



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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TO THE 2008 JOING INTERRIM REPORT
OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
ON THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010
WORK PROGRAMME**

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CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY

1.1. Current state of play

Draft of our National lifelong learning strategy (2007 – 2013) is still on development stage. It envisages this document to be ready till the end of July 2007, in implementation of the Pact for Economic and Social Development of Republic of Bulgaria till 2009, signed by the Government and the social partners on September 26, 2006. The draft of the strategy is developing by inter-institutional working group, which includes representatives from the responsible ministries (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Ministry of Finances) and the social partners, with assistance by a consulting company through a project by the PHARE programme.

Draft of our National lifelong learning strategy is based on the concept that lifelong learning is a base for achieving an economic, social and mental prosperity of the individuals. The purpose of this project is to ensure linking and consistencies of learning at the different stages of the human life, taking in account its specific features. It represents LLL in specific relation with the economic and the social development, as well as with the personal development. The document shall define the key domains for action and to assure harmonization of the national objectives in the field of LLL, in compliance with the relevant documents adopted at European level [1 – 16].

1.2. Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance

The strategy's general aim is directed to achievement of effective, qualitative and full valued human resources development and individual development in the knowledge-based society. The concrete objective is defined as creation of the conditions necessary for increasing the number of participants and widening the domains for people participation in LLL, targeted to acquiring and improving their professional, social and civic knowledge, skills and competences.

Draft of the strategy shall be linked also with the acting strategic documents at national level (see *Annex I*). They are National Programme for School and Pre-School Education Development (2006 - 2015), the National Strategy for Introducing ICT in the Bulgarian Schools (2005 – 2007), National Further Vocational Training Strategy (2005 – 2010), Employment Strategy (2004-2010), as well as Human Resources Development Operative Programme (2007 – 2013). A draft on Adult Training Strategy (2007 – 2013) is developed under PHARE project in 2006, as well. Its aim is development of adult training as an element of LLL and assistance to effective functioning of adult vocational training system. As a strategic document, defining priorities in the field of adult training, this document is taking in account during development of our national LLL strategy.

The accents in the 2007 action plan for the National Further Vocational Training Strategy (2005 – 2010) are directed to improving effectiveness for interaction and co-ordination between the responsible institutions, increasing investments and research assurance of further vocational training, modernization of training equipment, work on establishment of a system for validation of qualifications, acquired by non-formal or informal learning, activities for increasing number of participants in further vocational training, and activities for increasing number of provided vocational training courses as well.

Regarding teachers' training, the draft of the national LLL strategy envisages measures for:

- Improvement of initial and permanent teachers' qualification related to new training plans and curricula, as well as related to necessity for mastering ICT, learning of foreign languages, promoting Bulgarian participation in national programmes and projects, etc.;

- Improvement of teachers' qualification's quality, introduction of new training methods, building a system for tracking on labour market needs.

Some data inaccuracies about the percentage of people in BG participating in LLL activities could be mentioned as a difficulty met during the development of strategic documents in this field. It reflects on the data analysis as well.

1.2.1 which systems and levels of education and training are covered

Draft of our national LLL strategy covers all levels of the educational system – pre-school and school education, VET, higher education and further training, including teachers' and trainers' qualification. The Human Resources Development Operative Programme 2007 – 2013 covers these areas too. Validation of formal education, non-formal and informal learning is recommended on a voluntary basis in the strategy's draft. To this end, teachers' and trainers' qualification and career development system is forthcoming to be developed.

1.2.2 the challenges addressed by the strategy, including improving the efficiency and equity of education and training systems, and how these have been identified (evidence base):

Educational and training system in BG faces problems in integrating different ethno-cultural groups, especially Roma¹ and people with special educational needs. At the present moment 1/5 of Roma people does not have even primary education. It is serious obstacle for their full valued professional realization on the labour market. Around 0.2 % of them have graduated higher education. This number is especially low for them, and the percentage of school drop-outs – the highest one, in comparison with the other ethno-cultural groups². However early school drop-outs' negative tendency is typical for children living in outlying, rural and hardly accessible regions, as well as for immigrants' children, orphans and other groups at risk. Using data collected by the Ministry of Education and Science, around 1/5 of the pupils in obligatory school's age annually drop out from school. It reduces their chances for employment till minimum and imposes urgent measures to be taken in this direction, as development of alternative training forms which combine elements of general and vocational education.

In order to resolve the problem concerning better inclusion and keeping children and youth within the educational system, the Human Resources Development Operative Programme puts accent onto two basic moments: 1) inclusion of children, especially those from different ethno-cultural groups, in the educational cycle's early stages, and 2) development of the system for out door activities. Inclusion of children in the early stages of education – kindergartens and pre-school education will facilitate their integration on one hand, and on another hand, it will provide better employability for their parents.³ Inscription of Roma children at kindergartens will provide an opportunity for successful overcoming of language barrier at early stage and their access to next educational cycles will be facilitated. Our door educational activities are directed to development of the children's and young people's creative potential and better attractiveness of the educational institution. They assist for better organization of young people's leisure time and are an alternative for avoiding risks in the modern society.

¹ Around 10 % of the pupils in BG have Roma origin („Roma schools in Bulgaria 2002 – 2003”, study by Open Society Foundation, 2003).

² Using data from the same study: „, 80 % of the children that are not covered by the school system are from Roma origin, as there is already second generation of fully illiterate people, especially in municipalities with predominant Roma population”, page 5.

³ Pilot phase of the activities directed to children at early age (3 – 6 y. o.) will be supported by the Project for Social Inclusion. Financial resources at this pilot phase (excluding the component for building or constructing of infrastructural facilities) will be used according to the rules of the Human Resources Development Operative Programme, in order to ensure smooth transition between pilot phase and further development of the project co-financed through the European Social Fund.

Modern economy's dynamics impose continuous improvement of people's qualification, assimilation of new knowledge, skills and competences in order to ensure their better employability on the labour market. In this respect, it is extremely important to build and develop an effective LLL system stimulating permanent self-improvement and facilitating mobility on the labour market by applying different didactic tools, as distance training and e-learning, qualification courses for advanced learners, etc. By official data, only 1.3 % of the active population (25 – 64 y. o.) participates in LLL activities at the present moment, than the Lisbon goal is 12.5 % in 2010. Development of an efficient career guidance system orientated to the different stages of professional development is an important part of working LLL model. Especial attention should be taken to illiteracy and low-literacy people by organizing specialized literacy courses in order to facilitate their further access supplementary professional qualification and to more competitive participation on the labour market, respectively.

1.2.3 the priorities for action and policy development within the strategy, in the light of these challenges.

The priorities of our strategy's draft are related to the European LLL priorities, taking in account the national environment, learning conditions and immediate factors as well. They are specified according to the actual and expected social-economic growth 2007 – 2013. Changes' influence related to full membership of BG in the EU is a basic determinant factor in this direction. Achieving the values of the basic indicators from the renewed Lisbon strategy is leading requirement for us in the field of education and training, as well as in the field of employment.

1.3. Main policy measures

Investing in professional qualification of human resources is part of the general employment policy of BG, regulated by the Employment Promotion Act (published, SG, issue 112 of 29.12.2001, in force since 1.01.2002., last amended and supplemented, issue 48 / 13.06.2006, in force since 1.07.2006) and accomplished through the national action plans on employment and the corresponding national programmes. Analysis of existing trends and tendencies in the field of further vocational training till the present moment and challenges as a new Member State of the EU impose conclusion for sensitive increasing of investments. Considerable increasing of employers' investments for improving qualification of the work power in the enterprises is a must.

Measures targeted to LLL system development in BG are set in the Human Resources Development Operative Programme (2007 – 2013). Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes Directorate is established by the new Rules of Procedure of the Ministry of Education and Science, adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers № 148 / 19.06.2006 (published, SG, issue 52 / 27.06.2006, in force since 27.06.2006). This directorate at the Ministry performs intermediate unit's functions with respect to the Human Resources Development Operative Programme for the period of 2006 – 2013. Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for priority directions 3 and 4 of this programme, namely *3. Improvement of education and training quality in compliance with labour market needs for building knowledge based economy* and *4. Improving access to education and training*. Their aim is more successful social and labour realization of people by improvement of conditions for equal access to education and training and development of the system for LLL.

Financial resources of 171 millions BGN are allocated in the state budget for 2007 (published, SG, issue 108 / 2006) for development of secondary education. These funds will be used for financing of national programmes for secondary education development, which are approved by the Council of Ministers, by proposition of the minister of education and science and the minister of finances. The programmes' priorities are: optimization of school network; introduction of ICT at schools; better coverage of children at obligatory school age within the school educational system; heads of schools' qualification for improvement of their school governance competences; introduction of systems for internal

and external evaluation; introduction of differentiated payment depending on output results; rationalization of vocational schools' network; creation of accessible architectural environment at school – for integration of children with special educational needs; renewal of training equipment at schools; development of outdoors activities; rituality of school life; teachers' qualification; renewal of sport equipment at schools; improvement of energy effectiveness.

Following sources for funding further vocational training are envisaged to be used in 2005 – 2010: state budget's funds (allocated to responsible institutions, district and municipal administrations), PHARE programme and the Structural Funds of the EU, international sources; employers' funds; vocational training providers' own incomes; work power's personal funds; other funds from municipalities, non-governmental and other organizations, sponsorships, donations, etc. Since 2007, Bulgaria has access to the European Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund. Human Resources Development Operative Programme 2007 – 2013 is the basis strategic document for assimilation of funds from the European Social Fund. Its aim is improvement of the quality of life through human capital's improvement, achievement of high employment rates, enhancement of productiveness, access to qualitative education and lifelong learning, increasing the social inclusion as well.

Effective use of above listed opportunities for funding further vocational training assumes high degree of co-ordination in using these sources, in compliance with our priorities at different levels. Measures for promotion of working power and employers for investing in the field of adult vocational training are envisaged and are implementing, regulated by the Employment Promotion Act (published, SG, issue 112 / 29.12.2001, in force since 2002, last amended and supplemented, issue 48 / 13.06.2006, in force since 1.07.2006). These measures are implemented by the Employment Agency's activities (this agency is under jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy). They are listed on page 6 of the 2005 Bulgarian report – contribution [17]. Additional funds can be provided as credits for qualification of unemployed persons who have right for monetary compensation and who want to begin their own economic activity after approval of business project. In addition, another opportunity targeted to different groups of unemployed who want to start small business (by establishment of micro-enterprises, growers, etc.) is provided by the amendments in the Employment Promotion Act in 2005 – they can be trained in the subject of their business activity or in business management free of charge.

The state subsidy for higher education development is 0.8 % from GDP and 0.9 % of GDP in 2006 and 2007, respectively.

Since the beginning of 2007, all training activities are VAT free. As a result, we expect increasing of training activities provision, including training at work place, and increased participation of employed people in them as well as.

1.3.1 the main policy measures in the strategy and how these fit together, including,

1.3.2 outline the measures designed to address progress towards the EU benchmarks, including any national targets in these areas;

1.3.3 allocation of resources to main policy measures, including any national targets for more / more efficient use of funds and the use of EU funds to support lifelong learning (eg Structural Funds, European Investment Bank),

Our national policy in this area is supported by some strategic documents: National Strategic Reference Framework and Human Resources Development Operative Programme 2007 – 2013, and by our national strategies in the field of education as well. Also, by Priorities 3 and 4 of the Human Resources Development Operative Programme 2007 – 2013 (*3.1.3 Improvement of teachers' qualification and creation of conditions for teachers' career development – part Qualification of heads of schools and teachers, and 4.3.4 Development of distance training forms*), the Ministry of

Education and Science participates in project proposals competitions, with beneficiaries the Ministry, the National Pedagogical Centre and the National Institute for Training Heads of Schools (which are external units of the Ministry).

1.3.4 measures to change attitudes to learning,

1.3.5 strengthening evidence-based policy making, using a culture of evaluation, leading to innovation in education and training

National School and Pre-School Education Development programme 2006 – 2015 is one of the basis steps in this direction. It is developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and adopted by the national Assembly on 07.06.2006. The programme is based on the concept that children (pupils) are basic value of the educational system. Its main objectives are assuring equal access to education and guarantying high-qualitative and effective education. The programme defines concrete measures for achievement of these objectives. More important of them envisage:

- improving structure of secondary education;
- keeping at school children down to age of 16 y. o. and reduction of school dropouts' number;
- development of an effective internal evaluation system by wide use of tests, as well as introduction of standardized national external evaluation system;
- optimization of schools' network by applying of active policy targeted to reducing the number of low-numbered and mixed classes by binding schools' network with labour market needs and social-economic characteristics of the region;
- durable introduction of curricula in general and vocational education, based on modern knowledge and in compliance with labour market needs;
- introduction of modules for early career guidance and entrepreneurship in the training plans;
- decentralization of governance in the school system by delegating rights to heads of schools related to financial issues, human resources management and introduction of innovations in training;
- development and introduction of financial system which promotes development;
- introduction of differential teachers' payment system depend on the results achieved by the pupils and the quality of training;
- development of school governance and management system by attracting participation of parents and business community.

Basic steps in the field of vocational education in 2006 have targeted to harmonization of legislation with *acquis communautaire* in recognition of qualifications. Draft of Law on amendments and supplements of the Vocational Education and Training Act (VET Act) has been adopted by the Council of Ministers on 20.04.2006. This draft fully incorporated all recommendations made during the technical consultations on 7.03.2006 in Brussels. The draft transposes completely Directive 89/48/EEC and Directive 92/51/EEC and establishes legislative grounds for transposition of Directive 99/42/EEC. Draft envisages also appropriate changes in Chapter 8 "Recognition of right for practicing regulated profession based on professional qualification acquired in foreign country" of the VET Act (see Articles 63 – 79). Due to different regime for recognition, depending on degree of education required for practicing regulated profession, amendments and supplements of the Higher Education Act has been done in 2005. New Chapter 12 "Recognition of right for practicing regulated profession based on professional qualification acquired in foreign country" has been provided there (see Articles 97 – 107, published, SG, issue 77 / 2005). This chapter regulates legislatively recognition of legal capacity for practicing regulated profession acquired in Member State of the EU and

of the EEA. These legislation changes are in force since 01.01.2007 – the accession date of Republic of Bulgaria to the EU.

National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), in its aim to establish culture of quality evaluation and self-evaluation, has actualized the manual for self-evaluation of VET Centres. A self-evaluation card for drafts of state Educational Requirements (standards) has been developed. It is intended for working groups who develop such drafts. Experts from NAVET are leading in implementation of “Dissemination of information about the EU’s policies in the field of VET and of good practices from the Western Balkans counties and the EU’s candidate countries – quality assurance and development of career guidance” project, funded by the European Training Foundation (ETF). Reports prepared jointly with representatives from the social partners are disseminated to institutions related to VET in BG.

NAVET participates in competition for funding three projects by DG EAC/22/06’s call for proposals for development of National Qualification Framework (NAVET is a partner, German Federal Institute for VET is the leading organization), DG EAC 33/2006’s call for proposals for credit transfer systems, and EAC 32/2006’s call for proposals for implementation of the Common European Framework for Quality Assurance. At the end of 2006, NAVET has obtained funding as a contractor and began to work on project named “QTEL-NET – Achievement of correspondence between search and supply – sectoral approach network for qualifications in the field of Tourism at European level”. Participation in projects funded by the EU provides to NAVET an opportunity for building partnerships with similar institutions from other countries – SQA, Scotland, BIBB, Germany, and to use and share experience and good practices with them.

1.3.6 measures to target the needs of disadvantaged people (e.g. immigrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled)

Care to children with special educational needs and their integration at school environment is an important component of the Ministry of Education and Science’s policy. This component is set in the School and Pre-School Education Development National Programme 2006 – 2015. Widening access to VET, by provision of programmes for acquisition of first degree of professional qualification since 2005/2006 school year, is a real step towards integration of disadvantaged people, their bringing out from the marginal groups and their successful integration in the society. Processes of education, inclusion in real working environment, communication and affiliation to given values are accompanied by protection of identity, conservation of traditions in the community and inclusion in the intercultural dialog.

Policies and measures targeted to widening range of learners and their keeping at school are directly related to applying different motivation forms and methods and to establishing suitable conditions for support and educational labour. School is approved factor for education in the spirit of tolerance, intercultural intercourse for conservation and enriching traditions of the nation and the society. Different pedagogic approaches to children from different ethno-cultural groups are used in the Bulgarian school. Different pedagogic models and techniques are approbated by this way, taking in account the specific of a given educational institution and environment’s characteristic where children live and study. Children with different ethno-cultural characteristics are educated at school environment, where variety of behaviour models of ethnic and religious tolerance is built.

National legislation has been harmonized with the requirements of Directive 77/486EEC on training children of migrants workers in 2006. Towards this end amendments and supplements of National Education Act have done (published, SG, issue 105 / 2006).

1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of the strategy:

1.4.1 coordination and consultation mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders:

At the present stage, evaluation of the educational system is performed in compliance with the requirements of the National Education Act (published, SG, issue 86 / 18.10.1991, last amended and supplemented, issue 41 / 19.05.2006, issue 105 / 22.12.2006), the Rules of Procedure for Application of National Education Act, the Law on Degree of Education, General Education Minimum and Training Plan (published, SG, issue 67 / 27.07.1999, in force since 27.07.1999, last amended and supplemented, issue 105 / 22.12.2006) and the Vocational Education and Training Act (published, SG, issue 68 / 30.07.1999, last amended and supplemented, issue 62 / 1.08.2006, in force since 1.01.2007 – the accession date of Republic of Bulgaria to the EU, amended, issue 63 / 4.08.2006), Instruction № 1 on control activity (1995), Ordinance № 3 of the Minister of Education and Science on evaluation system (since 2003, amended in 2005).

Evaluation of the educational system is performed at national, regional and school level. Bulgarian education system is centralized. That's why policy in education related to evaluation is determined at national level, by the Ministry of Education and Science through its structural units. National legislation and recommendations by the Ministry of Education and Science are obligatory for all types and degrees of schools and for all participants in the educational process and working in the national educational system. In this respect, the Ministry inspects and evaluate, as follow:

- activities of the Regional Inspectorates on Education (under Ministry of Education and Science's jurisdiction), schools and service units, related to implementation of laws and other legislative acts and administrative documents with respect to secondary education;
- management and administrative activity of experts and heads of the Regional Inspectorates on Education and of heads of training-instructive institutions;
- activity of heads of schools in compliance with the requirements of the Labour Code and other lower legislative acts – during conclusion, amendments and termination of contracts with teachers and non-teachers staff;
- school documentation's regular use and saving.

Control activity of experts and heads of departments and other units in the system of national education are evaluated on regular basis by permanent expert control commissions appointed by order of the Minister of education and science. These commissions determine conditions and order for attestation of heads of schools and service units, in compliance with Article. 37, paragraph 7 of the National Education Act. They also make suggestions to the Minister about changes in labour-juridical relations. Ministry of Education and Science, through its territorial structures, can control the activities of private schools and kindergartens as well, in compliance with the legislative requirements – inspection and analysis of the whole organization of educational process in the kindergartens, schools and service units and preparation of findings protocols and reports about the results from the inspections and prescriptions for improving the activities; inspections (thematic and complex reviews) at the Regional Inspectorates on Education and in the schools.

1.4.2 implementation arrangements, including publicity and dissemination

Regarding the measures for training and improving teachers' qualification, performed by the National Institute for Training Heads of Schools, it is envisaged as follow:

- preparation of analysis concerning the annual programme for heads of schools' qualification, performed by the institute and publication of the results on the Ministry of Education and Science's web-page, including publishing of performance's interim report. It will assure transparency and opportunities for control from the civic society onto the institute's job;
- tracking on implementation of innovations in school governance, provoked after training at the institute, which will lead to measuring the efficacy and applicability of trainings planned at the institute.

IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSVERSAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1 The establishment of national qualification systems and frameworks (in line with the European Qualifications Framework), and the elimination of obstacles between levels and systems

Implementing the Communicational Strategy for Accession of Republic of Bulgaria to the EU, consultation process on development and implementation of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) is ongoing in the country. Seminars are carried out, with participation of representatives from the field of education, local authorities, social partners and non-governmental organizations. Discussions and analyses are accomplishing in compliance with the degrees of professional qualification regulated by the VET Act and the general recommendable degrees from the EQF. Links with sectoral qualifications are under discussion too. National seminar for popularizing the EQF has been carried out, with participation of 150 representatives from educational institutions, public authorities, employers and social partners. The EQF document has been translated and disseminated in Bulgarian language. Our expectations are the reform to be supported at national and sectoral level.

Consultation process has been performed with respect to the ECVET at national level in 2007 with aim to assure better transparency of qualifications and raising the mutual trust between educational institutions and social partners. The ECVET system has been published in the newspaper “Azbuki” and disseminated to all vocational secondary schools and social partners. Two seminars have been carried out, with 100 participants from all stakeholders. The consultation process has been linked with the EQF / NQF, the mechanisms for accumulation and transfer of credits, the EUROPASS and the PLOTEUS portal.

New structure of the State Educational Requirements’ (Standards) for acquisition of qualifications by professions in BG, proposed by NAVET, will provide opportunities as for easier comparison and recognition of qualifications acquired in BG and abroad, using the EQF, as well as for introduction of ECVET, step by step, in Bulgarian VET system.

Bulgarian framework of qualifications in higher education corresponds in high degree to the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF of EHEA) (see 2005 Bulgarian report – contribution). Supplementary actions must be done for full harmonization of existing requirements for knowledge, skills and competences in BG with those of QF of EHEA, as well as related to existing credit transfer system in higher education in BG. Such reform is expected to lead to amendments and supplements in corresponding national legislation. Research and consultations at higher education institutions’ level and at expert commissions of the National Evaluation and Accreditation’s (NEAA) level have been performed in this direction during the recent biannual period, regarding the EQF for LLL and the QF of EHEA. Work in this direction is foreseen to finish during the next year. Taking in account the top importance of this topic and the forthcoming changes, they will be discussed in details with the stakeholders at national level. This topic is an object of special interest in the draft of our new Higher Education Development Strategy, which consultation process is currently ongoing at national level as well.

2.2 Identification and validation on non-formal and informal learning

Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still at initial stage in BG so far. The process of implementing policies and measures targeted to identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning begins, using the common principles in this field from the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). Widening partnership between institutions and stakeholders will assure better trust, objectivity and trustworthiness of the processes that start

during the current year. Our expectations are the participation of stakeholders and social partners to grow up and greater responsibilities to be taken towards legislation development, institutional work out and strengthening, mechanisms for evaluation of competences – standards on competences, standards on validation, defining validation beneficiaries and quality assurance in this field.

As is mentioned in the previous Bulgarian report [17], step towards this end has been taken in 2004, when the Framework Programme E for further vocational training for actualization or extension of already acquired professional qualification has been developed and approved by the Minister of education and science. With this respect, training seminars have carried out in 2005 – 2006 in Sofia and Thessalonica, Greece, through joint Bulgarian-German project on theme “Promoting Adults Vocational Training and Employability”. Experts from the responsible ministries, the NAVET, the Employment Agency and representatives from the social partners have participated in them. Validation of non-formal and informal learning process is foreseen to begin in 2007, after all methodological and organizational basis be assured.

Legislative initiatives in recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications, undertaken in implementation of Directive 89/48/EEC’s and Directive 92/51/EEC’s requirements are developed in two directions. Firstly, significant parts of the legislation are at renewal stage – amendments and supplements of basic legislative acts have been done. Secondly, part of the new legislation has already developed and another part is at development stage. At the present moment, the national legislation is fully in compliance with Directive 92/51/EEC.

Already mentioned above amendments and supplements of the VET Act (SG, issue 77 / 2005) have lead to amendments and supplements in the Higher Education Act (SG, issue 77 / 2005) as well, related to attestation of professional qualifications. They establish input legislative base for recognition of non-formal learning outcomes. It is a prerequisite for improving the VET’s attractiveness and quality, as well as for promoting LLL. It contributes for achievement of compliance with the common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning¹¹. Practical implementation of this possibility requires further action on development of methodical documentation and handbooks to be performed, corresponding legal entities to be defined, and necessity for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning to be popularized among the potential users (employed, un-employed, employers, etc.) of this service. At the present moment, working group on development of a draft of Law on Recognition of Qualifications is established and is working at the Ministry of Education.

Description in details of learning outcomes for each profession in the State Educational Requirements (standards) for acquisition of qualification by professions will contribute for easier development of tools for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Towards this end, it is necessary examination materials to be developed, in order to specify whether the candidate can (and to what level) demonstrate knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to each of the results listed in the State Educational Requirement (standard). Methodical support to the pedagogical staff for further vocational training for adults is necessary to be developed, as well as information database for support research activities and activities for popularizing and introducing good practices in this field.

2.3 Widely accessible lifelong guidance policies and systems

In 2006, the NAVET has prepared a report concerning current state of play on career guidance policy development at European level and at national level as well. This report has been done under framework of the “Copenhagen Dissemination Process” project, funded by the ETF. It is disseminated among the responsible public authorities and the social partners.

Modular training in the field of career guidance has been introduced in the low secondary education's curricula, in implementation of the National School and Pre-School Education Programme 2006 – 2013. Two subjects – *Home Technique and Economics* and *Technologies* set corresponding training contents.

Development of National Educational Portal has started in 2006, in implementation of the Strategy on Introduction of ICT in Bulgarian Schools 2005 – 2007 and the action plan for 2006 to the National Strategy on Further Vocational Training. The portal is targeted to pupils, teachers, and heads of schools, parents and partners in the field of education. The portal contains registers of secondary schools and higher educational institutions, plan for accepting pupils in the public general schools and the municipal general and vocational schools, List of Professions for VET (according to Article 6 of the VET Act), educational documentation concerning the VET system in BG, geographic Information System on the Structure of the National Education. The portal is developing and enriching on regular basis as with respect to institutions – providers of education and training, as well with respect to training contents, programmes, methods and educational forms.

Building of Career Guidance System in secondary education has started in February 2006. On the grounds of the “Labour Market” project and an agreement signed by on the he National Pedagogical Centre (which is external unit of the Ministry of Education and Science) and the USAID, pilot training in career guidance has been done by the project “Training Consultants in Professional and Career Guidance”. As a result, 40 participants have obtained Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) certificate in June 2006. During the second stage of same project, the certified consultants have trained more than 100 teachers and pedagogical advisors from all country. The process continues, as it is forthcoming around 1500 consultants to be trained during 2007 and 2008.

Career guidance development is a priority in the NAVET's action plan for 2006. Expert commission on career guidance is appointed in NAVET. This commission, according to the Vet Act, licenses the information and career guidance centres in the country. Despite existing legislative base, during all six years since the NAVET's establishment, there are no centres – candidates for licensing. The reasons could be find in lack of coherent national policy in this field, impossibility for self-funding of such centre and to ensure self-dependently all informational base needed for provision of qualitative information and career guidance services. Draft of a Career Guidance National Strategy is at development stage. It is developed by the NAVET (see *Annex 2* for more details).

Under framework of the “Labour Market” project of USAID, through the National Programme for Student Practice, since 2005 till the present moment, career centres have been established in 27 of 51 total higher educational institutions in BG. Six of them are established in private higher education institutions.

2.4 Measures to reinforce transnational mobility in all sectors, including through the removal of administrative and legal obstacles, the implementation of Europass, or by the provision of financial or other support

List of Regulated Professions in Bulgaria has been actualized in 2006. The changes been adopted by Decision № 925 of the Council of Ministers on December 29, 2006. All information concerning regulated professions in BG can be currently found at the National Information and Documentation Centre's web-site [12].

As it was mentioned above, in 2007 the NAVET has proposed changes concerning the structure of State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions. New element in these standards is text in English language, which contains name of the profession, the specialties included in this profession, the professional direction (by ISCED 97), and the most important competences that shall be acquired after training in this profession as well. This information could be used in the EUROPASS's enclosure to the certificate for professional qualification. It will provide an opportunity for every training institution to issue enclosure to the certificate for professional qualification to all

without any difficulties. This information in English will assist to process of recognition of qualifications acquired in BG and to the mobility of the Bulgarian and foreign citizens.

Participation of BG in different European programmes in the field of education actively contributes for promotion of transnational mobility as well (see *Annex 3* for more details).

CHAPTER 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES IN SCHOOLS, HIGHER EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT EDUCATION

3.1 Elements to be reported on for all levels (schools, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning)

3.1.1 Governance and leadership of education and training institutions (eg organisational and administrative reforms, autonomy and accountability measures, public/private initiatives)

Contemporarily, the Ministry of Education and Science's functions are moving from administrative orders to control and regulations. Stress in the Regional Inspectorates on Education's activity is moving from administrative-governance rights to methodical support activity and control.

Strong centralization of the educational system is the basic problem for school system's governance. It reflects negatively onto the adequacy of governance decisions towards the personals at implementation level. That's why measures for decentralization of the school and pre-school education system are undertaken. Possibility for providing regional policy, which to take in account demographic, social-economics and other features of a given region increase by this way. In the same time, regional policy assures balance, co-operation and control between the central public authorities and the local authorities.

Despite the state saves its right to set general standards for quality of education and to control their respect in the whole country, more rights and their corresponding responsibilities are given to each particular school. More operative rights concerning budget issues are provided to the schools. Preconditions for self-dependent policy, including higher salaries to the teachers, have been established by this way. Such financial decentralization is bound with supplementary funding to the schools. These supplementary funds must be managed in compliance with the laws and economically expediently.

On the grounds of § 65 of the Law on State Budget of Republic of Bulgaria for 2007, a programme for optimization of the schools network has been developed, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finances and Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria. This programme has been adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 2007. Its objectives are related to provide each child the opportunity for qualitative education, vocational school networking that responds to the labour market needs and the social-economical profile of the region, increasing effectiveness of the public expenditures for education. This programme is organized through modules, which contains municipal programmes for optimization. Municipal programmes contain measures targeted to schools re-structuring and establishment of central schools on the territory of a given municipality, and measures targeted to decreasing the number of classes at a given school, including decreasing the number of classes with low number of pupils and the number of joint classes as well. The programme for optimization of the schools network's total budget is 35 millions BGN. Deadline for implementation is 31.12. 2007.

School and Pre-School Education National Programme 2006 – 2015 has identified serious deficit in the school governance, which requires immediate measures. This programme foresees decentralization in school governance to be accomplished in the following basis directions: appointment and recruitment of heads of schools; greater rights to the local authorities concerning establishment and close down of municipal schools (saving the right for control by the Ministry of Education and Science) and step-by-step giving rights to the local authorities concerning number and profile of vocational and specialized schools. A system of criteria and indicators for quality evaluation of heads of schools' and teachers' performance on regular basis is under development. Obligatory attestation would play stimulating and disciplinal role onto the heads of schools, and more – combined by introduction of mandatory basis.

Delegating significant governance authority at local level is a milestone in the current Government's plan. Measures include delegated school budgets, specialized school management, re-structuring of all authorities and tasks of the responsible institutions. Governance based at school supposes new legal rights and responsibilities for the head of school – he / she manages the school budget, determine the number of teachers and other staff, appointment of staff, accounting to the School Board (School Council) and to the municipality. Head of school is not well prepared for school management or kindergarten's management, due to lack of proper education / qualification or to insufficient practical experience. In order to respond to these needs, the National Institute for Heads of Schools Training has been established in November 2006. Its basic aim is to build national system for heads of schools training and other actors in the school education system by preparation of analyses, reports, training programmes and assurance of contemporary, modern, innovative and qualitative heads of schools training as well. Training must combines national traditions with the European dimension, targeted to higher quality and better effectiveness of school governance and school management (*see Annex 4* for more details).

Recent changes in the statute of heads of schools have been performed too. Its aim is, by one hand to create guaranties that heads of schools have all governance and management knowledge and skills and, by another hand – to assure mechanisms for control onto their activity. Heads of schools training at the National Institute for Heads of Schools Training is planned on regular basis, in order to improve his / her governance competency. Two groups of training are carrying out in this institute: initial training for candidates for heads of schools, which finish by national exam for licensing, and periodic training of acting heads of schools directed to bringing their knowledge up-to-date and improving their organizational, governing and financial competences. For better control onto their activities and for better motivation as well, it is envisaged heads of schools to prove the effectiveness of their programmes for school development on regular basis, to report about everything that is achieved, and to demand again the trust of parents, teachers and pupils – heads of schools' mandates is introducing at the present moment, combined by periodic evaluation of the head of school's job and professional qualities.

Pilot agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Association of Municipalities is recently signed, targeted to strengthening of the local community's role in school governance system; widening the opportunities for society's participation and control onto decisions taken in the school governance system; promoting and control of heads of schools by development and implementation of a system for evaluation of their job and professional qualities. This agreement is realizing in 10 pilot municipalities in the country.

Public governance functions in higher education are related to establishment of general framework and conditions necessary for functioning of the system. Higher Education Act provides to higher education institutions full academic autonomy. The state stimulates autonomic higher education institutions in their efforts to build strong and stable university structures with enough autonomy and transparency in decision-making process. At the present moment good European practices for university governance and university management are under research and dissemination of

results phase. Opportunities for introduction of new university management models related to modern forms of university governance and leading to better financial control at institutional level are researched too. Division between university management functions and pure academic functions is clearly seen in the private higher education institutions and in some public universities as well, targeted to strategic capacity and financial stability improvement.

After Ministerial conference in Bergen in May 2005, substantial structural changes in the field of governance of higher education system have not been performed. Co-ordination, functioning and rights given by law between the basic national institutions responsible for higher education, as National Assembly, Council of Ministers, the Minister of education and science, and the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, are improved. Their functions are described in details in the Bulgarian report for Bergen conference.

Higher Education Act (1995) gives to the Minister of education and science new functions as an organ of the public authority in implementation of the national policy in higher education. Whole activity related to co-ordination, governance and control of the higher education system is included in his legal rights. Other new elements, introduced by next Higher Education Act's amendments and supplements in 2004 (SG, issue 48 / 2004) are related to organizing and support of an information system, which covers register of higher education institutions, register of academic staff on basic and supplementary labour contract, register on current and dropped out students and doctorands by educational degrees and professional directions (areas of knowledge where different specialties exist), register on graduated students and doctorands. These registries have become a fact in 2006.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency has established a new unit for post-accreditation monitoring and control within its structure in 2005. This unit is responsible for monitoring of trends and tendencies during post-accreditation period of the higher education institutions.

Other organizations participating in higher education governance are represented in *Annex 5*.

3.1.2 Stimulating private investment from enterprises, households and individuals

3.1.3 Widening access, and improving equity of participation, treatment and outcomes, especially for disadvantaged learners (e.g. migrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled)

General and vocational education:

National educational priorities are related to achieving the objectives for equal access to education and qualitative education. They are in compliance with the objectives of Priority 4 of the Human Resources Development Operative Programme. Ministry of Education and Science implements a number of activities for implementation of the national policy and the recommendations of the European Commission targeted to assurance of equal access to qualitative education, development of education for inclusion of the different target groups, including social inclusion of children and pupils with special educational needs. They are listed in *Annex 6*.

Improvement of access to further vocational training is a basic priority issue in the National Strategy on Further Vocational Training 2005– 2010, which is adopted by the Council of Ministers. Complete evaluation and SWOT analysis of existing legislative and institutional basis for further vocational training in BG has been performed in 2006. Results are published and disseminated among the different stakeholders, supported by the project “Adult Education in South-Eastern Europe” of IZ / DVV and funding provided by the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development of Germany. Same analysis is disseminating also via the NAVET's web site.

Development of a national information system for search and supply of vocational training has started in 2006 r. by the NAVET's initiative. During the same year, another system – the integrated information system “NAVET – Employment Agency”, which has been mentioned in the previous national report, is developed as a national system for

search & supply of adult vocational training, in compliance with the EU's guidelines on development of information system at administrative and inter-institutional level. The system has a potential as for horizontal as well as for vertical further development and extension, and if enough financing is ensured, the system could be developed as an acting element of the electronic government. Its basic aims are related to vocational training provision according to labour market's dynamic needs and requirements and the national social-economic priorities and overcoming the gap between learning outcomes and actual labour market needs. The system will ensure transparency at all stages of the monitoring processes with objective to assist for more qualitative decision-making processes at all levels. Also, this system will assist for information provision, which is necessary for better quality assurance of adult vocational training, for optimization of state subsidy's allocation and expenditure, to provide opportunity for development of "qualification passport" for learners, to facilitate information supply for employers and citizens in this field. All stakeholders in the field of VET, as well as citizens will have access to the system, at different levels.

In 2005 – 2006 NAVET has collected and summarized annual information concerning the VET centres' activity. The survey has been implemented by special information card via Internet. 90 % of the VET centres have responded. It is the first time when NAVET requires such information, but collecting such data in future will be of great importance, related to development and functioning of an information system for search & supply of adult vocational training in the country.

Higher Education:

The Higher Education Act foresees facilitated conditions and order for accepting disadvantaged students. Candidate-students that have successfully passed the entrance exam and are persons with durable disabilities and with decreased workability, war-invalids, complete orphans, mothers with three or more kids fall in this group. Training complete orphans, persons with durable disabilities and with decreased workability, war-invalids, persons who have grown up to 18 y. o. at homes for nurturing children without parents, students in higher military schools and doctorands during the last 2 years of training is free of charge. In addition, special facilitations are foreseen and regulated by the higher education institutions' Rules of Procedures – for orphans, deaf, blind people, disability persons with durable injuries and decreased workability to and up to 70 %, war-invalids, persons who have grown up to 18 y. o. at homes for nurturing children without parents, mothers with kids down to 6 y. o. and dispensary persons.

Also, distance form of higher education, introduced in BG in 2004, appears quire useful for blind students – they receive all the information that is necessary for their complete training by electronic way. Further development of these forms must take in account also the needs of students with motor disabilities more fully, in order to decrease their degree of isolation. More details about existing measures in higher education in this aspect are provided in *Annex 6*.

3.1.4 Measures to address gender aspects in education and training

Introduction of new educational structure is foreseen in the School and Pre-School Education National Programme 2006 – 2015 as a measure for overcoming inequality between the students studying in different kind of schools, due to mastering different educational minimum contains and lack of transitiveness within the educational system.

Access to school education is guaranteed in equal degree for the two genders. Grades are leading principle for accepting pupils in the schools with planned public order, no gender restrictions.

Working group is established in the field of secondary education at the Ministry of Education and Science. It has passed two stages of training organized by the National Council on Gender Equality.

Implementing the national plan, recommendations to authors of textbooks and supplementary books for rejection of all texts and pictures, which push on violence, gender and religious discrimination, have been adopted. Quota principle

concerning boys / girls ration for accepting pupils at schools in the national education system, has been abolished from the national legislation.

3.1.5 Use of learning outcome based approaches for the definition and design of education and training objectives, standards and curricula, and their relevance to the needs of society and the economy

School and Pre-School Education National Programme 2006 – 2015 has been adopted in order to harmonize the Bulgarian educational objectives with the dynamic global economy's new requirements and the challenges on the high-competitive labour market. The programme is based on the concept that child (pupil) is the main value of the educational system. Interests of the rest participants in the educational process must be subjected to the main objective – assurance of equal access to high-qualitative education for the children. Human Resources Development Operative Programme also has a target to improve the educational services in compliance with the labour market needs. Measures for strengthening the links between the educational institutions and the business are foreseen there too.

Learning outcomes are a basic element of the State Educational Requirements (standards) for acquisition of qualification by professions, according to the NAVET's proposal for bringing the *Framework Requirements for development of Standards for Professional Qualification in Bulgaria* up-to-date. Defining learning outcomes by the State Educational Requirements will provide an opportunity for facilitating the recognition of qualifications, acquired as in BG, as well as abroad, using the EQF for LLL. Listing the learning outcomes with corresponding measuring units is a precondition for introduction of the ECVET step-by-step.

As it is already mentioned in the 2005 Bulgarian report, such State Educational Requirements are developed and adopted for each profession in the List of professions in VET. Complete analysis, evaluation and actualization of this list are performed in 2006 (see *Annex 7* for more details). State Educational Requirements' basic elements till 2006 have been profession's profile, training contents and requirements concerning training equipment and teachers' staff.

Introduction of new educational documentation is evaluated as a basic precondition for improving the quality of VET. Information on this issue is provided in *Annex 8*.

3.1.6 Quality assurance systems

Building of contemporary, effective and objective quality assurance system and raising teacher's authority and his / her social status through introduction of differentiated payment system and teachers' career development that are in close relationship with quality of training, are among the basis priorities of school education in BG. Promising mechanisms for measuring learning outcomes are necessary, in order to assure high quality of training. Plan for widespread use of tests and introduction of a system for national standardized external evaluation of learning outcomes is developed. It foresees external evaluation of learning outcomes to start since the current school year, at the end of primary education's initial stage (IV class) and after VII class. Process for introducing tests all over at Bulgarian school system started since 2006/2007 school year, both as leading form for current control and evaluation during the training, and in finishing each educational stage.

Teacher's competency in use of modern pedagogical methods in compliance with the educational contents is a basic factor for improving quality of training. That's why the modernization of the school system is expressed in supplementary teachers' qualification as well. This supplementary qualification is related to new State Educational Requirements on training contents, mostly in foreign languages and ICT. Applying clear quality standards is of great importance both for institutions providing adult training, assuring transparency and equal access to education, independently regarding place and time, as well as assurance of unified standards for recognition and certification of knowledge and skills.

State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions, developed by NAVET and consulted with employers, contribute for quality assurance in the VET system. VET centres' licensing and further control procedures performed by NAVET assure quality of adult training. Quality assurance, evaluation and control system is a basic requirement for the VET centres - candidates for licensing. VET centres clearly realize the significance of quality assurance systems in adult vocational training. Some of them are already certified by ISO 9001:2000.

Participation of employers, workers and employee in development of educational documentation is widening, as well as their participation during state exams procedure for acquisition of professional qualification. It is a real contribution to improvement of the quality of VET and for better match with the labour market needs. Social partners and other stakeholders have participated in 34 % of such state exams in 2005/2006 school year.

Activities related to development of methodology for defining and standardization of "central schools" and related to consolidation of schools have been recently performed. Estimated effects and uses from the optimization process of school and service units have been researched /with priority in regions with mostly Roma population, in view of school dropouts tendency/. System for prevention of school dropouts due to consolidation of schools has been developed jointly with representatives from the World Bank and the Ministry of Finances.

In higher education system, the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is the institution responsible for external quality evaluation and control. NEAA participates in all initiatives for development of the European higher education area and for standardizing the evaluation criteria of the European evaluation and accreditation agencies. On these grounds, NEAA has developed own evaluation and accreditation criteria and recommendations. These criteria and recommendations are developed according the Higher Education Act and to a great extend with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA. They are in compliance with the Higher Educational Act's requirements and with the Standards for quality evaluation in the EHEA. They are based on equal value's principle of the three main activities in the higher educational institutions: educational activity, research activity, and management of the institution. Appropriate environment and suitable conditions for mutual recognition of accreditations by harmonization of criteria, procedures and efficacy of results from evaluation and accreditation procedures is established by this way. NEAA's list of criteria is developed in compliance with the basic evaluation models and in particular with the CIPP model (context, input, process and product evaluation model). More information concerning external quality assurance in higher education is provided in *Annex 9*.

With regard to quality assurance at institutional level, all 51 accredited higher education institutions have developed internal quality assurance systems. Quality assurance systems of 13 higher educational institutions are certified by ISO 9001:2000. Such system contains mechanisms for approval, periodic review and monitoring of training plans and programmes that are provided. With this respect special attention is paid towards the structure and contents of educational material, resource assurance, feedback from the students, and periodical review of training plans. Significant progress is noticed in achieving better transparency related to evaluation criteria for students. Tradition for obligatory programmes for pedagogical development of young and recently appointed academic staff, in order to improve their pedagogical skills and competences that have been terminated since the beginning of 1990s is recently renewed in some of the universities. Big progress is observed regarding modernization of training equipment for the students in all higher education institutions.

3.1.7 Developing learning partnerships with stakeholders (policy-makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society)

It is a state's responsibility to make consultations with stakeholders as employers organizations and syndicates before adoption of legislation in the field of labour relations and relations that are directly linked with them, insurance

relations and topics related to level of life. Social dialog and collective labour negotiations are regulated by Articles 2 and 3 of the Labour Code, which has been actualized in 2006 by the Law on Amendments and Supplements of the Labour Code (published, SG, issue 48 / 2006). Co-operation and consultations with stakeholders at national level are carried out in the National Council for Three-party Co-operation's framework. This council consists of representatives from the Council of Ministers and all organizations of employers and syndicates that are represented at national level.

School education:

Need for introduction of working really forms of parents' and teachers' participation in school governance is taking in account in development of flexible mechanisms for control by the society onto the school governance. Status of school boards is re-rationalized and school councils, which include parents' and teachers' representatives and representatives from the municipality as well, are established in order to provide control in this direction. They could be developed as collective bodies for school governance in near future.

Vocational education and training:

Social partnership in the field of VET is extremely important factor for quality assurance both of training and human resources, in view of employability. Its main goal is affirmation of the three-party principle in decision-making process and use of the results from the social dialog in organization and provision of vocational training for both unemployed and employed people. VET's strategic meaning with regard to better employability supposes joint responsibilities to be taken by the institutions at national, regional and local level, and development of an effective co-operation and interaction with the social partners as well. In this aspect, partnership in implementing national plans, strategies and programmes, related to human resources development, is currently developing. Proposals for changes in the national legislation (National Education Act and VET Act), related to widening access to vocational training for different target groups, have been represented in implementation of the 2006 Action Plan to the National Strategy for Further Vocational Training 2005 – 2010.

Social partners continue their active participation in the NAVET's structures – expert commissions in professional directions and the Governing Board, built using the equity's principle between public representatives, nationally represented employers' organizations, employee's organizations and syndicates as well. They participate in all activities related to development of State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions, support and actualization of the List of Professions in VET and, of course, in evaluation of VET Centres – candidates for licensing.

Higher education:

Clear legislation exists in the field of higher education, which regulates participation of students (through Student Councils and the National Representation of the Students Councils), syndicates at national level and representatives of the civic society in policy development at national level (see *Annex 5*). Establishment of National Council on Student Issues is foreseen as a consultation body to the Minister of education and science, regulated by Articles 73a and 73b of the higher Education Act.

At institutional level, collective labour contracts are acting in all higher education institutions. They are registered at the Chief Labour Inspection. These contracts contain mechanisms for participation in governance issues of the higher education institution, through councils for social partnership in every higher education institution, established by rector's order.

3.2 Schools

3.2.1 *Increasing investment in and strengthening pre-primary education*

Children from 3 to 6 y. o. are a target group through Human Resources Development Operative Programme. Obligatory preliminary training of children one year before their entering at school is a national priority, with understanding that pre-school education has the highest returns' percentage onto the LLL process. Pre-school education is legislatively regulated as obligatory, one year before they to go to school. It is provided by half-a-day or whole-a-day basis at kindergartens or at school.

Pre-school education at kindergarten is accomplished in compliance with State Educational Requirements on Pre-School Education and programmes targeted to formation of those essential concepts and practical skills, which are fundamental for their further education. Variety of interactive methods and modern pedagogical techniques in which children's teacher is competent, are of great reliance for their successful mastering. Tolerance and co-operation, publicity and transparency, multifunctional and systematic approach, intellectual and practical approach, compensatory and successfulness are leading principles of the pedagogical interaction.

3.2.2 *Modernising school curricula and assessment arrangements (inter alia to address learning outcomes and the attainment of key competences)*

New curricula and textbooks for obligatory education are developed. Since 2002, they are introducing step-by-step according to State Educational Requirements on Educational Contents. Requirements for removal of informational overloading, adaptation by age of children and practical purposefulness of educational contents are taken into consideration in them. Their use by teachers is subjected to achievement of expected educational results taking in account the pupils' individual needs and potential. Objectives of each subject, expected results according educational contents, educational contents by itself, specific methods and pupils' evaluation forms, brief methodical guidance notes for applying the curricula, are represented in the curricula. Besides development of specific skills by different subjects, it is recommendable key groups of competences, which are developed by all subjects, to be taken in account, as language skills, mathematical skills, use of information, communicative skills, critical thinking and solving problems, learning strategies.

Change in the educational structure is going along with training plans' changes, curricular changes, changes in textbooks and supplementary books for low secondary education. Hours given for foreign languages learning and computer training are increasing in the training plans. Training in ICT is introduced as obligatory elective subject for low secondary education since 2005/2006 school year.

Effective use of modern ICT for improvement of the quality of education, enriching of educational contents and introduction of innovations in the educational process is a basic objective of the National Strategy for Introduction of ICT in the Bulgarian Schools 2005 – 2007 and its action plan. It envisages all pupils to be enough well prepared for the informational society through computer and informational literacy. Improvement of training methods by ICT is an accent there, and concrete actions are performing (see *Annex 10*).

It is foreseen modernization of curricula and State Educational Requirements and development of new ones to be funded by the European Social Fund. Development of a system for external evaluation of quality in education is envisaged as an activity too.

3.2.3 *Addressing the specific learning / training needs of teachers (including pre-primary) to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society*

In compliance with the priorities of our government, the Ministry of Education and Science performs efforts and invests in improving the quality of teachers and trainers by organizing short-term and long-term qualification courses – both in new educational contents in innovative training methods, and work in multicultural environment. As is mentioned in our previous report, investing in teachers’ training in foreign languages and Informatics is still a priority, taking in account the necessity of such knowledge in the EU. A number of seminars in human rights and active citizenship are also carrying out. Human Resources Development Operative Programme also envisages measures for teachers’ qualification, which will be supplemented by career development programmes.

During the recent year, the Ministry of Education and Science began to develop new system for teachers’ career development. It will allow their preparation to be in compliance with the new political, economical and European perspectives. It will develop appropriate behaviour arrangements in the teachers by this way. Scale of positions in the secondary education is developed, as well as their functions, requirements for appointment at a given position and minimum required professional experience.

Taking in account the special function of the teacher in the modern society’s development – regarding the intellectual potential of the nation and affirmation of cultural values of the society, a new system for teachers’ payment is a must. It by itself requires:

- transition to new type of policy in funding education;
- current percentage of the State Budget is far from the necessary funds for functioning the education. LLL tendency in modern education will require more funding in future too.
- wide spreading the societal outset by 1) decentralization of education; 2) investments, even in nature, from parents, citizens, organizations, etc. and 3) improvement of the training equipment.

3.2.4 Measures to reduce early school leaving, to increase rates of completion of upper secondary education, to reduce the proportion of low-achieving 15 year olds in literacy, and to increase the take-up of mathematics, science and technology subjects (EU benchmarks)

Measures in this field are set in implementing *Priority 4* of the Human Resources Development Operative Programme: Anxiously high percentage of children at obligatory school age, which are not covered within the educational system or later are dropping out is observed in BG. Highest percentage of school dropouts have groups at risk and particularly the Roma children. Most of children (34,7 %) leave school by family reasons at low secondary education stage. It could be explained by the position of education in the family’s system of values, low economic status – unemployment, poorness, lack of money for ensuring education, use of children as working power in the family, etc. More than 5000 pupils per year drop out from school by lack of motivation. Reasons are difficulties in assimilation of the training contents due to not good mastering of Bulgarian language or due to sometimes quite sophisticated academic style of textbooks, traditional passive model of training and lack of interactive approach to children, which does not stimulate pupils to be active and which does not motivate pupils’ interest in learning. Measures for reducing the number of pupils that are not covered within the educational system and measures for reducing the number of school dropouts can be listed in three basic groups: changes of educational structure, social activities, and measures for children with mother tongue other than Bulgarian and for children with special educational needs.

With regard to effective implementation of measures, development of a system for collecting data, evaluation, analysis and control of children at obligatory school age and of movement of pupils by classes, educational stages and degrees has already begun. It is envisaged the system to be introduced in 2007/2008 school year. Together with the measures for carrying children at obligatory school age at school, a system for reintegration of already dropped out of school children will be developed. It will include adaptation of curricula, alternative forms of training, opening of pilot schools

“Second Chance”, etc. Mechanism for parents’ daily informing about absences and coming late of their children at school is envisaged too, including using ICT and the opportunities provided by the National Educational Portal.

Current state of play, related to need for optimization of the school network and the big number of classes with small number of pupils and mixed classes in the country are described in the School and Pre-School Education National Programme 2006-2015. School network in BG can be described as insufficiently optimized in some directions. Firstly, the total number of schools does not take in account demographic changes – considerable decrease of children at school age in the recent years. Second, artificial supporting of relatively big number of schools leads to ineffectiveness of expenditures and additionally delays investments for improving quality of education. On another hand, different kinds of schools in many places in the country do not take in account the regional labour market needs and educate specialists in professions and profiles that do not ensure opportunities for professional and social realization.

Pedagogical staff’s structure could also be defined as insufficiently optimized. Teacher / pupils ratio in BG is higher than the average for the EU. The big number of teachers in the system as a whole is matched at the same time with insufficiency of teachers in some subjects, mostly in foreign languages and ICT.

Classes with small number of pupils and fused classes exist in many schools in the country, including districts’ centres and even in the capital. Using data from the Centre for Information Service of Education, there exist 6784 classes with small number of pupils and 3341 fused classes in the 2006/2007 school year. Both considerably lower than the minimum number of pupils at class and simultaneous training of pupils with different age groups at one class (fused classes) do not allow normal educational process. It does not respond to children’s interests too and is in contradiction with the basis priorities for guarantying equal access to qualitative education. Network of municipal schools and service units has been optimized in 2006. As a result, 77 of them are closed, 10 are transformed, and 4 new are established. Optimization of public schools is performed too, as 39 of them are closed, 4 are transformed, and 29 new are established.

Ministry of Education and Science and UNICEF work together on a joint project for prevention of school dropouts. The project “Prevention of school dropouts in Bulgaria”, developed by the Ministry is targeted to conclusion-making concerning the results from measures at inter-institutional level, as free breakfasts, textbooks and transport, as well as to find the reasons by which children do not attend at school and drop out as a consequence. This project is based on a sociological study among teachers, heads of schools, NGO, early school leavers and their parents. National programme for preventing early school leavers will be developed as a result of this study.

3.3 Higher Education

3.3.1 measures to reinforce the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation:

Measures and concrete activities for strengthening the links between education, research and innovations are foreseen in the draft of the National Reforms Programme of Republic of Bulgaria (2006 – 2009 г.), as for example:

- defining the common principles and requirements on state exams and diploma thesis defending together with related stakeholders;
- attracting people from the practice and the business as teachers in higher educational institutions;
- participation of representatives from the practice in state exam commissions;
- attracting people from the business in expert councils on quality in higher educational institutions;
- career centres establishment in the higher educational institutions for ensuring effective partnership with employers by supporting selection of students for work places and approbation positions.

3.3.2 Any participation targets and measures to achieve them

Objective: balance between state, university and labour market requirements for improving quality of education, research and academic staff; promoting creativeness and competency of the human factor and the institutions; development of research potential and promotion co-operation.

3.3.3 Measures to increase excellence:

- Improving the activity of internal quality assurance systems in the higher educational institutions, which includes quality of academic staff and students' opinion too;
- Applying of mechanisms for mobility of teachers, students and research staff between research and university structures and the enterprises.

3.3.4 Measures to increase the number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology (EU benchmark)

- Concrete activities are foreseen in this direction. They are included in the draft of our National Reforms Programme 2007 – 2009.

3.4 Vocational education and training and adult learning

3.4.1 Measures to improve the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and of adult education

Amendments and supplements of the employment Promotion Act have been done in 2005 and 2006. Their aim is widening the range of institutions that have legal right to provide adult vocational training for acquisition of professional qualification. Now besides VET centres, vocational training for adults can provide also vocational schools, vocational high schools, art schools, vocational colleges and higher education institutions. More information about the activities related to licensing and further control of VET centres is provided in *Annex 11*.

Ordering of adult training, organized by the Employment Agency and funded by the State Budget, is performed only if selection of training institutions is done according to the Law on Public Orders. New methodology on evaluation of project proposals for offering of vocational training for acquisition of professional qualification is adopted in 2006. Especial attention is paid with respect to quality of proposals, as requirements to the training institutions are raised. Experts from the corresponding professional area are attracted in quality evaluation process as well. Methodology is already used since 2007.

Besides the classical scheme for acquisition of higher education and issuing of diplomas for higher education, long-lasting tradition for providing formal further training within the higher education system exists in BG (since 1980) – for specialized and post-graduated training, re-qualification, and variety of qualification courses (for teachers, medical doctors, etc.). At the present moment, these documents are recognized without any problems by corresponding sectors (education, health care), as well as by employers organizations. Also, currently almost all higher education institutions have functioning units for further or post-graduated training and issue documents for acquisition of corresponding qualification. Currently acting system allows awarding of educational credits acquired by further training, which are recognizable within the higher education system. Further training can be funded as by the post-graduated students by themselves, as well as by private or public organizations or employers. Some practical examples concerning validation and recognition of previous training acquired within formal educational system can be found in *Annex 12*.

3.4.2 Measures to reinforce the link between VET and labour market needs including early identification of skills needs, improving the relevance of curricula and qualifications

Model of inter-institutional integrated information system is developed in collaboration between NAVET and the Employment Agency. The joint project is funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and implemented by

external executors. The purpose of the system is data collecting, information processing, information storage and provision related to search and supply of vocational training and career guidance for adults. Pilot model of the system is working and can be used in practice. Since February 2007 this information system is available in Internet for all individuals and all institutions. At the present moment it contains information only about VET Centres that are licensed by NAVET. Possibilities for further expansion of the system depend on available financial resources, political acceptability, and interests of social partners, employers and candidates for training.

System on determining employers' needs of working power with a given qualification is developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2006, by PHARE project. Its purpose is to assist for a good match between training and labour market needs. It is envisaged till the end of 2007 the system to be introduced over all the country and to be used in developing educational plans, determining the professional directions and the state order for accepting pupils and students.

3.4.3 Opening up pathways to further and higher education:

- Structure of the List for Professions in VET allows further training in other profession after graduation of a given profession, and also opportunities for further training in other close profession for acquisition of low level of professional qualification. The most appropriate professions for further training as opportunities for acquisition of higher level of qualification by professions are listed in State Educational Requirements for acquisition of professional qualification by professions.
- Bulgarian legislation ensures good opportunities and clear principles for providing flexible transitions in higher education system. Autonomous higher education institutions have right to develop concrete rules in this aspect and to use them in their practice. Students can continue their higher education in master programmes, which are different (concerning different areas of knowledge) than bachelor programmes that they have graduated. Training in supplementary subjects besides those listed in the basis training plan is allowed, as well as training in modules of subjects that are different than those studied during previous level of training. At later stage, credits acquired by this training can be recognized within the system for further training.
- Flexibility with respect to training methods is available by division of a given subject by levels (studied in different semesters), part of which is obligatory for the corresponding educational degree (for example Bachelor, Master) and another part is provided as non-obligatory (chosen by the students or facultative). By this way, student or post-graduated student has opportunity to shape the palette of his / her own training, to set ones or others accents in it that assumes as useful for his / her future professional realization. Flexible learning paths in higher education reveals especially strongly in cases when student has declared his / her desire for partial training in defined range of subjects with defined duration – month, semester, etc. Different universities have rich experience using flexible pedagogic approaches and training methods that are specific for each professional direction or specialty – from use of modern ICT tools till juxtaposing and analysis of personal attainments by audio visual records of concerts, spectacles, etc. mostly related with art specialties.

3.4.4 Addressing the specific learning / training needs of vocational and adult teachers and trainers to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society

Teachers' qualification is performed through three-party bodies at national, regional and local level, as social partners participate in development and implementation of the policies. Provision and acquisition of initial qualifications in career development in professional and management spheres is ongoing process. Continuous education set requirements for mastering of key competences and bringing up-t—date all basic skills that every teacher must acquire

as a minimum, in order to participate actively in the professional life and in the society. Priority areas for further development at policy level in teachers' qualification sphere are identified and corresponding concrete activities are noted. Planned activities in this area are funded, as financial resources of not less than 0.8 % of the annual funds to be used for salaries are foreseen to this end. They are provided by the municipal budgets – for municipal kindergartens, municipal schools and service units, and by the budgets of responsible ministries and other administrations – for public kindergartens, public schools and service units. Quality assurance of education is related to active participation of the social partners – syndicates and employers organizations in the field of secondary education and municipal administrations. Teachers' training is accomplished with participation of higher educational institutions (through their teachers' training departments), non-governmental organizations, licensed VET centres, etc.

Different types of funding qualification activity provides opportunity on one hand to draw up the national priorities of our educational policy, and on another hand – to draw up and to organize activities related to corresponding regional needs taking in account the municipal educational policy too. Supplementary financial resources are envisaged by the Law of State Budget for 2007 (published, SG, issue 108 / 29.12.2006, in force since 1.01.2007), targeted to teachers' qualification in implementation of the Pre-School and School Education National Programme 2006 – 2015. With respect to investing in trainers' qualification, as is mentioned in our previous national report – contribution, overall system for training trainers for adults still does not exist. Some measures in this field are presented in *Annex 13*.

It is forthcoming pilot project for differentiated teachers' payment to be launched in July 2007, bound with quality of education and qualification. That's why success towards this end depends on both good management at institutional level and quality assurance of education and training bounded with learning outcomes approach.

3.4.5 Measures which reinforce social partner involvement in training, in particular sectoral approaches to skills and qualifications:

- ◆ Participation of social partners in up-to-dating the List of Professions in VET, by State Educational Requirements development process, as well as in development of bachelor and master programmes and programmes for acquisition of “Specialist in..” educational degree (ISCED 5B);
- ◆ Inclusion of employers in provision of practical training of students in VET and higher education system in the enterprises;
- ◆ Activities of the career centres at higher educational institutions.

3.4.6 Enhancing access and opportunities for learning among the disadvantaged, and alternative pathways, including for early school leavers

Vocational training of disadvantaged groups on the labour market is a basis accent in our active employment policy, Such groups are unemployed youth, unemployed women older than 50 y. o. and unemployed men older than 55 y. o., etc. Their training is carrying out by literacy programmes, programmes for acquisition of qualification and employment, in order to improve their employability and to ensure their active participation on the labour market. Some of them are mentioned in our previous report. Such programmes are the programme for learning to read and write and qualification programmes for Roma, National Programme “From social aid to employment”, “Beautiful Bulgaria” project, National programme for employment and vocational training of people with durable disabilities, National programme “Computer training for youth”, project for youth – early school leavers, etc.

Reported data from the Employment Agency show that in 2005 47.9 % of people included in training activities are youth down to 29 y. o., 4.5 % are persons up to 55 y. o.; regarding level of education– 55.6% are graduated secondary education; 16.3 % are graduated higher education, and 67.9 % are women.

Methodology for selection of unemployed persons in order to include them in vocational training for acquisition of professional qualification has applied since 2006. The training is organized by the Employment Agency. Opportunities for active inclusion in training activities of disadvantaged groups, as long-term unemployed, uneducated and unqualified people, youth, people with disabilities, etc. are provided too. This methodology assists to improve the correspondence between training and unemployed learners' individual needs.

During the reflection process related to recommendations made by employers concerning the List of Professions in VET's up-to-date (the List is supported by NAVET), NAVET proposed new professions, which require 1st (the lowest) degree of professional qualification, to be included in the List. Such training requires 6th grade to be graduated and these professions are especially appropriate for training adults with low educational level. Such adults are mainly long-term unemployed, disadvantaged people, early school leavers, etc. Training in these professions is accessible for them and will improve their chances for realization on the labour market.

3.4.7 Measures to increase the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning, and to reinforce key competences among adult learners and older people whether employed or not (EU benchmark)

A number of programmes and projects for mastering key competences by unemployed persons are under implementation through the National Employment Action Plan. Literacy programmes are provided at national level, targeted mainly to Roma ethno-cultural group, which has the highest level of illiteracy. Programmes for computer training, projects on entrepreneurship, training in ICT, etc. are provided as well.

Mastering key competences for communication in foreign language, work on computer, building "learning to learn" skills, entrepreneurship skills, and communicative skills are included by State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions – at degree that is obligatory for all professions, responding to the Recommendation of the European parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for LLL.

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Information about acting strategic documents and drafts of strategic documents related to LLL

Acting strategic documents, which have developed and are implementing in order to reach the Lisbon goals, in accordance with the LLL concept in BG areas follows:

- **National Strategy for Further Vocational Training 2005 – 2010**

Strategy is adopted by Council of Ministers on 14.10.2004. The aim of this document is to define the national priorities for development of the further vocational training in LLL contexts, and to determine the responsible institutions. The strategy envisages improvement of access, quality of training, financing, institutional and social partnership, and research provision in this field.

- **School and Pre-School Education Development National Programme 2006 – 2015**

It is adopted by Decision of the National Assembly on 07.06.2006. The programme determines the educational system's goals and the curricula's goals from pre-school education to upper secondary education with respect to acquisition of key competences. It puts accent onto widening the access to education and the opportunities for developing LLL habits and discipline from the earliest stage of education and for adults too, including all stakeholders in the process.

- **Employment Strategy 2004-2010 r.**

Vocational training for adults and developing LLL are national priorities also in the Employment Strategy 2004-2010 and in the employment policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

It is forthcoming draft of Strategy for adult training taking in account labour market needs and LLL context 2007 – 2013 r. to be adopted. The draft is developed within the framework of PHARE project BG 2003/004-937.05.03 "Professional Qualification". The document puts an accent onto improving the access to adult education and training; links between the adult training and the labour market; acquisition of key competences in order to improve the employability; improving the adult training methods; validation of non-formal and informal learning; improving the quality of adult education and training; elaboration of the scientific research, creative and applied activities in the field of adult training. In addition to the draft of a Handbook on Methodology for Adult Training, Manual on Using Databases in the Area of Adult Education in three Member States of the EU (Denmark, Slovakia and France), Handbook Analysis on Users Needs, Strategic and Methodical Framework for Adult Training, and Terminological Dictionary in the Field of Adult Training (in compliance with the terminology used by CEDEFOP) are developed. 13 training seminars are carried out by the same project, with 295 participants. Seminars have been divided in three groups: 1) trainers in VET Centres and representatives from the employers (86 persons total), 2) representatives from NGOs and other organizations – adult training providers, teachers in foreign languages, teachers in VET, and representatives from the social partners (132 persons total), and 3) representatives from responsible administrations – Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, and NAVET (77 persons total).

Strategic documents under development are as follows:

- **Draft of Strategy on Vocational Education and Training in LLL Context**

This document is developing through PHARE project BG 2004/016-711.11.01 "Developing Human Resources and Promoting Employability". By it, the measures and the activities implementing School and Pre-School Education Development National Programme's goals should be defined. The strategy's focus should be directed towards effective inclusion of the key stakeholders on all levels.

Draft of Middle-Term LLL Strategy

It is forthcoming this strategy to be developed through PHARE project “Developing network of adult training centres”. It is envisaged the document to cover formal education and training, non-formal and informal learning, in accordance with the existing national strategic documents in the field of education and employment, and using the European experience.

Information about the draft of a Model for Career Guidance Development in Bulgaria

In 2005, the National Agency for VET (NAVET) has set to itself the task to develop, by corresponding expert commission, a draft on Career Guidance National Strategy, and to establish link between implementing activities in the field of education and training and in the employment field, in compliance with existing European practices. Due to lack of financial resources, it has not achieved too much. Problems related to development of career guidance in BG are discussed with representatives from the ETF by the project “Development of policies in the field of career guidance in Bulgaria” (2006), approved for funding by the Dutch agency CROSS. Dutch organization CINOP is nominated as executor of the project. NAVET is the project coordinator for BG. Project has started in the beginning of 2007, with 19 months duration. It is envisaged the following basic tasks to be implemented by the project:

- development of a national policy document concerning career guidance in BG, with participation of all responsible institutions and all stakeholders;
- preparation of proposal and establishment of national forum for career guidance;
- development of a model for career guidance;
- development of a model for career information in lifelong guidance context;
- 20 professionals from the schools and 20 professionals from the Employment Agency’s system, which are responsible for client-targeted provision of services to be trained.

Information about participation of Bulgaria in SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCHI programmes (2000 – 2006)

Participation of BG in the European programmes in the field of education is of great importance for development of the Bulgarian society, and for maintaining our affiliation to the big family of the European countries. By our inclusion in these programmes our government is aspiring to follow the tendencies in the European policy in the field of education and training and to contribute for achievement of the Lisbon's objective to transform our continent in Europe of knowledge. On another hand, our participation in the European educational programmes supports our policy in LLL, as promotes employment and social integration by investing in knowledge, skills and competences. Implementation of SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI programmes in BG is accomplished by assistance and political responsibility of two ministries: Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. These programmes are realizing successfully in BG thanks to their support and fruitful cooperation.

BG enjoys full rights membership in the second phase of SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI since 2000, according Decision № 3 of the Association Council of the EU. Human Resources Development Centre (HRDC), which is external unit of the Ministry of Education and Science, is nominated as a national agency which realizes the financial policy of the EU in our country in this field, and assists in implementation and management of these programmes here.

Since 2002 till the present moment, there are lots of projects that have been funded, as follow:

- 1832 projects in the field of school education (918 projects for school partnership and 914 individual mobility schemes);
- 392 projects in the field of VET;
- 204 projects in the field of adult training;
- 40 Bulgarian higher educational institutions have participated in European mobility schemes for students and teachers.

Constantly following the directions in the European policy and taking in account our concrete national needs, the Bulgarian project initiators show continuously rising interest in the European programmes. During past seven years the number of funded project proposals by the particular programmes, and, on another hand, the number of submitted project proposals is many times greater. It is evidence for popularity of these programmes among the Bulgarian society and for great interest that they have in our country.

Number of funded projects / participating institutions by the different programmes

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
COMENIUS programme	133	242	258	280	284	290	345
ERASMUS programme – number of participating universities	9	26	28	28	30	34	38
LEONARDO DA VINCI programme	43	38	41	50	64	77	79
GRUNDTVIG programme	--	31	28	37	45	46	17

Number of funded projects is presented in the table above, by years and corresponding programmes (COMENIUS, ERASMUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI and GRUNDTVIG). Rising number of projects is evidence that our country is opening to the new opportunities for mobility, practice and approbatory periods in Member State of the EU or to

realization of joint educational project with several partner organizations from another European countries targeted to implementation of innovative methods and approaches in the educational systems of the participating countries.

HRDC's consistent policy is directed to absorption of funds granted during particular years of selection. 100 % of grants by COMENIUS, ERASMUS and GRUNDTVIG programmes have already negotiated for the past 7 years. Negotiation and absorption of more than 100 % of funds that have been envisaged for BG by LEONARDO DA VINCI programme, namely 123 % averaged for the last 7 years due to the qualitative pilot projects that have been submitted by the Bulgarian initiators. They win for BG not only acknowledgements, but also more European funds for development of programmes and products in the filed of VET. By itself this is an indicator for aspirations of the Bulgarian specialists in the filed of education and training to use the opportunities provided by these programmes to solve national problems and to orientate the development of the Bulgarian education towards the European tendencies.

Absorption of EUR 43 893 386.48 total has been done during 200 – 2006 by SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI programme. Allocated by each particular programme, they are as follow:

- EUR 6 765 856.00 by COMENIUS Programme
- EUR 10 255 443.31 by ERASMUS Programme
- EUR 25 971 823.50 by LEONARDO DA VINCI Programme
- EUR 900 263.67 by GRUNDTVIG Programme

Absorption of the European funds by each programme during the years is presented on tables shown below.

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
COMENIUS Programme	555 572,00	785 169,00	891 556,00	977 039,00	1 054 342,00	1 158 335,00	1 343 843,00
ERASMUS Programme	302 796,00	1 047 037,98	1 513 707,95	1 508 173,62	1 819 617,38	1 929 679,96	2 134 430,42
LEONARDO DA VINCI Programme	3 762 784,00	2 667 559,00	3 546 351,00	3 578 762,00	3 531 013,00	4 767 098,00	4 118 256,50
GRUNDTVIG Programme	0,00	123 879,10	139 116,49	157 271,62	204 238,46	218 224,00	57 534,00
Total absorption of funds	4 621 152,00	4 623 645,08	6 090 731,44	6 221 246,24	6 609 210,84	8 073 336,96	7 485 448,92

Regarding absolute values, there are two main tendencies in absorption of funds. The European financial aid for particular sectoral programmes (COMENIUS, ERASMUS and LEONARDO DA VINCI), on one hand, increase continuously and this tendency will presents in the next 7 years too, and, on another hand, the amount of funds grated for projects in the field of adult training is relatively constant quantity, which is evidence for durable interest to adult formal and non-formal training.

Policy followed in projects' implementation during SOCRATES II and LEONARDO DA VINCI II programmes is realized by three consecutive calls for proposals, which underline basis trends in the European educational policy as priorities. These priorities determine the evolution of the European policy in the field of education and training from more concrete to more strategic objectives targeted to implementation of the Bologna's and Copenhagen's goals and stress towards:

- development of the European labour market, and
- transformation, modernization and adaptation of the European educational and training systems.

Another indicator for measuring the success of a given programme is the number of beneficiaries that have participated in it. Durable tendency is increasing of the number of beneficiaries by each particular programme and from all target groups. The rate of increasing is observed most clearly with respect to COMENIUS programme. It is absolutely natural event, taking in account the accent of our government towards increasing of competences of youth and teachers' qualification.

Good values of indicators are registered with respect to SOCRATES programme, where the Bulgarian higher education institutions demonstrate continuously increasing interest in participation in mobility schemes for students and teachers. During the last 2005-2006 academic year, the growth in the number of participants is 13% for the students and 19% for the teachers.

Till the present moment, beneficiaries by the four programmes (COMENIUS, ERASMUS, GRUNDTVIG and LEONARDO DA VINCI) have been more than 60000 Bulgarian citizens.

Number of beneficiaries with respect to the particular programmes during the years

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
COMENIUS Programme	3759	6465	7167	7287	6801	6807	8528
ERASMUS Programme	134	543	805	841	1069	1127	1296
LEONARDO DA VINCI Programme	639	596	609	692	911	1089	1514
GRUNDTVIG Programme		382	475	954	910	910	336
Total number of beneficiaries	4 532	7 986	9 056	9 774	9 691	9 933	11 674

General secondary schools, vocational high schools and associations, and the universities have greatest participation (90 %) among all organizations which submit project proposals. The rest 10 % are shared among the following types of organizations:

- Enterprises, SME and artisans, public or private organizations;
- Research centres and organizations;
- Professional unions, trade chambers, social partners;
- Local and regional bodies and organizations;
- NGOs, non-economics organizations.

Accessibility of the European funds to more and more spread range of users and beneficiaries is leading principle in the HRDC's job. With respect to this, priority during competition for funding stage for COMENIUS and LEONARDO DA VINCI programmes is giving to institutions, schools and kindergartens without any experience related to the programmes, and to those organizations that do their first steps working on European educational projects.

Regarding the regional dissemination of the programmes in BG, the following fact could be mentioned. COMENIUS programme have succeeded to reach even to very small villages and towns in BG, which initiate and successfully manage their international projects. Such examples are the projects of schools in Oresh, Dve Mogili, Malko Tarnovo, Satovcha, Bukovets, Banya, Strazhitsa, Batishnitsa and many others. On their hand, vocational high schools and professional organizations not only from the big towns, but also from smaller populated places as Bregovo, Montana, Chirpan, Ardino, Velidgrad, Razlog, Dupnitsa and other participate in LEONARDO DA VINCI programme.

Improving geographical balance is one of our great achievements – by this way schools and VET centers from all districts in BG work on programmes of the European Commission.

When talking about concrete impact of the particular educational programmes onto the Bulgarian economy and our national educational system, have to mention, that school institutions in BG recognize in COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, and ERASMUS programmes the tool for communication with institutions from the other countries, the tool for introducing innovations in the educational process and for creating new stimuli for pupils, students and teachers, the way for practical realization of the European dimension. Satisfaction from collaboration on topic of mutual interest, active inclusion of pupils, students and youth, team work, experiencing different cultures, communication in foreign languages, opportunities for visits in partner countries are only part of the total impact of the projects that the Bulgarian educational institutions share. However long-lasting rewards coming from the project work are more – increased interest of pupils and students in the educational process, increased motivation for work, better team work among the teachers and better interdisciplinary approach in teaching, adoption of good practices for long-lasting and steady school development, building new partner networks for cooperation and mutual help, etc. Bulgarian schools have accumulated serious experience in preparation and implementation of projects and in management of budgets during the period of functioning of the European programmes. Their self-confidence has increased and recently more and more schools undertake coordinating role in European partnership's framework.

European educational programmes reveal to the Bulgarian teachers rich opportunities for professional development and improvement by setting their professional skills and competences in competitive-based educational environment. Participation of Bulgarian secondary and higher schools in COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI and ERASMUS programmes is perceived as a tool for improving their prestige and authority.

In view of individual activities funded by COMENIUS programme, increasing the number of teachers who have passed international qualification courses could be noted as success – their number is around 130 per year. Main beneficiaries are teachers in foreign languages, but the number of participating teachers in other subjects increases too. Subsequently they apply acquired experience and good practices in their teacher job. By this way our teachers make their training hours more attractive and useful for the pupils, and, simultaneously, they disseminate the results from their participation in such courses among colleagues and stakeholders. By their representatives in individual qualification courses, schools have the chance to share valuable ideas for management and contents of curricula.

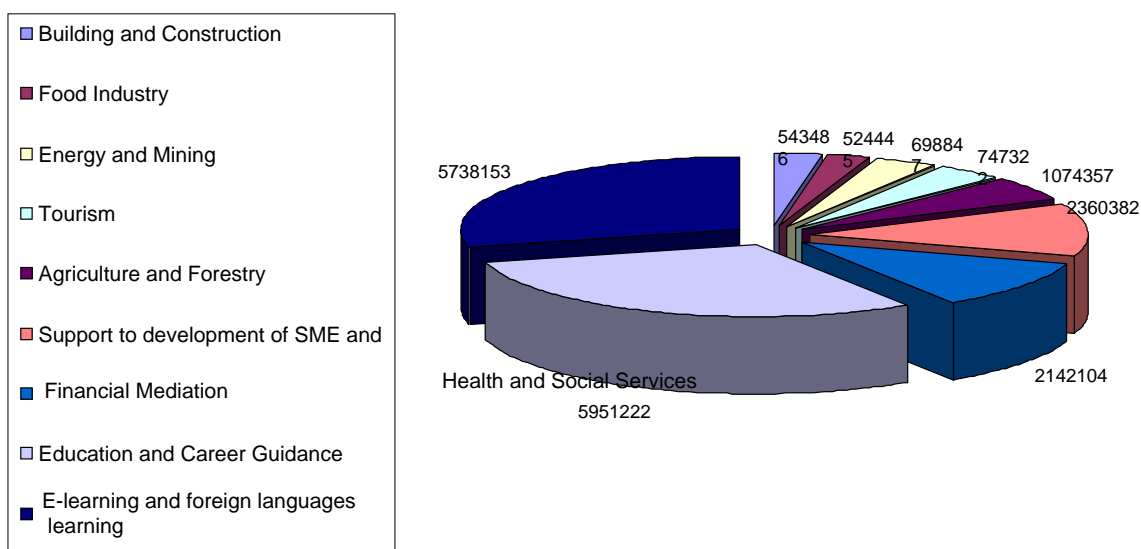
More and more rising interest of primary schools and kindergartens in projects by COMENIUS programme is a success too. Their project work reflects strongly not only onto their daily activity, but also onto their overall strategy for management and development of the institution. Many contacts with foreign teachers are realized, valuable experience and teaching practices are exchanged, the teaching process relieves its monotony and get rich. Mastering foreign language is bound to improvement, which is an additional stimulus for personal development too.

During the recent 7 years ERASMUS programme in BG has achieved remarkable success. Up to 4000 students and up to 1600 teachers in higher education have participated in mobility schemes in 24 member States of the EU. Mobility by ERASMUS is the most popular and the most attractive network for academic exchange in Europe and in BG too. More than 2/3 of all the higher educational institutions in BG that are carrying out active inter-university cooperation by projects and mobility schemes, as well as in transnational networks, have jointed to it. ERASMUS programme in BG contributes to successful and effective integration of the Bulgarian higher schools in the EHEA and their transforming to searched and preferred educational destination in Europe. Increased number of students entering in BG during the recent years is remarkable for the image of the Bulgarian universities – active academic partners with high quality of training and with European standards of provided educational services.

It is necessary to note also the active position of Bulgarian universities and their leaders in implementation of one responsible and significant mission at national and European scale, and namely – the Bologna process. During the recent 2 years, HRDC successfully coordinate “National Advisory Group on the Bologna process” project, which ensure trustworthy consultations and assistance in the process of reforms and modernization of higher education in BG. European educational programmes have impact also onto development of the particular economic sectors in our country. Absorption of funds by particular economic sectors indicates for the interest of the Bulgarian initiators of in acquisition of better qualification in the corresponding field. Economic sectors in which LEONARDO DA VINCI projects are funded are: education, health and social service, financial mediation agencies, SME, agriculture and forestry, tourism, etc.

It makes impression that significant part of the projects in the field of education is in areas of foreign languages learning and e-learning. This is another evidence for aspirations of the Bulgarian initiators of projects to be inline with the recent tendencies in the field of education and training in Europe. Bulgarian projects not only do not step back than the European ones, but also win international recognition and awards. Bulgarian project “Lingua piece” by the European Center for Education and Training is nominated as one of the top ten pilot projects in Europe on the international conference in Helsinki devoted to good practices in the field of VET. In same context, it is worthy to mention also two projects by LINGUA programme: “Listen and Touch” – English for blind, by Euro Forum, and “Enjoy the foreign language learning” by “Znanie” association from Sofia. They have been nominated as ones of the 50 most successful European practices for motivation of learners in foreign language environment, together with the multimedia self-study book “Bulgarian for foreigners” by “Letera” publishing house, which has recognized by the European Commission as one of the most qualitative products developed as a result of partnership by LINGUA programme. Despite that HRSC does not administrate directly such kind of centralized projects, HRDC assists actively for dissemination of their results by the projects that are fruits of cooperation between the SOCRATES National Agencies and those projects that HRDC coordinates – as “Universe of languages” and “Thematic review of LINGUA and MINERVA projects”.

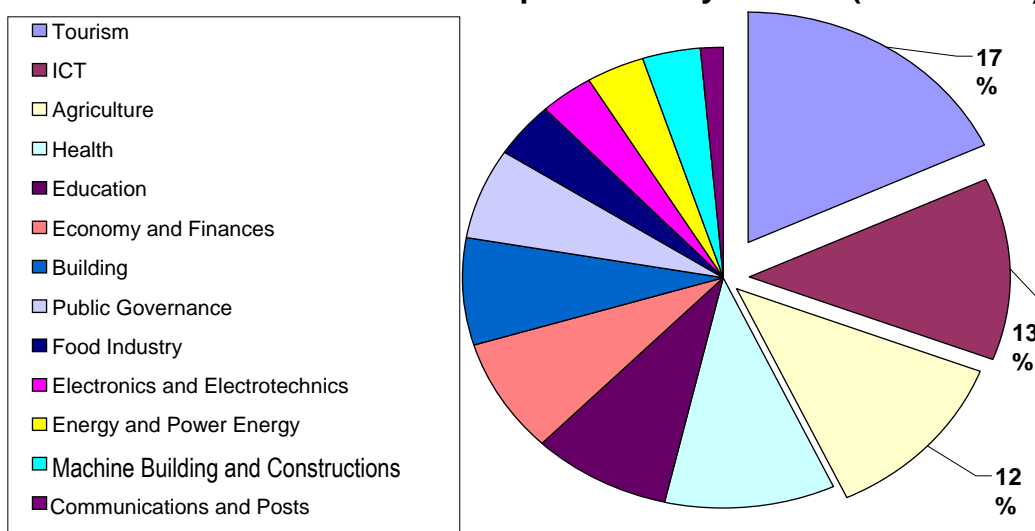
Absorption of funding shown by economic areas Procedure B – LEONARDO DA VINCI programme



Regarding economic sectors funded by mobility projects, the picture is more variegated, because there are numerous professions, in which the Bulgarian citizens wish to improve their qualification. Leading sectors are tourism, education – new ICT and computer sciences in particular, agriculture, health and social services. Overlapping of the economic sectors of mobility projects and of pilot projects is observed, which speaks about orientation of our country to sectors of tourism, services, agriculture and IT, where we have traditionally strong performance.

In addition to the assertion that LEONARDO DA VINCI programme by its innovative character functions as an experimental base for development of variety of approaches and solutions that later are used in practice, sectoral approach towards the projects has been introduced as a “testing field” and development of international qualifications and competences. This approach is imposing with regard to the globalization process and development of new technologies, because the actors related to vocational training process are directly involved to the problems and the difficulties of the particular sectors.

Number of beneficiaries presented by sectors (2000 - 2004)



Objectives that are set by the Copenhagen’s declaration and that are targeted to transparency, recognition and quality, cannot be achieved without active and systematic participation of institutions at that level. By this reason, particular sectors have the opportunity to determine their education and training needs and to show the difficulties that they face to.

During the recent 7 years, mobility schemes by ERASMUS programme are realized in all the 16 areas of knowledge. Since the start of the programme in BG till the end of 2005/2006 academic year 4162 student mobility schemes total have been implemented. Most of them are in the field of *Engineering Sciences and Technologies* (782), followed by *Mathematics and Informatics* (462), *Business Sciences* (457), *Languages and Philological Sciences* (386) and Social Sciences (355). 1653 teachers’ mobility schemes total have been implemented till the present moment. Most of them are realized in the fields of *Engineering Sciences and Technologies* (364), followed by *Mathematics and Informatics* (273), *Languages and Philological Sciences* (195), *Business Sciences* (113), and “Agritechnical Sciences” (109).

As is seen on the table about students’ and teachers’ mobility by ERASMUS programme, achievement of good balance makes impression, which includes all areas of knowledge. Biggest number of mobility schemes in the field of *Engineering Sciences and Technologies* is due to strong participation of technical higher education institutions in the programme, and to their relatively big number as well. Raise of student mobility schemes in the field of *Business Sciences*, which are very popular in the programme as a whole, makes impression too.

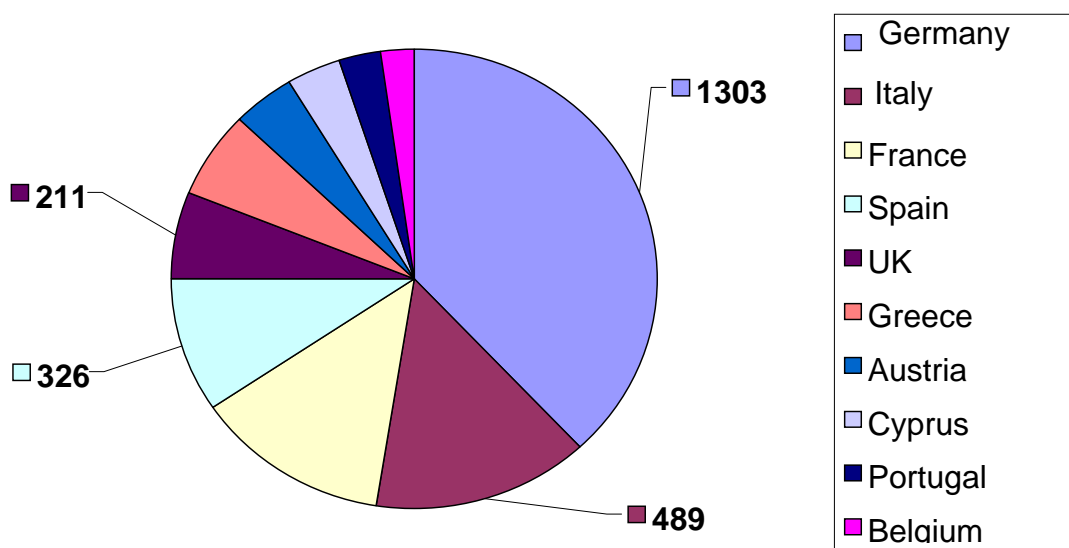
NRDC has not announced priority partner country in these projects. Choice of partner or accepting country depends on the projects' initiators and on the economic of preparation and submission of a given proposal.

Typical feature of the geographic balance of students' practices by ERASMUS programme is the outlined advantage of Germany as a country, which accepts the most of the Bulgarian students and teachers, followed by France. Number of mobility schemes in the UK decrease, as these in Belgium and Spain increase due to lower expenses for subsistence allowance in these countries. Greece keep constantly high number of student practices and teachers' mobility schemes due to low transport expenses related to mobility. Fact that mobility of students and teachers depends on existing bilateral agreements has its influence to certain degree to relatively high coincidence related to the countries, which are leading by number of accepted students and teachers, but there are certain differences too.

Preferable target country and preferable partner in implementation of mobility projects by LEONARDO DA VINCI programme is Germany, with the biggest number of practices and exchanges realized in 2000 – 2004, followed by Italy, France, Spain, and the UK. Among the countries that participate in mobility schemes are countries, which are lower popularity in BG, as Estonia (12 beneficiaries), Sweden (3 beneficiaries) and Finland (2 beneficiaries).

Compulsory element in implementation of projects by the European programmes is knowledge in the corresponding foreign language. In this sense COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, ERASMUS, and GRUNDTVIG programmes appear power tool for foreign language learning, for improving knowledge and competences of the young people, and for acquisition of practical skills in the corresponding foreign language. Foreign language learning in our country is already in unison with the other European countries where foreign language learning is introduced in early primary general education stage. Foreign languages study in BG is recognized as a necessary element of the professional and intercultural integration of youth in the member States of the EU. Studying foreign languages, BG demonstrates its openness to the world and its desire to communicate free with the other European nations. COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, ERASMUS, and GRUNDTVIG programmes actively and successfully contribute to implementation of this objective, providing opportunity for acquisition, development and improving of language skills and competences of the participants in them.

Number of beneficiaries by partner countries (2000 - 2004)



ERASMUS programme's contribution for promoting language diversity and language wealth of Europe must be noted

too. For fourth consecutive year BG organizes and implements intensive courses in Bulgarian language for Erasmus students and teachers coming in the country. Interest for participation in these courses has increased several times, jointing more and more young people and academics from other European countries to Bulgarian language and cultural identity.

In accordance with the figures of the priority countries - partners by LEONARDO DA VINCI programme for example, greater number of beneficiaries have trained their knowledge in German language. English is on second place. It is interesting that foreign languages as Spanish, Portugal and Greek become popular in BG too.

From all presented above, one could make conclusion that our participation in the European educational programmes COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, ERASMUS, and GRUNDTVIG contributes for development of Bulgarian education, for higher quality of VET, and for improving competences of the working power as well. Programmes appear additional tool for internationalization and for adding new European dimension in Bulgarian education.

Set of good practices and successful presentations of Bulgarian participants in SOCRATES programme deserve to be known and awarded for their good job and diligence. That's why since December 2006, HRDC has started a national initiative for nomination with "European Quality Label" the best projects by this programme. This initiative is part of the European programme for awarding the European Quality Label, which covers 14 European countries and which is supported by the European Commission as a qualitative step towards the new Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). Project "European Quality Label" performs public analysis and evaluation of the contribution of all participants in SOCRATES programme for development of the European educational system, and by this quality it appears necessary precondition for successful start of the LLP. By participation of HRDC in the "European Quality Label" project, BG shall provide its indisputable contribution to full valued development of the European educational area and to fulfilment of the LLL's ideas and objectives.

Activities of the National Institute for Heads of Schools Training

National Institute for Heads of Schools Training functions since November 2006. Till July 2007, the institute provides training in modules in School Governance, with themes “Delegated Budgets”, “Structural Funds of the EU”, “Public Private Partnership”, “Projects Management”, “Team Work”, “Partnership with Family and Parents”. It is envisaged 3 600 acting heads of schools to be trained. Till the end of 2007, training in following modules will be provided:

- Acquisition of competences in School Administration, Psychology of Governance, Financial Management that are required for appointing heads of schools – 1000 persons will be trained;
- Improving heads of schools’ knowledge related to implementation of training strategies and techniques for work with pupils with special educational needs that are necessary for implementing the National Policy for Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs – 120 heads of schools, that provide training for integration of such children, will be trained;
- Preparatory course for applying innovative approach for organization and management of educational processes, which are base for building modern, based on new technologies training – interactive training by Microsoft project– 120 heads of schools will be trained.

Other organizations participating in higher education government

- Council of Rectors – body for expressing the common interests of higher education institutions to the state bodies. It develops attitudes and propositions related to problems in the field of higher education and science. It provides opinion about draft of the state budget related to higher education and science; about draft of Classifier on Domains of Higher Education and professional Directions. It provides attitudes related to criteria for awarding scientific degrees and titles as well.
- Student Council – body for defending students’ and doctorands’ common interests in a given higher education institution.
- National Representation of the Student Councils – national body for expressing students’ interests at national level. Its main activity is development of attitudes and proposals related to problems in the field of higher education and science at higher education institution level. It provides opinion about draft of the state budget related to higher education and science.
- National Council on Student Issues – consultative body to the Minister of education and science.
- Supreme Attestation Commission – institution under jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers. Its activity is targeted mainly to awarding and recognition of scientific degrees and titles.
- Sectoral Council for Three-Party Cooperation “Higher Education and Science” to the Ministry of Education and Science – it is established in 2006 as a consultative body with aim to assure transparency and common public consensus in discussing issues of strategic importance and legislative documents related to higher education and science. Members are deputy ministers of education and science and all nationally represented organizations of syndicates and employers.
- Governance bodies of a higher education institution – General Assembly, Academic Council, and the rector.

**Activities of the Ministry of Education and Science, directed to assuring equal access
to qualitative education, development of integrated education
and social inclusion of children and of pupils with special educational needs**

General and vocational education:

- Opportunity for acquisition of the compulsory general educational minimum is provided by the training plans and curricula. Taking in account the new social realities, studies in foreign language and in ICT are included there.
- Special care is provided for children that do not have equal start in life (children that do not master well Bulgarian language, children with special educational needs, disadvantaged children, etc.), in order to assure their full rights participation in the educational process. Supplementary training in Bulgarian language is provided too, with aim to assist children from different ethno-cultural groups in successful mastering of the general educational minimum. Special programmes for training in Bulgarian language are provided for children of immigrants and migrants-workers to be integrated in the Bulgarian educational system.
- Differentiated care to children with special educational needs is expressed not in their orientation to special schools, but in assurance of high-qualitative pedagogical support and individual approach in training in general school system. Opportunities for transitions within the system of general secondary education by training in individual curricula are established for children that do not acquire the general educational minimum. State policy with regard to children with special educational needs is described in our national legislation, in national strategies, programmes and plans, which are developed in compliance with the Convention for Children's Rights of the United Nations Union, with the Salamanka declaration for special needs education, etc.
- Process of desegregation of Roma children is directed towards increasing usefulness of training in multicultural environment and their more successful adaptation. Strategy for educational integration of children and pupils from ethnical minorities and corresponding action plan are implementing in BG, with regard to creation of conditions for durable going out of the Roma from the ghetto and their integration in municipal and public schools. Targeted actions are accomplished, related to widening range of such children within the kindergarten and their education in environment where they to be able to communicate in Bulgarian language on daily basis.
- Teams for complex pedagogical evaluation in the Regional Inspectorates on Education and such teams of specialists in the kindergartens and the schools, where children with special education needs are trained, have been established by changes in the Ruled of Procedure for applying the National Education Act (published, SG, issue 99 / 2003). They perform primary evaluation of educational needs and guide children and pupils to the most appropriate training in each particular case. One of the main tasks of such team at kindergarten or at school is to perform deep evaluation of children' and pupils' educational needs, in order to develop individual curricula for them.
- Since the beginning of 2006/2007 school year, 28 resource centres have been established. Their aim is to assist to integrated education and training of children and pupils with special educational needs in districts in the country. Rules of Procedure and general requirements for recruiting of heads of such centres have been approved as well. More than 700 resource teachers, rehabilitation therapists for hearing and speech, logopedists and psychologists have been recruited there. For comparison, the number of integrated children and pupils during 2005/2006 school year is 1538, and the number of resource teachers is 223.
- Training activities for experts in Regional Inspectorates on Education, heads of kindergartens and general schools and other pedagogical staff have been performed in implementation of the National Plan for Integration of Children with Special Education Needs and / or With Chronic Diseases in National Education System (adopted by Decision

№ 894 of the Council of Ministers of 2003). Information campaigns, meetings, seminars and conferences for public support in this field have been organized as well.

- Evaluation of specialized kindergartens and schools has been performed in 2006, targeted to changes in the structure of their networks (transformations, closing down). As a result, the network of specialized schools and houses for bringing up and education of children without parents' care has been optimized – 24 specialized schools have been closed down (13 from them – for pupils with special education needs and / or with chronic diseases, and 9 for pupils with deviant behaviour). Pupils from these closed down schools have been directed to integrated education in general educational environment. Five houses for bringing up and education of children without parents' care have been closed down too.
- Decentralization of the houses for bringing up and education of children without parents' care is accomplished by changes in corresponding legislation. According to § 8 of the Transitional and Concluding Provision to the Law on amendment and supplement of the national Education Act (published, SG, issue 105 of 2006), since January 1st 2007 all houses for bringing up and education of children without parents' care are transformed from service institutions within the national education system to specialized institutions for provision of social services – houses for children funded as delegated by the state activity of the municipal on which territory they are situated.
- Opportunity for repeated inclusion in educational and vocational training activities for youth dropped out from the educational system is provided. In framework of the National Employment Action Plan, 100 young people from the above mentioned target group have been included in vocational training in 2006. By state plan for accepting pupils for 2006/2007 school year, an opportunity 1525 young people to be included again in upper secondary education system and to acquire professional qualification has been provided.

Higher Education:

- ◆ All principal government instruments specify as priority implementation of policy for “retaining the availability of higher education system and increase of equality” for the various social and ethnical groups. As a result from the target national policy in respect to involvement of Roma minority the University of Veliko Tarnovo has developed bachelor programmes for teachers in Roma mother tongue. During the last two years a number of international projects were implemented, aiming to ensure relieves and additional opportunities to young people from isolated groups and provide them with chance and access to higher education. In result from this activity during the next year people from Roma minority will be provided opportunities to attend specially elaborated pre-admission preparation courses, organized by university lecturers, whereas the condition is candidates to hold diplomas of secondary education with very good results.
- ◆ National unions of blind, disabled persons and deaf persons render specialized advises and information to students with specific educational needs, related to provision of additional opportunities for their financial and social support. Students are directed to non-government organizations, providing additional financial or specialized support to students.
- ◆ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy proposes disabled graduating students also to participate in special employment programmes, with aim to ensure them jobs in the public administration sector.
- ◆ During the recent years the Bulgarian higher education institutions have implemented sustainable and targeted policy for improvement of training conditions for students with special educational needs, which to a great extent have already had positive implications. At a number of premises there are established platforms for access to educational halls; library places are adapted for the needs of disabled persons. A database of scanned literature is provided to blind students, studying at different higher education institutions. In a number of universities,

especially in humanities and economy, blind students are provided with specific library places, equipped with Brile displays, scanner, talking computer software and Brile printer. Such places in New Bulgarian University are used free of charge by disabled students from all universities. Some lecturers provide their complete courses of lectures in electronic form, which is a great relief to blind students and is related to their independence.

- ◆ For the needs of sport activities of students with physical disabilities National organization for sport and integration has been established and it uses the base provided by St. Climent Ohridski University of Sofia and organizes its activities jointly with the sport department. Training in sport games for disabled persons is offered to disabled students, as well as goal ball for blind students.
- ◆ Information database for disabled students from the University of National and World Economy, divided into specialties, will be implemented in the next year. It will provide specialized information for free positions, adequate for them, in the German enterprises with outsourced activity in Bulgaria.
- ◆ In 2007 few universities will start training of students in master programmes with one-year duration, as well as specialized post-graduate training for teachers will be launched, willing to work within multicultural and multiethnic educational environment.
- ◆ Specialized Bachelor programme for deaf-mute students is functioning at the National Academy of Theatrical and Film Art (NATFA).

**National Agency for Vocational Education and Training's activities for actualisation
of the List of Professions in Vocational Education and Training**

In actualization of the List of Professions in VET, following requirements are fulfilled:

- Only professions that are in compliance with the characteristics of a given professional direction (sector) according to ISCED 97 can be included in the List of Professions in VET, corresponding to the same professional direction (this has been a fact before actualization, but with little exceptions);
- Wide-profiled professions to be included in the List – after training completion in these professions, the persons will have enough opportunities for realization on the labour market;
- Changing labour market needs to be taken in account in the actualized List of Professions in VET, where the opportunities for realization of positions from the new National Classification of Professions and Positions (2005) to be represented.

Technology in review and actualization of the List of Professions in VET has been developed, in order to ensure unified approach in the activities of the NAVET's expert commissions. To this end, NAVET has required written attitudes of 35 institutions – ministries, state and executive agencies, national companies, national governance institutions, national services, nationally represented employers and syndic organizations, higher education institutions, National Statistical Institute and other stakeholders. 58 meetings of the 13 expert commissions by professional directions (sectors) have been done. Proposals for changes in 28 professional directions of the List of Professions in VET have been made. Financial issues of this process have been performed completely by funds from the NAVET.

Information about the new educational documentation in the field of VET introduced in 2005 – 2006

- Drafts of 21 State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions have been approved by the NAVET's Governing Council in 2006. Next, in compliance with our administrative regulations they are submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science. Drafts of 25 State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions are submitted to the Minister of Education and Science. Since 2001 till the present moment drafts of 70 State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions are adopted and published in State Gazette.
- Analysis of the "Framework requirements for development of State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions" has been done in 2006, using the technical support provided by PHARE 2003 BG 2003/004-937.05.03 project "Professional Qualification". Using these results, the NAVET has submitted to the Minister of education and science proposal for actualization of the framework requirements. Accent onto this new structure of State Educational Requirements are the learning outcomes. By this way, an opportunity for facilitating comparison and recognition of qualifications acquired as in BG as well as abroad is provided, using the EQF as well. Representation of learning outcomes using measuring units – credits is a precondition for further step-by-step introduction of the ECVET system. In this respect the Ministry of Education and Science has organized 7 training seminars with participation of more than 1800 teachers and experts of planned number of 2720 total.
- 15 national exam programmes for state exams in theory and practice of profession are developed and approved. Unified criteria for evaluation of acquired knowledge, skills and professional competences have been introduced by them. According to the VET Act, use of national exam programmes is obligatory for obtaining state recognized documents for degree of professional qualification acquired by the learner.
- 13 educational plans for professions are approved for training in vocational high schools in the secondary education system during 2006/2007 school year. They regulate the general education contents, obligatory training practice (general, by sectors, and specific practice) with regard to number of training hours for 4 or 5 years duration of study.
- 670 curricula have been developed and approved, in compliance with the approved educational plans since 2004. They define the training objectives and tasks, educational contents and expected knowledge, skills and competences as learning outcomes for each subject / training module for each grade.
- Training plans and curricula for adult vocational training in VET Centres are developed by these centres by themselves, in compliance with the corresponding State Educational Requirements published in SG and with the acting legislation. NAVET performs control of their educational documentation.
- Six framework programmes for acquisition of professional qualification by individuals up to 16 y. o., which have been developed and approved in 2004, continue to play role of basic document facilitating further vocational training activities in LLL context. They contribute to widening access to training and qualification; they regulate duration of such training for acquisition of degree of professional qualification, of qualification on part of profession and for continuous vocational training as well. There is noted in the analysis of further vocational training (2006), that adult training of 14082 persons has been provided in 179 professional schools. Main problem faced is related to existing financial regulations that do not promote enough such activity.

External quality assurance in higher education

With respect to external quality assurance, a new methodology for evaluation and accreditation has been introduced in 2004. It is a great extend in compliance with the European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance, developed by the E4 group under the governance of the ENQA and adopted at the Bergen meeting. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) criteria list has been announced in 2005. The regularity of evaluation and accreditation is established with the Higher Education Act and 80 % of the higher education institutions in Bulgaria have been evaluated for second time according to the new criteria by November 1, 2006. First sector reports are published in the end of 2006 and they reflect the situation with higher education in every separate professional sector. They are done on the basis of the ongoing programme accreditation of professional directions (sectors).

The scope of the accreditation activity of NEAA encompasses all higher education institutions – universities as well as specialized higher schools and colleges. The accreditation scheme is unified for all and it is obligatory both for private and public institutions.

Accreditation decisions are based on evaluation performed by external independent experts and on internal self-assessment (the self-assessment report), site visits and evaluation report, which is submitted to the evaluation institution before final decision to be taken. The report is not publicly accessible. Accreditation decision is published only. It contains a concise evaluation according to the criteria, period of validity of the accreditation, the capacity of the higher education institution, and recommendation for improvement. A system of post-accreditation monitoring has been introduced in 2005. The period of post-accreditation and monitoring of the adherence to the recommendations depends on the general evaluation.

From May to June 2005 the NEAA has been audited by an external team from the National Audit Office and its activity related to sustainability and improvement of the quality of Bulgarian higher education have been evaluated. This audit, however, could not be linked (due to objective reasons) to the review of the activity of the Agency related to implementation of Bergen Standards for Agency for External Quality Assurance, because these standards have been set up later in May the same year.

Students are full right participants regarding the efforts for quality improvement in higher education. In this respect Bulgaria has achieved good results and shows progress. Different approaches are used for inclusion of students in all stages of the evaluation process – in the preparation of the self-assessment report of the higher education institution, during the visit of the NEAA group, as well as participating as members of the expert group and of the Accreditation Council. Students from all higher education institutions are given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the self-assessment report and to talk with the expert group's members. NEAA has developed its own evaluation model, which achieves encouraging results. It gives the students the opportunity to become part of the expert groups but not their full members. A student is nominated through a special procedure and presents an independent report, which the expert group gets before issuing its statement. This approach takes into consideration the fact that the student is competent in some respects like training (for example the training plans and programmes, quality of teaching, etc), service (administrative service, the condition of the library, information centres), social and cultural environment, etc.

Bulgarian legislation does not provide for the participation of students in the process of decision-making by the accreditation council of NEAA. Bulgarian experience with making students part of the accreditation procedures has been NEAA participates in the coordination of the European countries for improvement of quality in higher education and mutual acknowledgment and recognition of procedures and accreditation decisions. The agency is a co-founder of the Central and Eastern Europe Agencies for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEEN) and the chairperson of the NEAA has been a member of the managing board of the CEEN since May 2006. NEAA recruits international experts for

institutional and programme accreditations. It maintains active European connections with other similar agencies. The NEAA has signed a bilateral agreement with French Agency CNE and the agreement stipulates establishing of joint working groups (one such group has already been set up), joint research, exchange of information and experts. There are negotiations with other partners for signing of similar bilateral agreements for cooperation. The NEAA took part in the most important international seminars of the period and there it presented its activity and had the chance to compare it with others. In June 2006 together with the British Council in Sofia the NEAA organized an international conference on the subject of "Institutional evaluation in European Higher Education". The chair of the European association ENQA and representatives of agencies from South-eastern and Western Europe took part in it.

NEAA has well-established procedures and has practice in inclusion of foreign experts in its experts groups. We consider this inclusion of foreign experts as necessary and important, because, as a result, it enriches the knowledge of Bulgarian experts and gives more credibility to the evaluation. This useful approach could not be applied in all procedures, mostly because of financial reasons.

**Actions foreseen in implementing the National strategy for introduction of ICT
in the Bulgarian schools and its action plan**

- Ensuring high speed internet access to every school – it is foreseen to happen till the end of 2007;
- Building of National Educational Portal. Its aim is to be a modern assisting tool to the training process at school. This portal is already in use, since the beginning of 2006/2007 school year. In perspective, it will become the fundament of a national electronic network of knowledge. It provides wide range of opportunities for all actors in the educational process – pupils, teachers, heads of schools, parents – with opportunity for access of 10000000 users at same time. Different users can find there e-training courses, tests (both for internal and external evaluation), electronic educational documentation, variety of other information. These users can communicate by different thematic forums; they have access to web-pages of all schools in the country; they can use different searching information systems. Teachers can have feedback from their pupils and their parents, which, by themselves can have continuous feedback with the school.
- Development of electronic training courses – they wouldn't replace the traditional paper textbooks, but by providing greater opportunities, as interactivity, opportunities for providing references, set of test variants, etc., they will assist pupils for better and full valued assimilation of the educational contents. Such courses will be developed step-by-step for all subjects in the field of low secondary and primary education.
- Multimedia at every school – Goal: till the end of 2006 at least one multimedia system to be ensured in each Bulgarian school. It will provide opportunities for training using modern tools.

Activities related to VET Centres' licensing and further control

Improving the network of licensed VET centres continues to be main task of the NAVET since April 2005 till the present moment as well. Spreading this network over all geographical regions in BG has drawn vocational education near to widened range of users. It has improved their effectiveness and employability according to the labour market needs and the European requirements. Analysis of acting criteria, application forms and guidelines for licensing VET centres has been performed, in compliance with Article 49a of the VET Act. Results from the analysis show that they do not need substantial changes to be done so far. Results show that these documents contribute for improving the operative work and the effectiveness of the overall licensing activity and guarantee for provision of qualitative vocational training in compliance with the labour market needs.

Spreading the network of licensed VET centres and improvement of licensing process's effectiveness are related to applying of improved licensing procedures. Procedure for supplementing already issued license is applied successfully too. As a result, new 160 VET centres are licensed during the reported period; licenses of 75 VET centres are amended, without reporting the number of VET units (braches of VET centres) that have passed successfully licensing procedure. By this way, an opportunity for successful renewal and development of their activity has been provided, as well as for being more flexible in supplement of vocational training. At the end of 2006 the total number of licensed VET centres is 385. Ten of them are licensed with total number of 197 units. By this way the total number of VET centres and VET units within their structures is 582.

Interest in VET centres is directed mainly to provision of qualifications by professions that offer greater opportunities on the labour market, as building and construction, tourism, light industry, and business administration. Licenses issued to VET centres situated in big towns predominate in comparison with these in small towns and settlements. This ratio is proportional to active population's distribution and is adequate to the greater interest in improving professional qualification in the big towns.

Quality of work on licensing procedures is at very good level and guarantees to transparency and accessibility for the companies and organizations that want to license VET centre. Application forms and other documents required for licensing procedure, that have been submitted to the NAVET, have high level of professionalism; there are not rejected documents due to breach of the procedure, no ill-respected deadlines, no complaints and signals for infringements submitted by the users. Optimal duration of licensing procedure is met. Main factors for accelerating the procedures are: improved effectiveness of the NAVET's administration, the expert commissions and the governing council; improved quality of the submitted documents; improved professionalism of all actors in the process due to accumulated experience and due to training (provided by the NAVET) and self-study. According to results from non-formal current study with representatives from the VET centres, licensing procedure works successfully, in transparency and does not render difficulties to the candidates for licensing. A tendency for rising interest in licensing new VET centres is observed in 2006. Raised interest of VET centres in amendments of licenses by including new professions and specialties and by adding new units in VET centres' structures is observed too. Desire for widening of the licence's scope can be interpreted as an indicator for successful and effective work of these VET centres.

Main activity of the NAVET towards quality assurance of vocational training provided by VET centres is further control and related to it other activities. System for monitoring and further control of licensed VET centres is developed and is successfully used by the NAVET. Methodology and procedure for further administrative control

of VET centres are developed too. They regulate the rules and the procedures for application of the system. Study on VET centres' activity is done in 2005. It is accomplished by using information card by internet. NAVET required for a first time such information, but collecting such data in future will be of essential importance with regard to building and functioning of information system for search and supply of vocational training. 65 % of the VET centres have submitted the required information in the deadline. The rest of VET centres continued submitting the information and at the end of half of the year 90 % of VET centres have submitted the information. This percentage allows reliable conclusions to be made regarding the activity of the VET centres' network.

Unit for quality assurance of the NAVET has developed tools for self-assessment of VET centres, based on the European manual for self assessment of VET services, version 3.0. Using these tools, every VET centre could perform analysis of its activity and to propose measures for improving the quality of their services. Developed material contains useful ideas for improving management of VET centres, building partnerships, etc.

**Some practical examples related to recognition and validation of previous training,
acquired in the formal educational system and acquired as non-formal and informal learning**

- There is well-established practice for adaptation and recognition of prior formal learning existing in BG, obtained in organized processes and attested with various documents for public recognition of qualifications. A good example for such practice is the existing on this basis national system for raising the qualification and career development of the teachers. Good example of such practice is acting on this base national system for improving teachers' qualification and their career development. Existing legislative base provides concrete opportunities for free transition upon recognition of previous education related to consecutive transition from one educational degree to another as well as for obtaining new specialty, including specialty that belongs to another professional direction. Rules of procedure of autonomous higher education institutions set clear procedures, the order and conditions at which each specific transition is being affected.
- Recognition of prior non-formal learning is not a popular practice for the higher education institutions. Where separate cases have been established (mostly in the art academies, or in the philological faculties or in the faculties for informational and communications technologies) this recognition undergoes testing procedures set forth for each separate case. If the candidate succeeds to cover the respective academic standards he can be granted the respective certificate or even educational credits for the given educational discipline. Examples for recognition of the prior informal learning exist in the musical academies. They determine high academic criteria and norms, which are to be covered and which also include obligatory candidate students' exam prior to the awarding credits for specific achievements corresponding to the certain educational subject.
- Concrete examples for recognition of prior informal learning exist in the musical academies. They determine high academic criteria and norms, which have to be covered, including obligatory candidate student competition before awarding of credits for certain achievements, which correspond to a given subject.
- Higher Education Act provides regulation – opportunity for free admission of candidate students on the grounds of proved previous achievements obtained as informal learning – laureates of national and international Olympiads, bearers of medals at Olympic, World and European Championships in the cases when the competitive examination for the specialty they have chosen corresponds to the subject of the respective Olympiad or discipline.
- Question for allocation of credits at the higher education institutions is solved positively and legislatively assured by Ordinance № 21 of 30.09.2004 for implementation of a system for credit accumulation and transfer in the higher educational institutions, issued by the Minister of Education and Science (published, State Gazette issue 89 / 12.10.2004), which introduces the ECTS. Awarding of educational credits can be effected not only in the higher education system but also in LLL context. For example the specialized authorities at the medical faculties can award credits for knowledge and skills obtained in training at courses and individual training. The grounds for granting such credits are the Order of the Minister of Health and a Contract with the Bulgarian Medical Union.

Some measures for teachers' and trainers' training

- ◆ Improving teachers' and trainers' qualification in VET centres is performed on regular basis, within the framework of LEONARDO DA VINCI, SOCRATES, GOPA and other programmes. By them teachers and trainers develop their skills for work in more and more heterogeneous classrooms, as supplementary funding is assured to this end, by the European Social Fund. In this respect, qualification of teachers and trainers as an activity assumes education also as a factor for liquidation of poorness by acquiring new and extended skills and competences. Training in children's rights related to the Convention of the United Nations, to HIV and AIDS prevention, skills for life for youth coming from houses for bringing up children without parents' care, using interactive methods, reasons for school dropouts in cooperation with UNICEF – Bulgaria. Ensuring of adequate qualification and renewal of already acquired competences contributes for widening and popularization of their mobility in Europe as an element of their career development.
- ◆ Training of trainers for adults is implemented by using different employment programmes. As a big part of them are teachers in schools, it is especially important for them to pass training in Andragogy, as well as training for bringing their knowledge in certain subjects up-to-date, in order to respond on concrete employers' needs of modern qualification of their working power – guidelines set in the European requirements for quality of trainers. Such measures are foreseen in the draft of our national LLL strategy too. Pilot training of trainers for adults are certified by Bulgarian-German project named "Promotion of vocational training and employment in Bulgaria 2004 – 2007". Training is implemented using trainers manual, which has been developed within the project.
- ◆ Teams for realization of interactive activities and adult training can be trained also by the programmes provided by the National Institute for Heads of Schools Training, in order to ensure high quality of training by well-qualified and well-motivated teams of trainers.