. The act defines also the responsibility for VET - primarily in the hands of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), to which the regional education departments (Regional Departments of Education) are answerable, as well as partly of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Health Ministry, the local authorities in the regulation of vocational training, and of the employers' and employees' organizations. Furthermore, the social partners are involved in the work of the National Vocational Education and Training Agency (NAVET), taking part on an equal basis in its management and expert committees.

The Vocational Education and Training Act lays down four levels of vocational training. These levels apply in principle to all occupations, but the highest level attainable varies, depending on the knowledge and skills required in the occupation in question. Moreover, the VET Act defines special outline syllabuses which specify among other things the minimum age of candidates at the start of training, their prior education, the

duration of their training, the theoretical and practical learning content, and the methods of awarding a qualification.

Additionally, the VET act provides the legal fundamentals for identification and recognition of non-formal learning, especially by defining rights and duties of CPOs (Vocational Education Centres) together with rights and duties of schools (as institutions of formal education) or by defining the State Educational Requirements for acquiring of vocational qualification in profession, based on the learning outcomes.

Finally, The Act provides for the funding of vocational training establishments from various sources: national government, the local authorities, donations, national and international programmes, and income earned by schools themselves.

- **Labour Code** – in general sets out all the ways in which those in employment can receive vocational training. According to this Act, continuing vocational training may only be pursued with the agreement of both employer and employee, but the employer has more influence on the decision. Depending on need and particular circumstances, there may be three types of contract between employer and employee: Skills training contract, Training placement contract and Skills updating or retraining contract.

- **Employment Promotion Act** from 2002 sets out the options for the funding of continuing education and training by employers, the recruitment of new staff and the creation of training placements. Every employer can in this way apply for a state grant of up to 100 per cent of the cost of providing employees with vocational training. Employers who take on and train those who were unemployed can have up to six months' salaries refunded by the state. To assist the work integration of unemployed people with primary and lower education and low-skilled who cannot be included in vocational training, their enrolling in apprenticeship schemes is encouraged as a form of "on-the-job training". Unemployed persons with vocational qualification in a given occupation, but without any professional experience, will be given an option to work as interns in enterprises to achieve practical experience. Training placements are also supported, especially for young people who dropped out of the school system early. These grants are awarded in consultation with the regional employment offices. Furthermore, on behalf of the state, the licensed vocational training centres are to provide short and long-term training courses for the employed and the unemployed which are fully funded by the state via the Employment Agency. The Employment

Promotion Act states that the responsibility for VET lies within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which is to manage this policy area jointly with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is thus essentially responsible also for vocational adult education since those in employment and the unemployed account for a large proportion of “adults” (persons aged 16 years and above). Since 2008, alongside vocational training and literacy courses, another important component will be training in key competences (computer skills, foreign language etc.)

- **Trades Act** from 2001 governs the exercise of craft trades, the organization of the craft trade body and training. It was influenced by German experience and traditions and drafted with the assistance of the Koblenz Chamber of Craft Trades. “Craft trade” is taken to mean the production of goods and the provision of services that are specifically listed at the end of the Act (2007 - 127 vocations). For the training of tradespeople, the Act provides for three stages of craft trades training, supposed to follow the principle of combining practical work and theoretical instruction. The three stages are, in line with older Bulgarian and other European traditions, apprentice (čirák), journeyman (kálfa) and master (májstor). Apprentices must be at least 16 years of age.

- **Associations Act** or “Non-Profit Making Legal Persons Act” (2001). Bulgarian legislation also allows adult education to be provided by another kind of institutions: foundations and voluntary associations which pursue social or private aims, provided that they are not profit-making (for short: NGOs). According to the legislation, such organizations may be set up by Bulgarian and foreign natural persons and corporate bodies. In general, it is difficult to estimate their number since there is no centralized register, except for those also recognised as serving the public good. Counting is made more difficult by the fact that many associations / organizations only exist for a limited time or carry out no real activities once they are established. Roughly, it can be said that there are around 3500 associations / organizations, only some of which are truly active

- **Cultural Centres Act** - The cultural centres (čitálišta) are an institution with a long tradition in Bulgaria. They were established in the 19th century, during the time of Ottoman rule, as educational facilities sponsored and funded by the local elite. Nowadays, the cultural centres play an important part in non-formal adult education. In many places, especially in villages, they are the only institutions which provide non-

formal educational opportunities for children and adults. Throughout Bulgaria there are at present around 3500 cultural centres, some 2500 of them in rural areas. The 1996 Cultural Centres Act governs the activities of the centres by setting out the rules for establishing, operating and funding them. Thus, cultural centres are associations which may have both individual and collective members, and are managed, as is the usual practice in voluntary associations, by a “general meeting” of voting members, a board of management. The ways for funding the cultural centres are also set out: membership subscriptions, receipts from cultural events, subsidies from national and local government, donations and rental income from property. Finally, The Act gives local authorities particular responsibility for maintaining cultural centres by making them liable for around half the costs if a centre cannot maintain its premises by itself.

The Republic of Bulgaria adopted in the last decade various strategies, action plans and programmes in the broader field of adult education. In retrospect the first official document/paper related to ALE and signed by the Bulgarian government was

- ❑ **The Convention on Technical and Vocational Education**, proposed by UNESCO and signed in Paris in 1989.¹¹ The convention came into force in Bulgaria on 1 October 1994. By adopting the Convention, Bulgaria declared its willingness e.g. to draw up plans to enable young people and adults to expand their knowledge and skills in order to enhance their economic, social and personal development. Further, Bulgaria agreed to set up appropriate legislation, to prevent discrimination, to provide equal access to vocational education, to pay attention to the special needs of handicapped, to follow a series of requirements concerning economy, demographic development, protection of environment and cultural heritage etc, to design flexible and open-ended educational structures, to provide clear definitions of requirements for each occupational level etc.

- ❑ **Government Paper on Lifelong Learning**. In the wake of discussions on the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, the Ministry of Education put forward a paper on developments to date and possible future steps in this field. The document was drafted by a “Lifelong Learning Committee” made up of representatives of Ministries, the social partners, NGOs, occupational associations, research and teaching

¹¹ Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, available online at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org>

establishments, and state occupational organizations. The report by the Lifelong Learning Committee sees as the greatest challenge for the future to improve cooperation between institutions. After 7 years it can be clearly stated, that the ideas proposed by the LLL Committee, together with the annual lobby and advocacy work of institutions such as dvv international, events such as the “Lifelong Learning Weeks” have helped to raise the public awareness of the Lifelong Learning issues on everyday life basis, but also on the political agenda. One recent example for this can be found in the “Operative Programme for Development of Human Resources 2007-2013” which is highlighting once again that “Lifelong learning and vocational training are key factors for the preparation of qualify personnel which are of growing importance for the Bulgarian economy.”¹²

□ **National Economic Development Plan 2000-2006**

The National Economic Development Plan¹³ for the period 2000-2006 contains proposals for education and training measures that make reference to lifelong learning. More specifically, the Plan sets out six long-term goals: (1) strengthening the institutional framework and improving government administration, (2) improving the competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy – especially in the areas of industry, tourism, and small and medium-sized enterprises – and increasing exports, (3) expanding and modernizing the infrastructure and protecting the environmental, (4) raising standards of living and accustoming the public to the new economic circumstances, (5) achieving balanced and stable regional development by taking advantage of opportunities for cross-border cooperation, and (6) developing agriculture in rural areas. Among these especially Aim number 4 is related to lifelong learning. It provides for more training opportunities for the unemployed, especially those who have not satisfactorily completed eight-year basic education, Enhancing the quality of education and training provided by employers, Raising the skill level of workers and reducing unemployment, Reform of the vocational school system so that it better matches the needs of the labour market.

¹² Human Resource Development Plan 2007-2013, p. 33.

¹³ See the website of the Agéncija za ikonomičeski análizi i prognózi (AIAD): www.aeaf.minfin.bg/bg/publications.php?l=1&c=20 (accessed in August 2006). The has been published in June 2003. The English short name officially used is NEDP

- **Plan to Combat Poverty.** Based on the “Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Isolation” the government adopted in 2004 a “National Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Isolation”, updated once again in 2005. This Plan lists a broad range of projects, both of governmental institutions and NGOs. They are grouped into six overall objectives: Employment promotion, Higher income for poor and those in danger to become poor , Easy access to resources, rights, welfare and services, Prevention of social isolation risk , Social support to vulnerable groups, families and individuals and Mobilisation of all involved institutions, organisations and communities. Particularly the first objective –employment promotion– concerns adult education, since many projects concentration on education and training. For instance, the 2005-2006 plan provided projects for development of agriculture and alternative farming in the Rhodope mountains, training of paramedics, training units for small business start-ups, re-training for women to help them enter the labour market after child care, etc.

- **Employment Action Plans.** A “National Employment Action Plan” has been issued by the Ministry of Social Policy and Labour regularly since 2001, as the annual instrument of the National Economic Development Plan mentioned above. The activities they cover are relevant for adult education since most of the programmes that are financed in this way aim not only on active labour market policy but at vocational or basic education. Via the National Employment Action Plan every year are spent millions of leva for various education programmes. The National Employment Action Plan for 2007, for instance, has a budget of 289 million leva (148 million euros). DVV International in Bulgaria is one of the NGOs running projects within the frame of the National Employment Plans- e.g. Pilot project for vocational training of unemployed people in the field of balneology in 2007 and another one for vocational training of unemployed in the field of tourism – esp. animators in 2008. Various kinds of training courses are organized by the Employment Agency (12 million leva, 21 000 course participants). Several projects financed by Phare and other donors to enhance employability by vocational education (72 million leva, 11 000 participants).¹⁴

- In this context should be mention also the “**Employment Strategy for the period 2004-2010**”) It was adopted in 2003 and provides on about 50 pages a variety of activities

¹⁴ The National Employment Action Plan can regularly be accessed from the website of the Ministry of Social Policy and Labour (www.mslp.government.bg/bg/docs).

concerning many government institutions. Most activities rather concern economic policy, but there are several tasks defined that have to do with adult education, e.g. the task to improve entrepreneurship skills, general improvement of human resources etc¹⁵. On the 30 April 2008 the government adopted an updated version of the Employment Strategy for the period 2008-2015 the goals of which are in the light of the Lisbon goals, but also setting priorities for Bulgaria taking the specific socio-economic sector in consideration: employment policy, aiming at full employment, increasing the labour productivity and the social and territory cohesion, work approach, based on the lifelong learning idea, better matching the needs of the labour market, improving flexibility of the labour market, increasing investments in Human Resources, better adaptation of the education and training systems to the rapidly changing working and living environment requiring new competencies.

- **Continuing Vocational Training Strategy 2005-2010**¹⁶ The Strategy is concerned with all types of vocational training for adults (from the age of 16 years), aiming at better preparing them for the European labour market. Personal development is also addressed. The Strategy sets targets for the development of continuing vocational training, making reference to the discussion of lifelong learning throughout Europe and naming the institutions responsible for implementing it (ministries, agencies, civil society organizations, social partners). Five areas are specifically listed for the proposed continuing training offensive: (1) improving access to continuing vocational training, (2) more effective cooperation between the institutions concerned with continuing vocational training, (3) ensuring higher quality of continuing vocational training, (4) increasing investment in continuing vocational training, and (5) providing a scientific basis for continuing vocational training. A number of specific individual proposals are then attached to these areas. Deadlines are set for the implementation of each proposal, and the Government institutions responsible are named (usually the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour Social Policy) along with the other institutions involved. Possible sources of funding are mentioned (the national budget, Phare, etc.), but specific figures are not given.

¹⁵ The Strategy is available (in Bulgarian) from the website of the Ministry of Social Policy and Labour, www.mlsp@government.bg

¹⁶ An English print version of the strategy is available from the Ministry of Education and Science or from GOPA Consultants (www.gopa.de). The Bulgarian version was available from NAVET: http://www.navet.government.bg/assets/cms/File/prodaljavashto_pobuchenie/strategy_prof_edu-2005-10.pdf (accessed in May 2008)

A Midterm Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007–2013 is going to be adopted by the end of the year 2008. The strategy is closely aligned to the European developments and documents in the field of Lifelong Learning, comprises all elements of LLL – formal, non-formal, informal, presents a comprehensive picture of all policy and legislative frameworks on national level and establishes the links between all actors concerned.

The documents produced by PHARE projects are:

- ❑ **A methodological guide for adult education** which can be used by teachers and managers who need practical advice, for example on modern methods of teaching adult learners. The manual should be available from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy¹⁷.
- ❑ **A Bulgarian-English glossary of key terms in the field of vocational education**, as an attempt to overcome problems with differing terminology.
- ❑ Several documents in support of those who want to engage in **needs assessment for adult education**, especially concerning labour market needs. The main document is a booklet with a step-by-step instruction how to conduct a regional labour market study. This manual is an attempt to answer the constant need of more precise labour market data.

- ❑ **National Management Unit for Adult Education** – is planned to be established within the Phare project “Development of an Adult Training Centre Network” (BG2004/006-070.01.01) used in the elaboration of the Midterm Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007–2013. It has two main areas of action: The first area is strengthening the present network of adult education providers in Bulgaria. To this end, several education providers such as CPOs and vocational schools get sums from 50 000 to 200 000 euros either to establish a new training centre or to improve their existing venues, equipment and human resources. Amongst the 18 providers that were awarded in November 2006 are Vocational schools in Sofia, Vidin and Ruse. The second area of action seems more decisive for future conditions of adult education in Bulgaria: The idea is to establish a “National Management Unit” for adult education, attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. According to the grant scheme, this management unit will have to co-

¹⁷ available on the website of NAVET: http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/docs_all/eurodocs

ordinate the activities within the adult education system in Bulgaria, working closely together with the VET Agency (NAVET). Additional technical assistance will be provided for design and development of the management unit which includes training of administrative staff, training of training centres staff, etc.

- **Strategy for Craft Trades Training 2006-2008.** In a process of discussion with several actors involved in craft trades training, started in 2005, the National Chamber of Craft Trades has issued in 2006 a Strategy to develop training in craft trades, with a variety of measures to be taken in 2006-2008.
- **Strategy for Educational Integration of Ethnic Minorities.** The Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities was adopted by the Ministry of Education Science in June 2004 with planned implementation period is 2005 to 2015 which corresponds with the International Decade of Roma Integration. Although the main focus of the strategy is schooling for children, the document also asks for "full adult literacy for illiterate or poorly literate adult Roma".
- **Programme for Human Resource Development 2007-2013.** One of the most recent documents to adjust Bulgarian social and education policy for the next years is the "Operative Programme for Human Resource Development 2007-2013". This programme is to serve as a framework for using money from the European Social Fund (with co-financing by the Bulgarian state budget) in the years 2007-2013. The overall aim of the programme is to improve the living standard of people in Bulgaria by development of human resources, high employment rates, higher productivity, access to quality education and lifelong learning, and social inclusion. The programme defines eight priorities. At least three of them concern directly adult education: Enhancing productivity and adaptability of employees, Improvement of education and training especially concerning labour market needs and Better access to education and training. However also other priorities as well are related to adult education. The priority "social inclusion" deals chiefly with the people who have problems to integrate in modern society and modern work conditions; and many measures in this area will rely on adult education and training. The first call for proposals within the OP HRD were opened at the end of 2007 and first projects, among which DVV international has won several projects for improvement of qualification of employees and educational integration of Roma students, are just starting (May 2008).

Priority goals for Adult Education and Learning

The main priorities of the Bulgarian Adult Education Policy as defined by the Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013 can be summarized as follows:

- ❑ improvement of the legal framework in ALE in order to ensure to facilitate the implementation of the LLL concept and encourage participation of larger groups of the society in LLL activities (better access to ALE)
- ❑ set up of better structures for coordination with clear division of responsibilities on national, regional and local level
- ❑ create various opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal learning according to the labour market needs
- ❑ establish a comprehensive and transparent system for validation of all types of learning outcomes – knowledge, skills and competences, including acquired in non-formal educational setting
- ❑ create a ECVET system for setting up an individual learning portfolio to foster mobility among learners and employees;
- ❑ Strengthen decentralization process in ALE management - in terms of organization of the learning, quality assurance, validation agreements, lifelong guidance, information provision etc.
- ❑ establish a rational financing system as an instrument for ensuring the efficiency and quality of the initial and continuing education and training, by using the corporate and balanced responsibilities of the government, employers and learners
- ❑ foster the social dialogue in the field of Adult Learning and Education

Organisation and responsibilities for adult learning and education

The **Council of Ministers** is the leading institution in the field of education and employment policy.

The **Ministry of Education and Science** (MES) develops the policy guidelines for vocational training and coordinates its implementation. MES issues orders and prescribes appropriate methods for the formal education system (i.e. Vocational schools, Vocational colleges and institutions of higher education). The Minister of Education and Science approves the national training requirements for the four levels of vocational training and the list of training occupations drawn up by subordinate agencies (chiefly the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training).

The **National Pedagogic Centre** is an institution belonging to the Ministry of Education and Science. It has a central office in Sofia and regional offices in the capitals of the provinces. The centre has been working in this form since 2005. It was created in order to co-ordinate the work of its regional branches which had been existing previously. The task of the NPC is to pedagogically support pupils, teachers and parents by a) qualification of teachers and educators b) prevention of pupils failing to stay in school c) providing consultation and orientation on vocations and vocational education opportunities. The NPC organizes qualification programmes for teachers, including teachers of professional education institutions. The centres provide as well occupational information for pupils, students and teachers.

The **National VET Agency (NAVET)** is a specialist body directly subject to the Council of Ministers. It is intended to coordinate the work of the institutions concerned with vocational training and occupational guidance. Representatives of the Ministries, employers and the trade unions are involved as equal partners in its management. It is responsible in particular for the licensing of the new “vocational training centres”, drawing up the general requirements concerning the organisation of the VET system, e.g. Vocations and levels of vocational qualification, conditions of the acquisition of professional qualification and the organisation of the teaching process. Furthermore it sets up the national training standards for vocational training (state education requirements for VET regarding admission requirements, content of training etc.). NAVET also fulfils some other functions to do with vocational training. It works out criteria for the procedure of granting licences. It carries out studies of vocational training and occupational guidance. It is involved in the creation of a system for awarding certificates of vocational training. It is concerned with the recognition of the various documents relating to vocational training and occupational guidance. The agency also maintains the register of vocational training and occupational information centres, which is accessible via the Agency’s website. Finally it is responsible for the administration of the VET system as well as for the funding of VET and vocational orientation.

In the field of adult education, the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** is responsible for the vocational training of the employed and the unemployed. It draws up an annual “National Employment Plan”. According to the “National Continuing Vocational Education and Training Strategy 2005-2010” the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for

establishing vocational training needs by analysing the labour market. This Ministry is also involved in updating the official list of training occupations. An important function of the Ministry is to manage the projects that are financed by Phare.

The Bulgarian Employment Agency and its subordinate local branches, the employment offices is an agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It is responsible for employment promotion, supervision of the labour market, occupational advice, and education and training for the unemployed and those in employment (vocational training and motivational measures). The Agency's units are 9 regional head offices, advising 109 Employment offices with a total of 180 individual offices (numbers for 2007). The employment offices play the main role in vocational training for the unemployed by commissioning courses from local education and training providers, which they also fund.

A series of councils and commissions that are also answerable to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have additional functions in the regulation of vocational training, such as the **National Council for the Vocational Training of Workers**, whose role is to coordinate policy in the area of education and vocational skills training for the unemployed and those in employment.

The **Regional Employment Commissions** work out employment plans at regional level. These plans also cover vocational training for the unemployed and those in employment. The regional employment plans are then combined into the national employment plan and submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for approval.

Other ministries as the Ministry for State Administration and Administrative Reform, Ministry for Regional Development, Ministry for Agriculture and Foods are involved in the improvement of the human resources in the public and different private sectors – tourism, agriculture etc. mainly through the Operational Programmes of the EU structural funds.

A **National Higher Education Accreditation Agency (NAOA)** was set up in 1995 under the terms of the Higher Education Act, directly answerable to the Council of Ministers. Its role is to accredit higher education institutions, and to monitor and evaluate their work (and to withdraw accreditation in cases of doubt).

Local authorities:

Under the terms of the Vocational Training Act, local authorities are to be involved in framing vocational training policy by passing on information about the demand for workers in their areas so that the national training plan can be updated. This means that the local authorities provide information about how many young people in what jobs will be needed in the immediate future in the municipalities themselves, in enterprises belonging to the local authorities, and in the regional economy as a whole. Plans are then drawn up for the numbers of students in each subject in vocational schools and colleges within the area of the local authority in question.

Local authorities play a part in occupational guidance for school pupils, the unemployed and others. Furthermore, they are responsible in principle for funding vocational schools and colleges belonging to them. In practice this is of no great significance since out of the 500 vocational schools and vocational colleges in the country, only about a dozen belong to local authorities (2004 / 2005 figures). The bulk of vocational schools and vocational colleges are directly subject to the Ministry of Education and Science or other Ministries. However, the current wide range reform of the Bulgarian education system might change the role of local authorities essentially. Accordingly to the reform programme local communities shall have much more influence on questions as how many schools, what kind of schools, what kind of courses etc., including school funding. In general, decision making in the school system shall be decentralized: regional authorities, municipalities and even teachers and parents shall participate and shall have competences even concerning the budget.

Adult learning and education and other policies and strategies in place

Adult Learning and Education is being recognized as an instrument for human resource development in several strategy papers and national plans in Bulgaria. ALE is being used for employment purposes, e.g. in the National Employment Strategy for the period 2008-2015, as well as in the Annual Employment Action Plans and the National Economic Development Plan 2000-2006. Here, the main goal at which ALE is aiming is to improve the qualification level of the unemployed and employed persons and enable them to adapt to the rapidly changing working and living environment. Education and training is being regarded as instrument for improving the employment situation of the socially disadvantaged people and also for their better integration in the society.

Adult education and training is of great relevance also for the Educational Integration of Ethnic Minorities within the Strategy for Integration of the Ethnic Minorities 2005-2015. So is adult education one of the six strategic objectives of the programme: Desegregation of Roma education, Termination of arbitrary placement of Roma children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, Combating racism in the classroom, Introduction of mother-tongue education, Support of Roma university education and Adult education. Education is also the main priority in the Government's Action Plan for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015". Another important policy document tackling the educational integration of Roma is the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities¹⁸, adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science on 11 June 2004. It requires "full integration of the Roma children and students through desegregation of pre-schools and schools in segregated Roma neighbourhoods". According to the strategy, the Government provides specially trained teaching assistants in pre-schools and the first grade of primary schools. Special mention is made of "providing adult literacy for illiterate or poorly literate adult Roma" as a strategic aim.

Finally, Adult Education and Learning have a special role to play in many of the operational programmes of the EU structural funds – first of all in the OP Human Resource Development, but also in the OP Administrative Capacity, Regional Development and Agriculture.

Financing of ALE

Public investment in adult learning and education:

- **Public funding from the state budget.** This is valid for the school system (esp. vocational schools) , the cultural centres, a lot of the current programmes to retrain unemployed, etc
- Funding by European programmes, especially the pre-accession support programme Phare and the ongoing European structural funds. Concerning LLL and human resources, the European social fund is of special interest.
- Private funding through fees paid either by training participants themselves, or by the employers who want to invest in the qualification of their employees. This is especially important for the about 600 Vocational Training Centres (CPO) which have been founded, to a great extend, in order to participate in a growing adult education market.

¹⁸ Available at www.minedu.government.bg in the legal acts section (accessed September 2007)

One of the largest shares of the public budget for ALE is via the National Employment Action Plan through which every year are spent millions of leva for various education programmes. The National Employment Action Plan for 2007, for instance, has a budget of 289 million leva (148 million euros). Most of the projects covered by the plan combine employment and VET, so that it is difficult to say how much money is spent for education only. Some of the programmes in the 2007 plan that emphasize VET are as follows:

- The project “Krasíva Bălgarija” (Beautiful Bulgaria) in which unemployed get trained in a building profession while renovating public places (22 million leva, 2300 employed and 1400 trained)
- Various kinds of training courses organised by the Employment Agency in compliance with s. 63 para. 1 of the Employment Promotion Act (12 million leva, 21 000 course participants)
- Several projects financed by Phare and other donors to enhance employability by vocational education (72 million leva, 11 000 participants).

The National Employment Action Plan can regularly be accessed from the website of the Ministry of Social Policy and Labour (www.mslp.government.bg/bg/docs).

Furthermore, the National Employment Agency is implementing since 2005 a Programme called Active Labour Market Services. The programme is financing the following types of services - services to be provided under the programme are Employment Services (ES), Training and Re-training Services (TS); Small Business Support Services; Small Business Incubators; and Local Economic Development Planning (LEDP). The overall costs of the programme are 19,440,740 Lev (approx. 10 millions Euro).

Special attention is paid also to the new programme of the Ministry of Social Policy and Labour for 2008, called “Lifelong Learning and better Adaptiveness to the Labour Market”, which is funded by 176 millions of leva (88 millions of Euro).

Foreign bilateral/multilateral donor investment in adult learning and education

Funding by Phare Programme of the EU

Most of the larger projects that aim at improving Bulgarian general education and adult education during recent years were being funded –either completely, or by some kind of co-financing– by the European pre-accession programme Phare. This Programme of Community aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is the main financial instrument of the pre-accession strategy for the Central and Eastern European countries which had applied for membership of the European Union. Since 1994, Phare's tasks have been adapted to the priorities and needs of the individual countries. The revised Phare programme, with a budget of over 10 billion euros for the period 2000-2006 (about 1.5 billion euros per year), had two main priorities, namely institutional and capacity-building and investment financing.

In Bulgaria, Phare projects are being managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which has set up a special department “European funds, international programmes, and projects” (Directorate European Funds and International Programmes and Projects).

Phare programmes that have been finished are:

- BG2003/004-937.05.03 – Vocational Qualification. –This comprised 1.3 million euros for development of a needs assessment system for vocational training and for development of an adult learning strategy. Another 1.4 million euros were spent for upgrading vocational qualification standards. The overall budget of this Phare project was 3.2 million euros.
- BG0202.03 – Lifelong Learning and Vocational Education and Training. This was used chiefly in order to transform eleven vocational schools into “model schools” with up-to-date equipment. Additionally, there were several modules of continuing education for teachers. For example, 200 teachers were trained in interactive teaching methods, and another 100 in IT, each course lasting two weeks. There was also a training module for schools directors, focusing on how to strategically develop a vocational school according to market needs. The overall budget was 5.3 million euros, 4 of which from Phare, and 1.3 from the Bulgarian state budget.
- BG0102.06 – Social Integration – This project focussed on the Roma population in Bulgaria. The idea was to create twelve “Roma Culture Information Centres”, to organise literacy courses for a total of 4500 adult illiterates, and to offer additional courses for vocational qualification and entrepreneurship skills.
- BG0102.05 – Labour Market Initiatives. This project intended to fight unemployment especially of disadvantaged such as long term unemployed, women, youngsters, minority groups, etc. The idea was especially to motivate them to more actively participate in the

labour market, and to adapt to labour market needs. The project was planned to provide a bundle of initiatives such as qualification programmes, internship programmes, support businesses to create job opportunities for disadvantaged etc. One component was just to refurbish several vocational schools. Other activities concentrated on entrepreneurship skills for unemployed. The overall budget was 8.3 million euros, 6.3 of which by Phare, 2.0 by the Bulgarian state budget.

Phare programmes, concerning adult education or adult education policy in Bulgaria, that have not been finished yet:

- BG 2006/018-343.10.01 – Human Resource Development and Employment Promotion, Phase 3. (7.9 million euros).
- BG 2005/017-353.10.01 – Human Resource Development and Employment Promotion, Phase 2 – continuing vocational training and training for key competences of 54 000 people for 50 millions leva/25 millions euro), as well as fostering employment possibilities through entrepreneurship training - training of 50 000 people and 10 000 new enterprises, funded by 70 millions leva (35 millions euro)
- BG2004/006-070.05.01 – Labour Market Integration of Ethnic Minority Groups
- BG2004/006-070.05.01 – Alternative Employment.
- BG2003/004-937.05.02 – National Data Base for the Labour Market and the European Social Fund.
- BG 0202.01 – Employment Promotion for Youngsters. A scheme to support capacity and co-operation on a local level. (8 million euros, of which 6 million by Phare).

Funding by the European Social Fund – Operational Programme Human Resource Development

According to the priorities of the Operational Programme Human Resource Development, following funding possibilities related to Adult Education and Training should be stressed:

- Ensuring conditions for active employment of older people – above 50 years and for continuing education and training of unemployed people: training of 18 000 persons funded by 50 millions leva (approx. 25 millions Euro)
- Supporting and fostering the employability in branches suffering from lack of labour force – training in particular in the field of tourism, construction, metal industry and machinery, textile industry and gallantry. 20 millions leva (or 10 millions Euro) are foreseen for training of 18 000 people in the above mentioned field

- Boosting the youth employment through their long-term integration in the labour market in Bulgaria – foreign language and computer training for 10 400 youngsters under 29 years, funded by 15 millions leva (7,5 millions Euro)

Projects in the field of adult education, financed by other donors

- Project “Bulgarian-German Centres for Vocational Education“ in the towns of Stara Zagora, Pazardžik and Pleven; by the Federal Republic of Germany.
- Programme “Quick start” for inservice vocational education of workers; funded by USAID.
- Project „Vocational Education“ in the framework of the Programme for cooperation of the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the French Ministry of Employment and Solidarity”, in 2002.

The data above clearly show that the public investments of the Bulgaria government through co-funding of European and international programmes and projects are steadily growing, especially within the implementation of the Operational Programmes of the European Structural Funds.

Support to ALE form private/corporate sector

According to the data presented from the National Statistic Institute in Bulgaria and Eurostat-Continuing Vocational Training Survey for the period 2000-2005, the Bulgarian enterprises are on the second last place (26 from 27 EU Member States) in Europe for offering continuing education and training to their employees.

In this light are also the results about the investments of the Bulgarian enterprises in training - only 1.1 % of the labour costs of the enterprises in Bulgaria is allocated to training of the employees. Even more concerning is the fact that the most of the Bulgarian manager don't prepare training plans for their employees (in 2004 only 6,6% had such a training plan) and almost 80 % haven't planned in their annual budget an item for continuing vocational or other types of training. As a result only 28 % of the Bulgarian enterprises have offered continuing vocational training to their employees, and only 14,8% of the employees in Bulgaria have taken part in courses for vocational training.

Civil society support to adult learning and education

Although more than 3000 NGOs are officially registered in Bulgaria, many of them are not sustainable enough and active in their field of work only for a couple of years. For this reason it is difficult to estimate the budget of those of them dealing with Adult Education and Vocational Education and Training. Two examples will be used to illustrate the overall situation:

- The Federation of Societies for Support of Knowledge (FSSK) which is an independent organization providing services in the sphere of lifelong education, for the public benefit. It is a network uniting 30 societies from all regions of Bulgaria. Their main fields of activities are development of the civic society in Bulgaria through education in democratic values, improvement of intercultural and communication skills in the general administration and NGOs as well as better integration of ethnic minorities and other socially disadvantaged groups (e.g. disabled people) through vocational and other types of training. The annual budget of FSSK for the last three years (from 2005-2007) was appr. 300 000 leva (or 150 000 Euro)
- The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International Bulgaria) which is a nongovernmental organization in the field of adult education and vocational training, established in Bulgaria as part of the project ‘Strengthening Adult Education establishments in South Eastern Europe’. Its main activities are
 - to develop sustainable adult education structures in the country (institution building);
 - to increase general and vocational adult educational provision (in particular curriculum development and training of trainers);
 - to implement European standards of certification in computer literacy (Xpert ECP), personal and business skills (Xpert PBS), economic and entrepreneurial competences (EBC*L);
 - to promote the integration of socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups (unemployed, ethnic minorities, disabled people) by providing support with design and funding of educational measures (e.g. Second Chance Schools);
 - to encourage participatory teaching and learning (active citizenship);
 - to advice to ministries on enshrining adult education, VET and lifelong learning in legislation;

- to foster lobby and advocacy for Lifelong Learning policy in Bulgaria (e.g. DVV is organizing the Lifelong Learning Days in Bulgaria since 2001).

The annual budget of DVV International in Bulgaria, which is actually funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Foreign Office in Germany is declining every year because of the EU membership of Bulgaria – from about 160 000 Euros in 2001 to 100 000 in 2008.

QUALITY OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION: PROVISION; PARTICIPATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

Provision of ALE and institutional frameworks

When speaking about Adult Education and Learning, one should consider not only formal, but also non-formal and informal learning. Within one of the PHARE funded project the Bulgarian experts agreed on the following definitions which are in the light of the most spread in Europe Cedefop terminology:

Formal learning - Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification.

Non-formal learning - Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support).

Informal learning - Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification.

The main groups of providers of formal and non-formal learning in Bulgaria are on the one hand public educational institutions such as vocational schools, universities, public VET centres, as well as Employments Centres and on the other hand private VET centres, language

or computer schools, employers and associations/organizations, trade unions, NGOs and the enterprises which have their own training centres.

Institutions responsible for managing and co-coordinating ALE and types of ALE programmes

- **Vocational schools and vocational colleges:** 179 Vocational Secondary Schools, Vocational schools and Vocational colleges (of a total of around 500 such schools) provided continuing vocational training courses for adults in 2003. The total number of participants in vocational training courses in Vocational Secondary Schools, Vocational schools and Vocational colleges was around 14000 in the school year 2006/2007. Most students were enrolled in courses for seamstresses (around 2300), building workers (around 2000) and chefs and waiters (around 1800).

The following table is illustrating the number of enrolments of adult students in the vocational schools and colleges in 2006. Data from the previous years are showing progressive development of this type in training.

VET degree students in courses offered by Vocational <i>gimnázii</i> , Vocational schools and Vocational colleges in 2006 (outside their activity as traditional schools) ⁵						
	Enrolments			Degrees attained		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
VET Level 1	333	104	229	302	74	228
of which in private institutions	150	5	145	150	5	145
VET Level 2	181	90	91	227	71	156
of which in private institutions	52	6	46	108	5	103
VET Level 3	809	642	167	531	336	195
of which in private institutions	9	0	9	19	0	19

Compared with the numbers of enrolments and issued degrees in registered VET centres, the activity of school type institutions at the free market is relatively low. According to the NSI data, in 2006 CPO issued about 4900 VET Level 1 certificates, 4000 VET Level 2

certificates and about 1800 VET Level 3 certificates whereas the number of certificates issued by school type institutions was 303, 227 and 531.

□ **Institutions of Higher Education** - Most Bulgarian universities provide adult education in various forms, for example correspondence courses or special postgraduate courses. One widespread form of continuing education is the so called specialization or postgraduate training for people who have already been in employment after finishing a first degree. The costs of courses in different subjects are usually borne by employers, and occasionally by learners themselves. Here are a few examples of adult education provision at universities:

- A “European Centre for Lifelong Learning” has been set up at the “Černorízec Chrábăr” Free University in Varna. This aims at following the common education policy of the EU Member States, and in particular at teaching skills such as adaptability, entrepreneurial spirit and flexibility. The Centre offers a variety of initial training, skills training and retraining options and courses to update knowledge and skills previously acquired. Other services such as research, advice and marketing are also offered.¹⁹
- The “Saint Ivan of Rila” University of Mining in Sofia²⁰ established a Continuing Training Centre some years ago. It has several departments including “Training for Bulgarian Citizens”, “Training for Foreigners”, “Distance Education” and “Doctoral and Specialization Support”. The courses are covering large areas of topic from technical and specific aspects of mining through economics, education, shorthand and foreign languages.
- The private “New Bulgarian University” in Sofia (NBU)²¹ has a Continuing Education Centre offering courses for a variety of age groups. Provision ranges from skills training and retraining for adults, via the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and updating of occupational skills, to cultural continuing education. The Centre aims to respond flexibly to modern education and training needs and to specific occupational demands. Participants in initial vocational training courses are also given preparation to enable them to change jobs in response to changes in the labour market, to set up their own businesses, or for the purpose of personal development. Depending on the course, the admission requirement is satisfactory

¹⁹ See the Centre’s website at www.vfu.bg/bg/in.php?unit=III

²⁰ *Minno-geolóžki universitét „Sv. Iván Rílski“*, www.mgu.bg

²¹ *Nov bălgarski universitét*, www.nbu.bg

completion of either upper secondary or tertiary education. There are courses in Information Technologies, Management of small and medium-sized enterprises, Accountancy, Finance, etc

- The Institute of Continuing Education of the University of National and World Economy in Sofia (UNSS)²² provides continuing education and training for Bulgarian and foreign higher education graduates, with a wide range of courses on Economics, Law and Public administration. In addition, the University is licensed to provide training for the unemployed. Besides teaching, it is also engaged in publishing and consultancy²³.
 - The largest higher education institution in Bulgaria, “Saint Kliment of Ochrid” Sofia University (SU), offers postgraduate courses in fields such as Education, Humanities, Mathematics, Information Technologies, History and Philosophy. As usual with such provision, postgraduate courses are fee-paying, although practice shows that the costs are often borne by employers. The subject-matter of the courses is determined by the relevant faculty, but the content can be adapted to suit the wishes of the client. According to its own figures, Sofia University organized a total of 34 postgraduate courses in the academic year 2002/2003, and 129 “individual training courses” of private one-to-one tuition with a member of the teaching staff, paid for by the learner. There were just over 700 participants in postgraduate courses in the academic year 2002/2003, around 180 of them in Education, around 150 in Mathematics and Information Technologies, and around 120 in Philology.
- **Licensed Vocational Training Centres (CPOs)** – Based on the Vocational Education and Training Act from 1999, the first CPOs were created in 2003 and since then their number is rapidly growing. A large number of the current licensed CPOs were existing establishments, companies, training centres, voluntary associations, etc., and even include some state schools and colleges. The changing requirements of the labour market and the government policy fostered this rapid development of CPOS – thus, the government schemes for training of unemployed require a CPO licence and it has to be paid for it by the employment office. According to figures from the Employment Agency, a total of around 50 000 people (most of them unemployed) took part in 2004 in vocational

²² *Universitet za nacionalno i svetovno stopanstvo*, www.unwe.acad.bg

²³ www.ips.bg

education and training at institutions of all kinds, about a third of them in a CPO. Apart from the participants funded by employment offices, CPOs also have clients in the private sector – companies commissioning them to provide staff training – and a certain number of people paying the fees themselves, usually for courses in basic skills such as foreign languages or computing.

A glance at the register of licensed CPOs shows that they are sponsored or run by legal entities in all sections of society. These include very many small or micro enterprises providing vocational training either as their main or an additional business activity. Other operators of licensed CPOs are voluntary associations and NGOs, such as the Central Association of Cooperatives, a Jewish organization, the Confederation of Trade Unions KNSB (to be more exact, its training institute OKOM), various Znánie associations, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce, the umbrella organization of the Associations of Engineers (FNTS) etc. The 3 German Bulgarian Vocational Training Centres (BCCPO) in Stara Zagora, Pleven and Pazardjik hold CPO licences.

Most of the licences issued to date relate to construction, engineering, catering and tourism, office work and craft trades. The vocational training which can be acquired at a CPO goes up to Level 3. In order to take Level 4, it will still be necessary in future to attend an institution in the formal system, i.e. a Vocational college, since it is only these that teach Level 4. Finally, as licensed CPOs are entitled to issue officially recognised certificates on VET degrees NAVET tends to regard them as a part of formal education .

VET degree students in courses offered by Vocational Training Centres (CPO) in 2006 ²²						
	Enrolments			Degrees attained		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
VET Level 1 – in CPO overall	4651	1951	2700	4571	1909	2662
in CPO of private institutions	4147	1859	2288	4065	1814	2251
in CPO of public institutions	504	92	412	506	95	411
VET Level 2 – in CPO overall	4000	1585	2415	3819	1525	2294
in CPO of private institutions	3835	1532	2303	3677	1479	2198
in CPO of public institutions	165	53	112	142	46	96
VET Level 3 – in CPO overall	1626	640	986	1267	671	596
in CPO of private institutions	1418	517	901	950	422	528
in CPO of public institutions	208	123	85	317	249	68

- **German-Bulgarian Vocational Training Centres** – the 3 Bulgarian- German vocational training centres (BGCPOs) have been in operation since 1995/1996. They were initiated by the German Federal Government in the 1990s, and implemented by GOPA Consultants in behalf of the German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). After an initializing term, the three BGCPOs were handed over to the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in January 2001 and now they are functioning as part of the national Adult Education System, and funded accordingly by the national budget. The centres have modern training premises which suit their respective subject areas: construction technology and timber processing in Pleven, office work, business and use of computers for CAD, CNC and office procedures in Pazardžik, and metalworking, welding, motor and agricultural machinery mechanics, plumbing and orthopaedic technology in Stara Zagora. In addition to this specialist training, all 3 BGCPOs offer computer and languages courses, chiefly for the local population. The original idea of BGCPO was to offer the unemployed in particular vocational training of a European standard. Yearly, each of the 3 centres has between 1000 and 1600 students per year (full and in-service courses combined).

Currently (2008) two more vocational training centres of this type are being established. Both are intended to focus on preservice and inservice training for specialist staff working in tourism. One is in the town of Smoljan in the heart of the Rhodope mountains in Southern Bulgaria. The centre will concentrate its training activities on mountain tourism, especially alternative forms. The second centre is to be established at the Black Sea coast – most probably in Tsarevo (in the south of Burgas) in 2009.

The Employers. In-service training plans are far more common among enterprises in the public sector (21 per cent in 2002, 15 per cent in 2004) and major companies (46 per cent in 2002, 45.8 per cent in 2004) than in private businesses (7 per cent in 2002, 5.1 per cent in 2004) and micro enterprises (5 per cent in 2002, but only 2.6 per cent in 2004). In-service training is found more often in larger enterprises – 62 percent in enterprises with more than 250 employees, 34 percent in enterprises with 50 -249 employees, and only 24 percent in smaller enterprises with 10-49 employees.

The proportion of enterprises with provisional annual budgets for in-service training was 4.5 per cent in 1999, 5.2 per cent in 2002 and 4.6 per cent in 2004. Almost one in three major companies have a budget for in-service training (about 30 per cent both in 2002 and 2004), but this is the case in only very few micro enterprises (2.3 per cent of, 2.2 in 2004). Only 2.4 per cent of all enterprises had their own training centres in 1999. In 2002 it was 2.4 per cent, in 2004 only 1.3 per cent.

Concerning the types of in-service training, in 2005, of those enterprises that had any form of in-service training, 21 percent offered continuing vocational training (CVT) courses and 24 percent any other types of trainings. 58 percent out of those offering CVT courses were internal and 80 percent- external courses. 17 per cent had “CVT in work situation”, 3 per cent “planned training through job rotation or secondments”, 4 per cent through “learning/quality circles”, 5 per cent self-learning and 15 per cent attended continuing training at conferences, workshops, lectures and seminars.

Percentage of enterprises providing any other form of training, by form of training, 2005, Bulgaria

	◇ <i>total</i>
Type of training	
<i>atof</i> Any type of other forms	24
<i>ws</i> Continued vocational training in worksituation	17
<i>jrot</i> Job rotation, exchanges or secondments	3
<i>lquc</i> Learning/quality circles	4
<i>slear</i> Self-learning	5
<i>conf</i> Continued training at conferences, workshops, lectures and seminars	15

Participation in in-service training – according to the Eurostat CVTS 3 from 2005 (preliminary data), 15 per cent of all those in employment took part in in-service training, in 2002 were 11 per cent. The number of staff participating rises with the number employed by the enterprise. The proportion is appreciably higher in enterprises with more than 250 employees (18 per cent in 2002, and 2 per cent in 2005) than in micro enterprises (4 per cent in 2002 and 6 in 2005).

Percentage of employees (all enterprises) participating in CVT courses, by NACE, Eurostat 2005

Nace	geo bg Bulgaria
<i>C_to_k_o</i> All NACE branches covered by CVTS (Continuing Vocational Training)	15
<i>c_e_f_h_i</i> Mining and quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply; construction; hotels and restaurants; transport, storage and communication	19
<i>d</i> Manufacturing	13

g Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods	11
j Financial intermediation	42
k Real estate, renting and business activities	14
o Other community, social, personal service activities	8

The amount of time spent by an average participant in inservice training was 35 hours in 1999 and 30 hours in 2005. The highest number of hours was found in the social, community and personal service activities (57 hours) , followed by Real estate, renting and business activities hotels (44 hours) and mining and quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply; construction; hotels and restaurants; transport, storage and communication (26 hours).

	◇ geo	bg Bulgaria	
sizeclas			
total Total		1.1	Finally, the total expenditures of enterprises in Bulgaria for in-service training of their employees is only 1.1 percent of their total labour costs. There are also few differences according to the size of the enterprise – from 0.8 in micro enterprises to 1.3 to enterprises with 50-249 employees.
10_49 Between 10 and 49		0.8	
50_249 Between 50 and 249		1.3	
ge_250 250 or more		1.1	

Source: Eurostat, 2005

Regarding the type of sector, following differences can be observed – the most investments in training are undertaken in the real estate and financial intermediation (2,1 and 2 per cent) and the less in manufacturing (0,8 per cent), **Source: Eurostat, 2005**

	< td>	Geo	bg Bulgaria
Nace			
c_to_k_o All NACE branches covered by CVTS (Continuing Vocational Training)			1.1
c_e_f_h_i Mining and quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply; construction; hotels and restaurants; transport, storage and communication			1.1
d Manufacturing			0.8
g Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods			1.4
j Financial intermediation			2
k Real estate, renting and business activities			2.1
o Other community, social, personal service activities			0.9

As one of the important conclusions should be noted the reasons for this reluctant training policy of the Bulgarian employers:

- 82, 7 % consider the skills and competences of their employees as adequate to the needs of the enterprise
- 77,5 % prefer to hire external high qualified people than to train the internal ones
- and 34,9% stress the high costs for continuing training as the biggest obstacle for investing in training of the own employees.

□ Trade Unions

Three core associations of trade unions are recognised nationally as representing the interests of workers in Bulgaria, and take part in tripartite negotiations. The largest is KNSB (Konfederácija na nezavisimite sindikáti v Bălgárijia)²⁴, which was founded in 1990 and currently (2008) has around 380 000 members, representing 34 different sector organizations

²⁴ Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria; www.knsb-bg.org

and unions. The smaller association, which currently has 150 000 members, is Podkrépa²⁵, with 30 national (branch) trade unions. In 2004, a third association of trade unions, the Promjána Trade Union, was recognized as a national representative of employees, which means that it can participate in the tripartite negotiations. Promjána Trade Unions consists of about 20 branch organizations allocated in 28 regional structures and has, as it reports, over 50 000 members. The official name is Săjuz na sindikátite v Obedinénie “Promjana”.

The education and training activities of KNSB thus began in the early 1990s with a programme of training for trade union officials at all levels, in which around 5000 people took part. This covered the development of industrial relations - the new role of trade unions as independent representative bodies, and the rapid changes in society and legislation to which trade union officials needed to adapt, continuing vocational education and training as well as democracy training – in terms of building up active citizenship in the Bulgarian society. Courses have been increasingly opened up to participants from outside the ranks of the trade unions, such as a Master’s course in personnel management, in which only two fifths of the 240 participants were trade union members, and a Master’s course for financial experts, in which only 20 of the 120 participants were trade union members.

KNSB education and training are organized essentially by two subsidiary institutions, the “Institute for Industrial Relations and Management” (OKOM) and the Workers’ Training College (KRO). These are underpinned by a trade union social research institute, which provides background data, forecasts of needs, etc. Since 2002, OKOM has got a licence for a vocational training centre (CPO) and is entitled to provide training for around 30 occupations such as office management, secretarial work, data processing, computing, bricklaying, window-making, social work, hotel administration and insurance selling. About 600 people took part in the 52 courses that began in October 2004, some of which finished in May 2005. These courses are chiefly for the unemployed. As is customary, they are funded out of various state retraining programmes.

Podkrépa has a special department for trade union education and its basic functions is to organize the training of the members and leaders from all levels, to set up programs, training materials and equipment, etc. to coordinate the training process etc.

²⁵ Konfederácija na trudá „Podkrépa“, www.podkrepa.org. The name means “support”.

□ Training in Craft Trades

Training for craft trade apprentices is governed by the Trades Act and the several regulations of the Bulgarian Chamber of Craft Trades²⁶, which are drawn up in consultation with the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAPOO). The list of craft trades, as defined by the Act, comprise 127 vocations which are divided into the following groups:

- Building and restoration
- Electrotechnics and metalworking
- Processing of timber and other materials
- Sewing, textiles and leatherworking
- Production of foodstuffs and drinks
- Media, advertising and communication
- Health and hygiene services
- Glass and ceramic processing
- Artistic crafts

According to older Bulgarian and other European traditions there are three stages of craft trades training - apprentice (čirák), journeyman (kálfa) and master (májstor). According to the Act, apprentices must be at least 16 years old. Apprenticeship training consists of practical and theoretical parts and ends with an examination called journeyman examination, organised by the Regional Chamber of Craft Trades (RZK) twice a year. Teaching programmes are set up by the National Chamber of Craft Trades (NZK). To this end, the NZK creates expert commissions that consist of masters of the given trade, representatives of the respective trade associations, of the NZK, and other experts. Apprenticeship training lasts at least three and at most four years. A master's certificate can only be awarded by the National Chamber of Craft Trades (NZK). A master must have lengthy experience of the trade, the appropriate practical skills and the necessary knowledge of several fields of theory as entrepreneurship, general commercial and staff management skills and pedagogy. These skills are tested by means of a master examination. According to Trades Act, the NZK can issue a master's certificate to those who have completed secondary or higher education in an appropriate vocation. This is the way how most of the current master certificates have been issued, given the short time of existence of the craft trade organisation (since 2005). In May 2005 the Chamber of Craft

²⁶ *Nacionálna zanajatčijska kámara, NZK, www.nzkb.org*

Trades suggested a figure of about 7000 master's certificates issued. In view of the fact that the craft trades organization was only just being set up, this was a considerable number. In April 2007, a Chamber representative put the number of registered master's at an estimate 10 000 or more, and the number of crafts enterprises at 7000. Most masters were haircutters, beauticians, masseurs, car mechanics, opticians, bakers, tailors, electrical engineering technicians, jewellers and watchmakers.

According to the estimated data of the Chamber of Craft around 300 people were in some kind of craft trade apprenticeship at the beginning of 2005. Most of them were not a regular apprenticeship as is anticipated in the legislation (i.e., a contract for a three to four-year apprenticeship leading directly to a journeyman examination), but was restricted to a seven-month training programme funded by a state employment scheme to retrain unemployed adults. Only a small proportion were young people or young adults of typical apprenticeship age. The seven-month courses ended with a certificate. As NZK officials said, the idea was that those completing these courses could – if they wished – subsequently continue training up to the journeyman examination, depending of course on the availability of such training places. In April 2007, things had already developed. Craft Trades representatives said that about 700 young people currently were registered as employed following apprenticeship schemes. The Chamber expected that most of them would pass the journeyman examination in 2007 or the following years. About two thirds of them were of the three craft trades manicurist/pedicurist, beautician and haircutter. Other popular trades were car mechanic and the various trades dealing with textile processing. A positive impact on the number of registered apprentices had been made by a new regulation which provided tax relief for enterprises in some of the craft trades when employing apprentices. The craft trades organisations do a lot work in order to really become an important factor in vocational education in Bulgaria.

Recently, a new Strategy for Craft Trades Training 2006-2008 has been adopted by the Chambers of Craft Trades. The purpose of the strategy is to help develop the system of craft trades training by creating the necessary concepts, methodology, activity plans for a quality training in craft trades. The strategy defines five priorities, each of them with up to nine more concrete activities, to be undertaken in 2006-2008.

1. Improving the co-operation of the institutions involved in craft trade training (in particular with the vocational schools for solving the current situation of competition, capacity building and better co-operation in the sector)
2. Creating the preconditions for quality education in craft trades. (e.g. qualify masters who train apprentices, to issue all necessary documents, and to take care that Bulgarian craft trades certificates are recognized all over Europe.)
3. Providing for more investments in crafts enterprises that offer craft trades training (e.g. the Chambers want to agree with the state institutions to encourage more unemployed to participate in craft trades training; new tax regulations to motivate crafts enterprises to employ more apprentices and journeymen; training for the manager of the enterprises)
4. Improving the accessibility of craft trades training. (improve horizontal and vertical mobility, especially concerning mobility between the craft trades and the vocational schools; special attention shall be put on disadvantaged as possible target group for training in craft trades; an information system on supply and demand of training in craft trades will be created, as well as means for distance learning, concerning the theoretical part of training.)
5. Improving information on training in craft trades, and academic support (create a methodology of training in craft trades, and implement it; masters who train apprentices shall get methodological support; teaching material shall be provided which can be used for self-directed learning of masters, journeymen and apprentices).

□ **Cultural Centres “Čitálišta”**

The Bulgarian cultural centres are self-governing cultural and educational institutions with a separate legal status, which tradition is going back to the 19th century. Their activities expanded with the years and laid the foundation for many aspects of modern cultural life in Bulgaria, including music and museums. The cultural centres nowadays are facing the task of finding new ways of operating. The more active cultural centres are now once again in effect independent adult education institutions which are combined into several national networks. They are governed by the National Cultural Centres Act. They usually work very closely with the local authorities, especially concerning funding and staffing.

Number of <i>čitálišta</i> and <i>čitálište</i> Members ⁶²				
	1998	1999	2000	2005
<i>Čitálišta</i> overall	3 125	3 056	3 027	2 838
in towns	514	510	511	539
in villages	2 611	2 546	2 516	2 299
Members	191 000	180 000	170 000	164 000
in towns	86 000	81 000	74 000	68 000
in villages	105 000	99 000	96 000	96 000

The activities of the *čitálišta* varies hugely, from village cultural centres which serve as little more than bases for choirs that keep up folk singing via more active cultural centres running children's dance groups, brass bands or Art schools and playing an important part in planning local festivals, to large cultural institutions. Some particularly modern cultural centres are active in the field of regional development, taking the initiative, for example, in the introduction of pedestrian traffic lights and wheelchair ramps.

According to data provided by the National Statistics Institute, in 2005, the *čitálišta* had about 2000 folklore groups, 1800 music groups and 1500 dance groups, 520 theatre groups and about 7500 other groups of various amateur activity. Additionally there were about 50 000 cultural events organised by the *čitálišta*, not counting the activities of the aforesaid groups. Compared to this impressive number of cultural activities and events, the more specifically teaching branch of *čitálišta* activity is organizing about 330 language courses, 440 music classes and 150 ballet classes all over Bulgaria.

Cultural centres are funded from membership subscriptions, cultural events, renting out of premises, and donations. According to the legal provisions, cultural centres provide "basic local cultural facilities" free of charge. This applies to activities such as folk dance, singing, etc. They may charge fees for other provision, such as the use of the library, language courses or of course vocational training, where this is offered. In practice, however, the largest proportion of *čitálišta* budgets is accounted for by state grants (via the Ministry of Education) and the local authority which covers staff salaries. In 2005, the *čitálišta* have spent about 35 million Leva (18 million Euro). Revenues in 2005 were 36,5 million Leva (18,7

million Euro), of which 27 million Leva (13,8 mio. Euro) were provided by the state budget, and 2,3 million Leva (1,2 million Euro) were revenues from non commercial (cultural etc.) activities. Such earnings were supported, until the beginning of 2007, by a general tax exemption for čitálišta, concerning their “core activities” which has however abolished in the budget in 2007. The Parliament has entitled local municipalities to impose taxes in order to support čitálišta. These changes are part of an overall process of decentralization, following EU requirements. Some of the bigger cultural centres have also started applying for project funding from international organizations.

Encouragement for Modernization from the “Čitálišta Project”. An international project launched in 2000 gave considerable impetus to the cultural centre system in Bulgaria. This was known as “Social Development and Civic Involvement through the Cultural Centre Network”, the “Proekt čitálišta”²⁷ for short, and it ran for three years until the end of 2004. It was sponsored by the Ministry of Education and funded by a series of international organizations (USAID, UNDP, MATRA), which contributed a combined total of 2.5 million US dollars. A coordination office was set up in Sofia, with six regional offices in the provinces. The aim was to strengthen the role of cultural centres as traditional education centres in Bulgaria, and to modernize them so that they could make an input to regional development. The initiators sought support from the local authorities, NGOs and the regional economy. 300 cultural centres were entitled to participate in all project activities and calls for tenders. Another 600 cultural centres had access to a restricted range of activities. The cultural centres taking part could apply for financial support for their activities. Modern methods of working in the cultural centre environment were also promoted by means of model projects. In addition, a training and advice system for cultural centres was introduced. After the end of the Project in 2004 the office coordinating the project was transformed into an independent foundation which continues to work towards the same ends, and the range of cultural centres participating is no longer restricted²⁸. In principle, any cultural centre may join.

□ Programmes to Promote Employment – Employment Agency

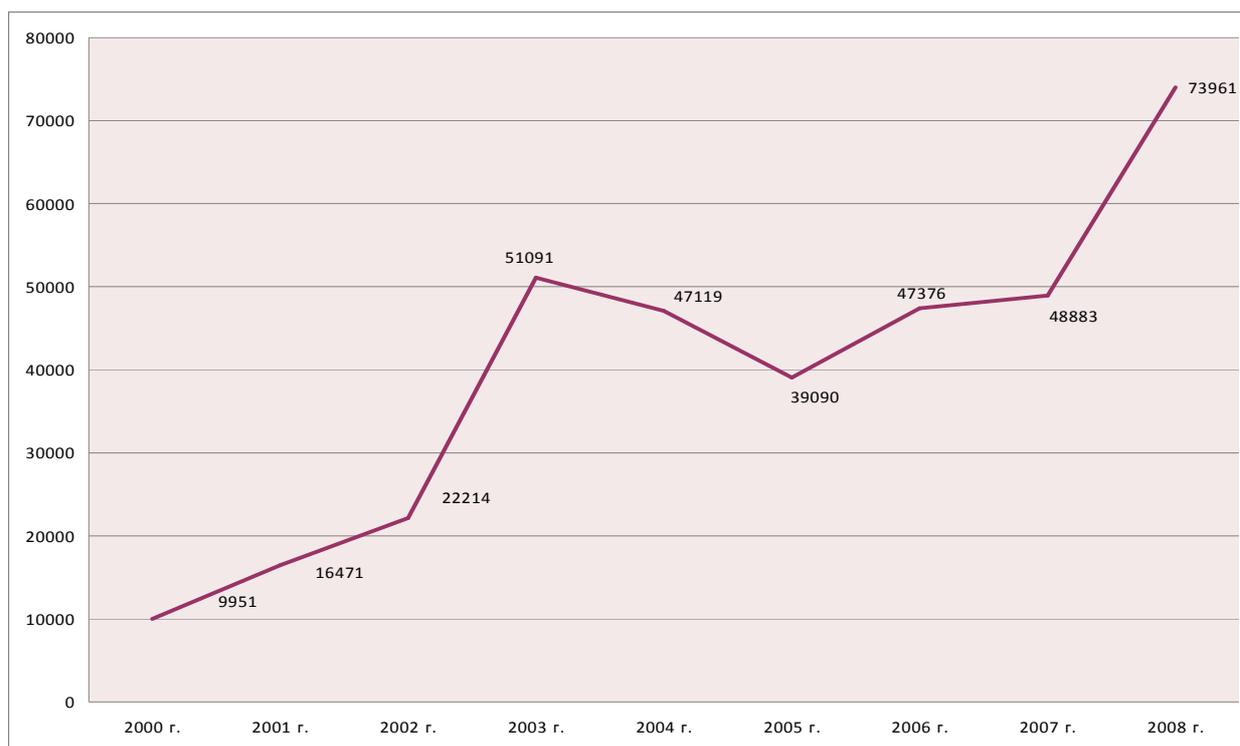
In the recent years, a big share of the adult education marked is dominated by courses to train or retrain unemployed, or to help people who are actually in employment sustain their

²⁷ the project website of *Proekt čitálišta* at www.chitalishte.bg.

²⁸ *Fondácija za razvitie „Čitálišta”*, based in Sofia. Website at www.chitalishte.bg

employability for the future. There are many programmes and projects financed by the Bulgarian government or via the Bulgarian government by international donors (the most important donor is the EU by its Phare programme), which aim at improving the employability of target groups such as youth, long term unemployed, women, people from ethnic minorities etc. The National Employment Action Plan 2007, f.e. lists 53 such projects and programmes - from very small ones up to the 40 million leva (20 million Euro) programme "From Social Benefits to Ensuring Employment". Most of those programmes are managed by the Employment Agency and its subdivisions - Employment offices. Not all of the programmes concentrate on training and qualification, but most have at least a training and qualification module.

The Employment Agency plays the main role in vocational training for the unemployed by commissioning courses from local education and training providers. In 2004 there were, according to the government report, about 32 000 unemployed participating in VET courses paid for by programmes that were managed by the Employment Agency. Additionally, there were about 13 300 participants in courses for people who are actually employed, but were supposed to need support to sustain their employability. Thus, the overall number of participants was about 45 000. The Employment Agency spent about 27 million leva (13.8 million euros) on the programmes. About a third of the courses were actually provided by Vocational schools, Vocational Secondary Schools or Vocational colleges (about 14 000 participants). The remaining courses were largely held by licensed Vocational training centre (CPOs). Some also completed a placement in an enterprise. The latest figures from 2008 are showing growing numbers of participants in training activities (both for unemployed and employed), funded the Active Employment Policy of the Bulgarian Government for the period 2000-2008 (Source: NSI)



The most important target group of the programmes are young adults. In 2005, 47.9 per cent of the participants were 29 years of age or younger. 4.5 per cent belonged to the target group of people over 55 years of age. 67.9 per cent of the participants were women. 55.6 per cent had completed secondary education, 16.3 per cent higher education. The most frequent training were computer courses, and trainings for cooks, pastry cooks, accountants, hairdressers, bakery workers, waiters and bartenders. Foreign languages is a constantly important subject as well.

Another activity line of the Employment Agency takes place in co-operation with employers. In 2005 the Agency organised training courses for about 5300 employees of micro and small enterprises, basically when the companies changed or reduced their production. This kind of training is financed one half each by the state budget and by the companies themselves.

Several important conclusions about the employment programmes in Bulgaria should be stated:

- The training of unemployed and employed people was organized along the following priorities: developing basic(key) competences and skills of the young people in order to increase their adaptiveness to the changing labour market and flexibility; reducing the number of the young school drop-outs; increasing accessibility of lifelong learning opportunities for all types of adults – e.g. those in permanent contracts, older people etc.

- There is a trend of stronger interest among the unemployed and esp. Younger people towards vocational training, which is business- and ICT-oriented.
- The steady increasing number of trained people (both unemployed and employed) are mostly due to the growing share of the national budget allocated to this type of training, as well as due to the growing interest of the unemployed to improve their chances for professional realization and competitiveness on the labour market.
- Introducing the apprenticeship system after professional qualification courses in 2003 has proved its added value to improving the relation between the vocational training and its implementation in the practice
- The increasing share of trained young unemployed in the total number of trained unemployed is a very positive result of the current active employment policy of the government
- There is a stable tendency that biggest share of the trained unemployed is those with secondary education. This can be explained with their motivation for improvement of their professional qualification or acquiring new profession for better realization on the labour market.

□ **Grundtvig Programme for Adult Learning**

The Grundtvig Programme for Adult Learning in the framework of the Lifelong Learning programme of the EU 2007 -2013 promotes the development of adult learning and education in Bulgaria. The Grundtvig Programme is being applied in Bulgaria for 7 years now (from 2001 on) and supports the Grundtvig Learning Partnership which are small-scale co-operation activities between organisations working in the field of adult education in the broadest sense. The budget allocated to the Grundtvig Programme in Bulgaria is relatively low compared to the other three sectoral programmes – Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Erasmus. Nevertheless, the programme is becoming more and more popular in the field of the adult learning providers in Bulgaria, and approximately 100 organizations are applying each year for grants under the programme, as well over 100 adult trainers and educators are applying for individual mobility (courses for further qualification in another EU member state).

In a Grundtvig Learning Partnership trainers and learners from at least three participating countries work together on one or more topics of common interest to the co-operating organisations. This exchange of experiences, practices and methods contributes to an

increased awareness of the varied European cultural, social and economic scene, and to a better understanding of areas of common interest. The participating organisations are encouraged to monitor and evaluate their transnational work and to interconnect it with the initiatives of their local community. They are also encouraged to cooperate with organisations and authorities at the national level, to ensure a sound basis for their ideas and activities and open up channels for dissemination. This will maximise the value of the transnational exchange, promote the circulation of good practice, and thus ensure the wider impact of results.

Some of the concrete objectives of the Grundtvig programme in Bulgaria are:

- to improve and update the learning content, training methodology and learning materials for adults towards better compliance of the education and training provision with the labour market requirements, or to make it shorter – to provide adults with key competences, knowledge and know-how corresponding to the needs of the labour market,
 - to assist people from vulnerable social groups and in marginal social contexts, in particular older people and those who have left education without basic qualifications, in order to give them alternative opportunities to access adult education and to find professional realization;
 - to improve the qualification level of the teachers and trainers of adults as well as the management of adult education organisations,
 - to elaborate new methodologies for assessing and validating learning outcomes, in particular those acquired through non –formal and informal learning.
- **NGOs, foundations and associations**, governed by the Associations Act, regulating the legal status of non-profit organizations in Bulgaria. Since it is not possible to present the work of all NGOs in Bulgaria dealing with adult education and lifelong learning, only some of them – the biggest national wide will be shortly describes in terms of their training activities and target groups.
- **Znanie Association** - is one of the largest networks of associations involved in adult education in Bulgaria, called “Federation of Societies for Support of Knowledge”²⁹ (FSSK). It is the umbrella organization for 30 regional associations and are usually called “Znánie associations” for short. The network is influenced by the German Volkshochschulen. The Znánie

²⁹ of the umbrella organisation at www.fssk-bg.org/index_bg.html

associations are today registered as being of public benefit under Bulgarian law. The Federation and its member associations provide a wide range of courses, seminars and other educational activities in such areas as languages and computing, business, book-keeping, banking, agriculture, tourism, culture, retraining, certification systems, vocational training and in-service training for teachers. Courses on human rights, environmental protection, public service, etc. are also organized. Every year, the Znanie associations run about 900 to 950 courses of varying length in various fields. The number of participants is between 13 000 and 4 000. Some of the Znanie associations have also been licensed by the NAVET to run a vocational training centre (CPO). This entitles them to offer vocational courses and to issue the relevant certificates. 2007 Znanie Association got the award of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for a training institution that has trained the highest number of unemployed and ensured their employability in 2007.

- **Associations of Engineers** – The associations of engineers (scientific – technical associations), form another network. They are brought together under an umbrella federation, FNTS (Federation of the scientific – technical associations³⁰) The members of this federation and its member associations are not only engineers but also entrepreneurs, academics, farmers, technicians, students, etc. The Federation currently has 19 national and 33 regional associations, together with their subordinate organizations, societies, etc. The Federation thus has over 22 000 members throughout the country (as at May 2005).

FNTS takes part in the adult education market through its own vocational training centre, which was set up in 2002. Its NAVET licence covered in 2005 over 100 different occupations, largely in the area of technology, and recently also in agriculture and construction. The centre expects heavy demand for training in agricultural occupations as a result of Bulgaria's accession to the EU. The anticipated financial aid for farmers from the EU will require considerable knowledge or experience of application procedures, in which area FNTS sees a gap in the market. An important field of the Federation's recent work was training for the construction industry, associated with the job creation and regional development programme "Beautiful Bulgaria" (Krasiva

³⁰ See the Federation's own website www.fnts-bg.org. The licence is published there, and can also be seen on the NAPOO website, www.navet.government.bg

Bălgarija), which provided work on public building projects for the unemployed, particularly in provincial towns and cities, with the aim of initiating longer-term employment.

The courses are in principle organized independently by the member associations of FNTS. The role of the staff in the Sofia head office concerned with managing the CPO is to develop syllabuses and methodology, to develop international contacts, and to monitor quality. In the first year of actual operation of the CPO (2004), around 500 vocational courses, 200 languages courses and 400 other courses, generally short courses, were arranged by the Sofia head office and the total of 29 training establishments, with an enrolment of 13 500 learners, said FNTS officials in our interviews in 2005.

A typical course in the vocational training programme covers 300 to 360 hours of tuition. Either participants pay for courses themselves, or they are paid for by their employers, and experience to date suggests that the numbers of the two groups are about equal. It is noticeable that it is chiefly younger participants who pay their own costs, and that they are more interested in acquiring a formal qualification than older learners.

- **International organizations:** The projects funded by the European Union, the Open Society Institute³¹, the Foundation for Reform of Local Government³², the US Agency for International Development (USAID)³³, The German Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Associations (dvv international)³⁴ the Dutch *Samenwerkende Fondsen Midden- en Oost-Europa*, the United States Institute for Sustainable Communities³⁵, the Roma Education Fund³⁶ and the Bulgarian Government “Rehabilitation and Social Integration” programme have the following aims:
 - To promote tolerance and understanding between ethnic groups, races, nationalities, religions, cultures, groups from differing social backgrounds, minorities, etc., who may be the victims of discrimination

³¹ Fondácia „otvorené občestvo“, www.osi.bg

³² Fondácia za reformu v miestnoto samouprávlénie, FRMS, www.flgr.bg

³³ www.usaid.gov

³⁴ www.dvv-international.de

³⁵ Co-operating Netherlands Foundations for Central and Eastern Europe, www.cooperatingnetherlandsfoundations.nl. From 2005 they are represented in Bulgaria by the Tulip Foundation (Fondácia Jále), www.tulipfoundation.net

³⁶ www.romaeducationfund.hu

- To promote the civil society, i.e., active participation by all citizens in the community

The implementation of these projects includes the following activities:

- Organizing seminars, conferences, lectures and courses for teachers, trainers, social workers, journalists, in order to make use of experience already gained in other regions and countries
- Publishing books and other materials to disseminate ideas such as tolerance, the values of the multicultural society, equal opportunities, human rights, etc.
- Organizing cultural, social and other events

□ **“Partners Bulgaria” Foundation**

Supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the foundation Partners Bulgaria launched – as one of its activities – a programme for interethnic integration in Bulgaria in 2000³⁷.

□ **“A Second Chance” Project for Adult Literacy**

The project was funded by the Phare “Social Integration” programme and implemented by the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (dvv international, Bulgaria³⁸). The project was launched in May 2003 and had the aim of teaching unemployed Roma to read and write. To this end, ten three-month courses were organized in consultation with the Ministry of Education. These courses were held in local schools, which provided both accommodation and teachers. A total of 150 people aged between 16 and 25 years, living in four towns, attended the literacy programme. Besides the teacher, each group had the services of a special assistant teacher, who was where possible a member of the Roma minority. The participants agreed to a “learning contract” and received an allowance for regular attendance at the course.

In 2006, dvv international continued this “Roma education” line of activities with a series two-years-courses for Roma who wanted to take a certificate of upper secondary education. On completion, they are awarded the standard middle education certificate.

More information on the work of dvv international in Bulgaria concerning general support to adult education development can be read in the internet at www.dvv-international.org, the homepage of the Bulgarian dvv branch, or from www.inebis.org, the website presenting dvv international’s South East European activities.

³⁷ Bulgarian name: Fondácija Partn’óri-Bălgáríja (FNB), www.partnersbg.org

³⁸ www.dvv-international.org

□ National Programme for Adult Literacy and Qualification of Roma

Since 2006, the National Programme for Literacy and Vocational Training of Roma People is being implemented on the labour market. The overall aim of the project is to support the employability of illiterate and unemployed adults. Since adult illiteracy is a problem chiefly of the Roma in Bulgaria, almost all participants were Roma. The project used a double approach, comprising an adult literacy module (held in 2006) and, as a second step, a vocational education (VET) module. Initial literacy courses are financed under the programme as a first step towards training for the first degree of professional qualification in professions currently sought on the labour market. In 2007 about 2500 young had achieved literacy and had improved their employment chances by vocational training. In 2008 1,500 people will be trained under the programme. To this end, the programme combined the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Employment Agency and its local sections, the municipalities, the school authorities and NGOs. DVV international was responsible to train the teachers and course providers in adult education methods. The programme is included in the national budget of the above mentioned institutions.

According to the project plan, the adult literacy module had a budget of 1.65 million leva (that is 660 leva or 320 Euro for each of the planned 2500 participants). VET courses were additionally financed by the appropriate regular state programmes. 17 000 leva were the contribution of dvv international (figures for 2006).

□ Development Programme of the National Council for Cooperation in Ethnic and Demographic Affairs

The project “Urbanization and Social Development of Regions with a Predominance of Minority Populations“ is run by the “Council for Cooperation in Ethnic and Demographic Affairs”³⁹. The project is a government programme and is funded by the Bulgarian Government, the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the EU support programme for candidate countries (Phare 2002) with a budget of around 6 million Euro. The overall aim is to improve living conditions in regions inhabited predominantly by minorities. The

³⁹ NCEDI - <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/> The council was created in late 2004. It meets several times a year in order to discuss new legislation etc. Its chairman was at first a minister without portefeuille, and now one of the vice minister presidents. Members are vice ministers of the 12 ministries, representatives of the National Statistics Institute, the five state agencies, the Bulgarian academy of Science, the Municipalities’ association, of NGOs and practitioners working in the minority and ethnic sector.

main objectives are job creation and the promotion of social integration. The project funds 50 courses for jobs in the construction industry, each with 20 participants from the minorities. While the courses are running, all participants receive an allowance and in some cases travel expenses. Motivated participants are selected by interview at the local employment office. Those successfully completing the course receive a certificate of vocational skills. The number and types of courses in each area are determined by local needs.

Participation in ALE

Statistical data on participation

Gender and age. Women participate more in educational activities than men. Differences between the genders can be observed both among adults of working age (25 to 64 years) and among young people and young adults (15 to 24 years of age). Among people aged 45 years and over, participation in educational activities declines sharply and reaches its lowest level (6.5 per cent) in the age group 55 years and over. EU25 average in all these figures is about two to three times higher.

Level of education. There is a strong correlation between level of previous education and continuing educational activity (see table on p.52). Participation in educational activities by those who have completed higher education is three times as high (45.2 per cent for the age group 25 to 64 years) as among those who only completed upper secondary education (12 per cent). A difference is also apparent between the different levels of vocational upper secondary education. Those who completed Level 3 of vocational education are more active (14 per cent) than those who completed Level 2 (10 per cent). The lower the level of education, the larger the discrepancy with EU25 average. For example, people with completed secondary education in an EU25 average participate by 68.7 per cent in any educational activity, in Bulgaria 45.2 per cent. People with completed secondary education as highest educational level participate by 44.2 per cent in EU25, but only by 12.2 per cent in Bulgaria.

Unemployed/employed. Employment status has a considerable influence on people's educational activity. Participation by those in employment (22 per cent) is twice as high as among the unemployed (11 per cent) and nearly four times as high as among the non-working

population 5 (5.7 per cent). Comparison with EU25 data, however, shows again that Bulgaria is far behind, usually by a factor of 2 or 3 or even more.

Participation in educational activities (overall) by level of education and employment status (2003), percentages, Bulgaria and EU25									
Level of education	Age group 25-64 years								
	Total		Employed		Unemployed		Inactive		
	BG	EU25	BG	EU25	BG	EU25	BG	EU25	
Tertiary (ISCED 5 and 6)	45.2	68.7	51.6	71.2	31.7	67.2	17.8	51.5	
Secondary (ISCED 3 and 4)	12.2	44.2	13.9	46.8	10.6	45.2	7.9	34.5	
Lower (ISCED 2 or below)	1.8	23.1	2.9	27.0	?	25.3	1.0	17.3	
Total	16.1	42.5	22.1	48.0	10.6	40.6	5.7	27.5	

Urban / rural. Place of residence is a factor which has a crucial impact on people's motivation to take part in educational activities. Participation among those in employment living in towns and cities is 26 per cent, three times as high as participation among those in employment living in rural areas. The differences between the unemployed living in urban and rural areas are equally marked. In towns and cities, 13 per cent of the unemployed take part in educational activities, while this figure is only just over 4 per cent in rural areas. The non-working population and those living in rural areas show the lowest participation in educational activities, only 1.7 per cent.

Of course, there are differences between participation in formal and non-formal learning activities which will be shown in details in the following sections.

Participation by the population aged 25 to 64 years in educational activities (2003) by labour force status and category of local unit, percentages					
	Overall	Labour force			Non-working population
		Overall	Employed	Unemployed	
Overall	16.1	20.7	22.1	10.6	5.7
Urban	20.2	24.6	26.1	13.4	8.0
Rural	5.7	8.3	9.1	3.5	1.7

Participation of adult learners in the formal education and training systems

Adult Learners in School System

Since programmes of formal education (i. e. the traditional school system) are initially created for young people (namely those of typical school and student age, between 7 and 24 years), adult participants tend to be an exception there. Particularly in the lower stages of education, they are only a handful of cases, in Bulgaria and elsewhere. Inside the traditional Bulgarian education system, **vocational education and training for adults** at ISCED Levels 1, 2 and 3 are provided in a few schools such as the schools in prisons. Additionally, some general and Vocational schools and Vocational Secondary Schools offer evening courses and distance learning for adults. The number of participants is far from considerable. The following approximate numbers of adults aged 25 years and over were enrolled (students in the traditional form) in 2003/2004 (source, NSI):

- in general education schools 600
- in special schools⁴⁰ - 25
- in Vocational Schools and Vocational Secondary Schools - 300
- in Vocational Colleges - 1000

People of working age may currently take continuing courses at ISCED Levels 4C in 13 Vocational colleges, and at Levels 5A and 6 in 50 colleges of vocational higher education, 41 of them attached to university- type institutions, the remaining 9 being independently organised. Courses for ISCED Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the formal education system use the same teaching programmes. There are no special programmes for the vocational training of adults, when they enrol in normal schools. Upon successful completion of the course, every student receives the same certificate of the appropriate level of general education plus the vocational qualification attained, regardless of age.

Adult Learners in Courses Leading to a VET Degree, Outside Traditional School Attendance

School enrolment is not the only way for adults to take a degree from a school. Especially the vocational schools (chiefly Vocational gimnázii and Vocational colleges) have started, to enter the education market. They do not need a special licence for this. Vocational gimnázii, Vocational Schools and Vocational Colleges (profesionálni koléži) altogether had, in 2006,

⁴⁰ For students with special pedagogical needs – e.g. for those with mental disabilities, hearing loss, behavioural disturbances, etc

exactly 1323 enrolments for courses (outside the traditional task of the schools) leading to a certificate Level 1, 2 or 3 of the national VET system. They have issued in that year 1060 such certificates. This is not overwhelmingly much, particularly when compared with the number of participants in courses for VET Level 1, 2 and 3 offered by the newcomer in the education system, the Vocational Training Centres (CPO). CPOs had 11600 enrolments and about 10700 degrees issued in 2006.

Adult Learners in Higher Education Institutions

Relatively many people of working age (25-64 years of age) are enrolled in university type institutions. In Bulgaria, in 2003/2004, there were about 53 000 such students on Bachelor's and Master's courses, 3900 in independent colleges of vocational higher education and vocational university courses, and just over 4600 studying for doctorates. Thus, a total of around 63 300 students aged between 25 and 64 years were enrolled in the formal education system, accounting for 1.5 per cent of the population of that age, and 5.1 per cent of the learners. (The overall number of students (without respect to age) in ISCED 5 and 6 in Bulgaria was 228 000 in 2003/2004 and 243 000 in 2005/2006).

Adult Learners Participating in Non-formal Education

According to the Cedefop definitions of non-formal learning (see Chapter 2.1.) and the figures of Eurostat from 2007, Only 1.7 percent of the Bulgarians in working age between 25 and 64 years take part in non-formal learning activities.

Participation by the population aged 25 to 64 years in non-formal education (2003) by gender and level of education in Bulgaria (2003) ²⁰						
Level of education	Number in 1000s			Percentage		
	Overall	Men	Women	Overall	Men	Women
Tertiary (ISCED 5 and 6)	38.9	14.1	24.8	4.3	4.0	4.5
Secondary (ISCED 3 and 4)	29.6	13.9	15.8	1.4	1.2	1.6
Lower Secondary (ISCED 2) or below	2.0	1.5	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.1
Total	70.5	29.5	41.1	1.7	1.4	1.9

The study from 2003 shows some further interesting trends:

- The amount of time devoted to non-formal education is relatively high: every person taking part in non-formal education in the year preceding the study had an average of 84 hours of tuition.
- Participation in non-formal education was in most cases (60 per cent) associated with a current or prospective job. The remaining 40 cent were taking part in continuing education for personal or social reasons.
- The largest numbers of participants motivated by employment were found in science, mathematics and computing (20 per cent), followed by social sciences, economics and law (18 per cent) and foreign languages (15 per cent).
- Among participants in foreign language courses, purely private motivation was relatively common (28 per cent).

If participation in non-formal education by the population aged 25 to 64 years is looked at by employment status, no essential differences can be seen between the employed (2.0 per cent) and the unemployed (2.6 per cent). The lowest figure, which is difficult to record statistically because of the small number of cases, would appear to be for participation by the non-working population (under 1 percent).

	◇ geo eu25 European Union (25 countries)	bg Bulgaria
wstatus		
pop Total population	16.8	1.7
emp Employment	20.6	2
une Unemployment	13.5	2.6
inact Inactive population	5.6	0.8

Working Age Population and Informal Learning

According to the Cedefop definition, informal or “self-directed learning” means acquisition of new knowledge and skills that is initiated and organized by the learner. Self-directed learning takes place without a teacher and outside the formal education system, and is not based on non-formal education and training provision. It employs all possible methods, such as reading

of books, journals or instructions, use of the internet for educational purposes, use of teaching programmes on radio and television, visiting a library, and so on. Accordingly, when the European and Bulgarian survey on Lifelong learning in 2003 was made, the questionnaire that was used for the interviews contained the following question: “During the last 12 months did you use any of the following methods for self-learning (outside the regular education and organized courses, seminars, etc.) with the purpose to improve your skills? Reading of any printed materials like professional books, textbooks, magazines, handbooks, etc. (yes / no)? Making use of information from the internet with purpose to improve your skills (yes / no)? Purposeful watching of educational TV programs; making use of audio or videotapes, CD-ROMs with educational purpose (yes / no)?” However, the respondents were not asked the extent to which they had made use of these.

Bulgarians are passive concerning informal (or self-directed) learning. In the 2003 Lifelong learning study, one of three “average Europeans” (of the EU25) throughout most age groups said that he or she had been using informal education during the last 12 months, but only one of six Bulgarians did so.

Again, there is no significant difference between men and women, and the enthusiasm for self directed learning declines with the increasing age. Other Relevant factors which are influencing the participation rates are the place of residence and the educational attainment. The proportion of self-directed learners is (according to the survey) four times as high among those living in urban areas as among those in rural areas. This reflects both low interest in education among people in rural areas and fewer opportunities.

Self-directed learning between the ages of 25 and 64 years by gender and level of education (2003) ²⁶						
Level of education	Number in 1000s			Percentage		
	Overall	Men	Women	Overall	Men	Women
Tertiary (ISCED 5 and 6)	395.8	159.0	236.9	44.1	45.3	43.4
Secondary (ISCED 3 and 4)	239.7	129.3	110.4	11.3	11.6	11.0
Lower Secondary (ISCED 2) or below	20.3	12.4	7.9	1.6	2.0	1.3
Overall	655.7	300.6	355.1	15.4	14.4	16.4

Furthermore, it is natural, that interest in self-directed learning is much stronger among people with high levels of education that have a strong tendency to pursue such learning. Over 44 per cent of those who had completed higher education stated that they had used methods of self-directed learning. Among those who had completed upper secondary education, this proportion was 11.3 per cent, and among those with basic schooling or less, only 1.6 per cent. It is obvious that a higher level of education increases readiness to pursue self-directed learning. The low involvement in self-directed learning among the unemployed and those with low levels of education demonstrates both that they are lesser motivated, and that they lack of practice and familiarity with self-directed learning. In some cases, such as among the rural population, limited material resources are a reason, too.

As decided in the frame of the updated employment strategy for Bulgaria 2008-2015, all stakeholders should join their efforts and work together towards progress in several dimensions (so called benchmarks)

	2007	2015
Participation in LLL activities (25-64 years' aged)	1.5 %	7 %
School drop out rate	16.6 %	10 %
Share of the 22 years' old with completed upper secondary education	85.1 %	87 %

Monitoring & evaluating programmes and assessing learning outcomes

Tools and mechanisms for monitoring & evaluating learning programmes and learners' achievements

Assessing learning outcomes is crucial for any educational undertaking. Measuring the outcomes of adult education is, however, complex as outcomes relate to a wide range of aspects such as personal development, socio-economic and cultural factors and involves both competences and attitudes. For this reason this section should cover a comprehensive

monitoring and evaluation perspective taking into account the programmatic and individual level.

A key factor to achieve the objectives of the national policy is the availability of information on implementation results and the impacts of the policy, on which to base managerial decisions in this area. The full monitoring and evaluation includes:

- **Ex-ante evaluation** of new programs and initiatives in view to achieve better quality proposals and an improved focus of actions proposed. Depending on the available information the ex-ante evaluation include various elements such as: causes for the emergence of a given problem; concrete characteristics of the target group; expected general and specific results from actions envisaged; indicators for measurement of goal-achievement; experience accumulated in the implementation of other programs and measures, analysis of the effectiveness of proposed actions (cost effectiveness).

- **On-going monitoring** – performed by the institutions responsible for the realization of concrete measures/programs. Work is done on the approximation of information arrays with the objective of integrating the information available from various sources and institutions. The integration of national statistical databases with those of EUROSTAT (for instance via the Labor Market Policy database, the EC database on labour market reforms (LABREF), structural indicators on the performance of the Lisbon strategy) support and speed up these processes.

- **Ex-post evaluation** of the implementation and impacts from the implementation of programs and measures. Impact evaluations is carried out (gross and net) to establish actual results for the end beneficiaries from the performance of actions under the individual streams of the Employment Strategy.

Impact on national legislation, policy formulation and programme development

With regard to improving the information basis for the performance of necessary actions in the field of adult education and training, and the development of methodological instruments, actions are undertaken in the following directions:

- Implementation of the national database on the labour market and the European Social Fund in the entire system of the Employment Agency;
- Extend the application of an integrated approach in the use of information from various sources, aimed at establishing the impact and effectiveness of different policies.

Through agreements between the MLSP and the National Revenue Agency for monitoring of unemployed people's realization after successful graduation of vocational training;

- Development of an integrated information system of the MLSP, in response to the need of precise and detailed monitoring of results, personal initiative and services rendered, related to the job seeker. This requires an expanded approach to the collection, sharing and data protection between the databases of the EA, SAA, NRA and NSSI, through which, access is provided to up-to date data. This system will allow the integration of the information systems of the social security and control institutions on the labour market. The access to the integrated database and single information systems would allow information provision in real time and undertaking efficient actions. The more precise monitoring and measuring of the efficiency and efficacy of the conducted policy shall become possible;

- Development of the instrumentarium on collection and provision of the labour market information, for the purpose of creating database in EUROSTAT. New indicators shall be developed, more fully reflecting the labour market processes and the factors, exerting influence over them

- Development of the policy development approach, based on the results from studies, researches and other scientific methods of assessing the needs of specific measures, implementation outcomes, etc. to enhance the capacity of the institutions for strategic analysis and projection of the labour market processes.

Progress is being measured both through the changes in the absolute values of indicators, and by their ratio / shares of the total sum.

Indicators in Education and training in support of the transition to knowledge-based economy

- ***Indicators of the level of education of the population***
 - Net ratios of enrolment in various degrees of education
 - Number of drop-outs from the system of education
 - Number of graduates by degrees of education, (International Standard Education Classification (ISCED))
 - Allocation of the population of 15 and more years old by degrees of education completed
 - Employed people and unemployed people by degrees of education

- Percentage of the young persons between 18 -24 years of age, with a degree of education, lower than secondary;
- Percentage of the young persons at 22 years of age with at least secondary education;
- ***Indicators for adult training***
 - Percentage of persons, who have completed successfully adult training courses (employed and unemployed persons) from the total of involved;
 - Participation of adult population participating in various forms of life-long learning (share of the persons aged 25– 64 who have participated in education and training in the last 4 weeks before the respective survey)
 - Share of the persons, who have started work up to 1 year after the completion of their adult training (including information, whether the profession exercised is related in any way to the completed education).

The main sources of information are the National Statistical Institute (Labor Force Surveys, other representative statistical surveys), administrative statistics of the Employment Agency, EUROSTAT and the findings from other in-depth or representative sociological surveys.

The values of the indicators need to be compared with the respective EU average values.

Adult educators/facilitators' status and training

In Bulgaria the profession of an adult educator does not belong to the list of professions, officially elaborated and recognized. This means that there is no a specific difference between the teachers and trainers for children and working in the formal system, and the adult educators/trainers and facilitators:

- In most of the cases the adult trainers are from the formal system: teachers and university lecturers. There is also cases when other specialist works in the field, especially in the non-formal system, because no official regulation for the field has been established.
- In the multi-national companies high educated human resource managers are responsible for the in-service-training. They work with teachers and trainers from the formal or non-formal sector and the quality of provision is tested “by doing”.
- In the Universities, where pedagogy is taught, a major “Adult Education” is introduced in about 60 hours, both lectures and seminars. Additionally a Master Study Programme “Management of Adult Education” has been introduced in 2002 in the private New

Bulgarian University” on the initiative and with the financial support of DVV-International, Bulgaria.

RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND GOOD PRACTICE

Research activities in the field of adult education and training

Research activities in the field of adult education have been directed to achieving the objectives of contemporary adult education policy in Bulgaria as well as to creating conditions for broadening the spectrum of educational services for adults and improving quality of the educational services delivered.

Research activities have been directed to studying:

- the development of the system for vocational training of adults in compliance with the EU strategies in the field of training and employment;
- the opportunities for providing more practically oriented knowledge and skills with the aim of improving the competitiveness of adults on the labour market and the employability of the workforce;
- the access to educational and career services delivered to adults, representatives of minority groups (mainly the Roma minority), marginalized groups, refugees and immigrants, people with disabilities;
- the quality of educational services delivered to adults.

The research activities in the field of adult education, respectively the topics discussed in the context of lifelong learning in Bulgaria are not systematic despite the national traditions in this field. Research activities are come down to individual scientific articles and presentations given under international and local seminars and conferences. There are a number of fundamental publications in this field the most important of which have been enumerated in chronological order below:

- Education outside school C., Gal-Iko Publishing House, 1994, (Pepka Boyadzhieva, co-author).
- Adult Education, Milka Atanasova, Petar Petrov
- Andragogy. The Art of Training Adults. Vyara Gyurova, Universal Drumev, Sofia, 1998

- Lifelong Learning – definitions, dimensions, strategies. Compiled by Yochka Tsakova, Ministry of Education and Science – Regional Inspectorate of Education, Sofia, 2002
- A study “Lifelong Education” conducted by the National Institute of Statistics was published in 2004; this study turns out to be the main source of statistical data on the subject.

The research work in this field is scattered among different institutions and universities and is done mostly at the faculties of pedagogy, Varna Free University and the Institute of Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In the last 10 years a number of individual studies were carried out by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), the Human Resources Development Centre (HRDC), the Bulgarian Industrial Association as well as under different projects implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. International non-governmental organizations such as DVV and GOPA have also contributed significantly to research activities in this field.

For the last years the “Knowledge Society: science, education and innovations” Section at the Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is seriously dealing with the subject matter of lifelong learning and represents Bulgaria in a large-scale project funded by the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme - Lifelong Learning 2010 <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee> (towards a lifelong learning society in Europe: the contribution of the educational system). A total of 14 institutions have been involved in this project from different European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the UK, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Scotland, Slovenia and the Russian Federation. The project cycle covers the period from 1 September 2005 to 1 August 2010.

The project is focused on the contribution of the formal educational system to the implementation of lifelong learning policies and the role of lifelong learning as a potential agent of social integration in Europe. What is more, the project aims at studying the impact of institutions, specific for a given country, on the access to adult education and at assessing the effectiveness of the policies and practices in the different EU member states.

Research has been carried out on three levels - micro, mezzo and macro – in order to trace the interrelation between the macro-structural factors, the national policies, the institutional factors and adults as potential learners. Information is collected from three different sources: (a) individuals (a study of adult learners at schools and universities, data from Eurostat

Lifelong Learning Survey conducted in 2005); (b) educational institutions (interviews with the management of schools and officials from ministries); (c) enterprises (interviews with the management of small and medium-sized enterprises). The team leader for Bulgaria is Prof. Pepka Boyadzhieva who is the author of the following publications on the topic:

- Lifelong Learning or for the “и” of second modernity. B: Grekova, M., P. Kabakchieva Beyond the disciplinary (self)limitations, Sofia: Sofia University Publishing House, 2006: 84-105.
- The University as an institution for Lifelong Learning. Strategies of the educational and scientific policy, 2006, books 3-4.
- Lifelong Learning as an institutional strategy in higher education, Policies, 2007, N. 3, Open Society Institute (www.politiki.bg)

Innovations and Good Practice Examples

Good practices

Good practices which can serve as an illustration of the different dimensions of the research activities:

1. In the period 2003 – 2004 an international project under Leonardo da Vinci Programme was implemented: „Development of career services for young people (15-26 years of age)”. Under the project a national sociological survey was carried out on young people’s needs for career services. The deliverables of the project included:

- Methodological Guidelines for consultants
- Methodological Guidelines for consultants working with people from disadvantaged groups (school drop-outs, young people with low level of qualification, young people from minority groups)
- E-guidelines „On the Labour Market” aimed at unemployed young people.

The three project deliverables are aimed at creating conditions for access to the labour market for young people by offering them counseling and guidance. In choosing the right education and training services these people can improve their qualification or re-qualify and thus become more competitive on the labour market. All project deliverables have an important social function with regard to the prevention of social exclusion of disadvantaged groups from the active economic life of the country.

2. In the period 2004 – 2006 Znanie Association, the above mentioned non-governmental organization, participated as a partnering organization under a Grundtvig project: „Developing support skills for European Teachers”. The other partnering organizations are from the UK, Ireland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, and Austria. One of the main objectives of the project was related to conducting a survey on the essence of knowledge and skills offered to adults and their practical orientation.

In the framework of the project an electronic tool was developed for forming learning skills in adult learners. The tool will help trainers of adults in working with people with different learning experience. Trainers of adults from the different partnering countries were trained in using the tool at an international seminar which took place in Prague.

3. With a view to studying and improving the quality of training delivered to adults a large-scale project was implemented for the last two years in Bulgaria under the Phare Programme of the EU: „Technical assistance for designing a system for studying, identifying and monitoring employers’, employees’ and workers’ needs for vocational training and developing a strategy for adult learning , particularly including methodology and content for vocational training of adults” EuropeAid/120163/D/SV/BG.

Under the project teams of experts in the field of adult training developed the following documents:

- A Methodology for studying, identifying and monitoring employers’, employees’ and workers’ vocational training needs in Bulgaria;
- Strategic and Methodological Adult Training Framework;
- Methodological Guidelines for Adult Training.

The documents developed under the project comprise part of the policy for adapting the educational services for adults in Bulgaria to the contemporary European requirements for the quality of education and training in accordance with the ideas outlined in the Memorandum for Lifelong Learning and the recent political, economic and technological changes in the field of adult training.

The project was implemented with the active cooperation of several branch ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Finance), the Employment Agency, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the organizations of social partners on the national and regional level, vocational schools, vocational training centres, universities, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria, the Confederation of Labour “Podkrepa”, the nationally representative organization of employees and workers, the nationally representative organizations of employers – the Bulgarian Industrial Association, and the Union of private entrepreneurs “Vazrazhdane”.

The establishment of a system for studying, identifying and monitoring employers’, employees’ and workers’ needs for vocational training is an important step toward achieving a balanced development on the labour market. It shall contribute to the establishment of an adequate database as well as for the dissemination of information and facilitating the communication on the labour market and social partnership.

It has been envisaged that the main effects from establishing and development of the system will be:

- the establishment of a complete database for the condition and trends in the needs of employers, employees and workers for vocational training;
- the establishment of more reliable conditions for licensing training organizations;
- the design and development of the state educational and vocational standards;
- the efficient support of the communication on the labour market, etc.

The developed Strategic and Methodological Framework for Adult Training and the Methodological Guidelines for Adult Training are in compliance with Bulgaria’s commitments as a EU member state as well as with its participation in the so called Copenhagen process – quality assurance of adult education and training as a precondition for mutual recognition of qualifications acquired in any of the EU member states. The Strategic and Methodological Framework outlines the specific criteria for measuring and assuring quality of adult training in Bulgaria in accordance with the requirements in the “Principles for assuring the quality of education and training”, agreed between all countries participating in the Copenhagen process.

- **Innovations**

An instrument for recognition of qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning was developed for the first time in Bulgaria in 2002 under a Leonardo da Vinci project “Assessment and Recognition of Work Experiences and Non-formal Learning (ARWEN)”. The project was implemented by partnering organizations from Italy, France and Spain.

The instrument consists of a number of tools for tracking prior achievements of young people acquired through non-formal and informal learning and their recognition.

One of the main deliverables under the project is a Methodological and Operational Guide which presents the objectives and content of the instrument, its structure and outlines the guidelines for using the different tools and their application in practice.

ADULT LITERACY

Implemented policies in the field of Adult Literacy

In Bulgaria the active citizens between 15 and 64 years old in 2006 are 64.5 % from the population (in EU-25 -70.5%). The non-active are - 35.5 %, which means about 1,8 million. With regard to the **educational level** active are 73.3% of the people with higher education; 66.2 % of the people with secondary, 27.8% with basic and only 13.2% with initial education, which shows a direct interdependence between educational level and active economic status.

With regard to the **level of education** of the Roma population, according to data, provided by the National Statistics Institute from the 2001 census a conclusion has been drawn out that 23.2 % of the Roma, 10.1 % of the Turks and 1.3 % of the Bulgarians among the 20 years old belong to the illiterates and people with not completed primary education. 43 % of the Roma children have either never been to school or have not completed the initial level of education.

Having all these figures in mind a conclusion could be made that between the low level of education and the low level of employment among the Roma population in Bulgaria a strong interdependence is available.

New projects and initiatives in Adult Literacy

During the last years several initiatives have been started both as an effort by the state and the NGO sector, but also with the significant persistence and support by the international community: the EU has funded several projects under the PHARE – e.g. Social Inclusion, Civil Society Development, Educational and Medical Integration of Disadvantaged Ethnic Minorities with a focus on Roma, Multi-annual project “Improvement of the Situation and the Integration of the Disadvantaged Ethnic Minority Groups with a Special Focus on Roma” (2004 – 2006) – phases 1, 2 and 3.

A very encouraging influence had exerted the initiative the Decade of the Roma Inclusion of 8 countries from the region of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. It was supported by the Bulgarian Parliament with a special Declaration, adopted on 8.4.2005.

A significant progress has been achieved on decision-making level as a result of this interaction among the state administration, the NGO sector and the international community. The good example set by the NGO sector, although to a limited extent, has been accepted as a good practice and somewhere – as a starting point for national programmes and action plans to be developed. Having laid such a basic foundation, a package of strategic papers was elaborated, where the main goals for common work and main actions for implementing the goals were accepted. Worth mentioning are:

- The Framework Program for Equal Participation of Roma in the Bulgarian Society, (Council of Ministers 22.04.1999)
- The National strategy on educational integration of children and pupils from ethnic minorities – Ministry of Education and Science, June 2004;
- The National Action-Plan for Implementation of the international “Decade for Roma Integration 2005-2015”, adopted by the Council of Ministers on the 14th April 2005.

Most of the planned activities are now in a pre-implementation phase, with the exception of the PHARE projects, which have already been realized. The encouraging factors during the years before the beginning of 2007 have been related to the needs defined on a local level and with the pressure regarding the accession. Some steps have already been achieved: awareness has been raised; common actions by the state and the NGO sector (a plus to be mentioned in some of the cases – with the support of the business circles) have been planned or even

started, some administrative infrastructure on national, regional and local level has been established.

During the last over 15 years many international foundations and donor organizations have launched programmes and projects in the field literacy and social inclusion- not only in Bulgaria, but also all over the region of South Eastern Europe: USAID, the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the Open Society Foundation, the Democracy Commission , Matra/Kap etc. All EU-funded cultural, educational and youth programmes and the pre-accession funds have worked into the same direction. Many Bulgarian registered NGO have been working with these organizations and programmes. Different actions all over Bulgaria, mostly in the fields of capacity building, education, social support, health issues and supporting employability have been granted. Many good practices have been awarded both by the national authorities and by the donor organizations. Thus the potential of both active promoters of such actions as well as active citizens from the side of the ethnic communities has been developed into the active citizenship direction.

Good practices in Adult Literacy in Bulgaria:

- Regional Initiative for Promotion of Self-Employment of the **Yambol Chamber of Industry and Commerce**: with the aim of economic and social integration of minority groups and of people with special needs;
- A series of practical-oriented projects, aiming at the economic development of mixed regions; education and vocational training of ethnic minorities of the **International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR)**;
- Second Chance School Project: Integration through Education of the German Folk High Schools (**DVV-International**), **Office in Bulgaria** – Adult Education for minority groups with the aim of improving employability and social inclusion.

EXPECTATIONS OF CONFINTEA VI AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR ALE

The Expectations of the Bulgarian government and civil society sector from CONFINTEA VI:

- foster exchange of experiences, good practices, and innovative approaches not only between governments but also between all type of national and international

actors (ALE providers, VET and Employment Agencies, NGOs, social partners, researchers etc.)

- intensify the flow of information on global and regional developments in adult learning and education
- improve communication, cooperation and partnerships more in regional and global networks
- identify new financing possibilities for Adult Education and Learning (both on national and international level)
- improve professionalization within the LAE field (in terms of professional growth and quality in adult education)
- establish benchmarks as internationally applicable/adaptable tools in order to measure progress and to ensure implementation of the governments' commitments

Main issues and future perspectives for the development of adult education and adult learning in Bulgaria

The main issues and future perspectives for adult education and learning in Bulgaria were very well synthesized by the experts that elaborated the Midterm Lifelong Learning Strategy in Bulgaria, 2007-2013. They not only set up the priorities according to the main objectives of the strategy but also defined indicators which will measure the progress in achieving the concrete aim. All the results are summarized in the following table:

Objectives	Priorities	Indicators
1.1 Improving the legislative basis with a view to overcoming the obstacles in front of the realization of the LLL concept and encouraging the participation of different social groups in LLL activities;	Amendments to the legislation with regards to improving the motivation of learners, training providerse, employers; financial stimuli; facilitating the access to learning and creating opportunities for encouraging learning activities	Amendments to the legislative framework in accordance with the Lifelong Learning concept Improved opportunities for adults with lower level of education to acquire an educational degree and/ or to take part in vocational training
1.2 Building new and effective structures for coordination with clearly formulated responsibilities on the national, regional and institutional level;	Effective partnerships between the institutions for education and training and the business sector, e.g. through establishing a LLL Council on the regional and local levels	Improved partnership between the educational and the business sector for on-the-job training; developed and updated curricula, research activities
1.3 Creating various opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal learning corresponding to labour market changes;	Improved access to various learning opportunities. Flexible curricula responding to the needs and the changes on the labour market.	Increased number of curricula for training in an alternative environment: distance/ e-learning, blended learning, community learning, on-the-job training Established virtual resource centres providing information for training opportunities on the local and regional level

		Increased number of flexible/ module based curricula responding to the needs of the regional and local labour market
1.4 Creating a transparent and coordinated with the respective bodies system for recognizing all learning achievements with respect to knowledge, skills, competencies including those acquired through non-formal education and training;	Recognition of non-formal, informal and prior learning Implementation of a National Qualifications Framework	Increased percentage of participation of people of all ages in non-formal and informal learning activities as a result of increased opportunities for updating prior learning Developed schemes, agreed on the national level, for recognition and validation of key competencies (most of all language competencies, digital competencies, communicative and social competencies) Improved mechanisms for recognition and validation of professional competencies with a focus on recognition of competencies acquired on the job for all qualification levels

		<p>Developed National Qualifications Framework with clearly described national qualifications and the competencies to which they can be referred in the European Qualifications Framework</p> <p>Improved mechanisms for recognizing prior learning between secondary and higher education both for the general and for the professional competencies</p>
1.5 Implementing a credit system for accumulation of qualification and individualizing the personal and professional profile as well as for ensuring the mobility of learners and workers;	<p>More efficient implementation of the European Credit Transfer System</p> <p>Implementation of the European Credit System in the field of continuing education and training</p>	<p>Improved mobility, improved employability, adaptability and flexibility of the workforce</p> <p>Issued Europass documents – Europass Certificate Supplement, Europass Diploma Supplement and Europass Mobility</p>
1.6 Implementing the transition from centralized to decentralized schemes through proposing new and efficient coordination	Decentralization of delivered education and training oriented to the needs of the labour market;	Improved mechanisms for training needs analysis and analysis of delivered training

<p>structures and activities – training organization, quality assurance, validation agreements, lifelong guidance, information provision, etc.</p>	<p>Meeting training demands in accordance with the specific needs in local and regional context</p> <p>Implementation of a lifelong guidance system</p>	<p>Increased number of education and training providers implementing quality management systems in the process of training delivery</p> <p>Increased number of independent consultancy services for external evaluation of delivered training</p> <p>Guidance programmes for all learning forms</p> <p>Guidance programmes for groups with special needs</p>
<p>1.7 Establishing a regional system for funding as an instruments for ensuring the efficiency and quality of initial and continuing training on the basis of shared and balanced responsibility between the state, the employers and the learners</p>	<p>Establishment of a rational funding system with a view to ensuring efficiency as well as for using it as an instrument for sustainable quality assurance.</p> <p>A balance between the responsibilities of</p>	<p>A functioning a rational system for funding</p> <p>Increased number of joint initiatives in the field of education among the state, employers and learners</p>

	the state, the employers and the learners.	Implemented models for evaluating the return of investments in training Cost-effectiveness and accessibility of training
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