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IMPLEMENTING THE 'EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010'

WORK PROGRAMME

2005 Progress Report

BULGARIA

National Contact Person:

Ms Mimi Daneva (m.daneva@minedu.government.bg)

Commission Contact Persons:

Ms Luce Pépin (Luce.Pepin@cec.eu.int)

Mr Sebastian Volkers (Sebastian.Volkers@cec.eu.int)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010

BULGARIAN CONTRIBUTIONS

TO 2006 JOINT REPORT OF THE COUNCIL AND THE COMMISSION

The strategic aim of the European Union till 2010 is creating of the most competitive power of dynamic knowledge-based economics in the world with more and better places of work and better social cohesion. An exclusive attention is required to achieve this aim in order to ensure suitable education and vocational training to improve the ability for employment of the working power. Republic of Bulgaria as a candidate-country for accession to the European Union takes into account the European strategies, policies and practices in the domain of education and training in development of its national policy. The Lisbon strategy till 2010, the Lifelong Learning conception, the Education and Training 2010 program, the European Employment Strategy, and etc. are leading for us in this point of view.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

The Lisbon strategy is an important factor for the overall development of the policies and the educational systems in Bulgaria. After publishing the Conclusions, accepted by the Council on the meeting in Lisbon (2000), the gathering process of opinions for the Memorandum of the Commission for Lifelong Learning (LLL) was one of the basic European initiatives with Bulgarian participation. By this way the LLL was considered as a key factor, which should accompany the successful transition to knowledge-based economics and knowledge-based society in national aspect too. The consulting process on the Memorandum served as a base of further actions coherent to the realization of the LLL concept in the country.

The education is a national priority in the ruling program of the Bulgarian government (2001-2005). Its basic priorities are to ensure order and stability in the education and development of the system for vocational qualification, re-qualification, and LLL. Reforming the education is set in front of the important task: to ensure conditions for vocational preparation that give an opportunity for further support of the quality of the work power and its employability in accordance with the requirements of the labour market and knowledge-based economics. Giving up qualitative education and training to everybody by equal access and equal conditions can execute this task. The main goal of Lisbon, its three coherent strategic goals of Stockholm 2001 and the 13th priority domains, the indicators and European reference levels of European average performance in education and training (Benchmarks) are taken into account during developing the Bulgarian National Programme "Modernization of Education".

These indications are basic for formulating and realization of the national policy on employment and adult vocational training, and are presented in the National Employment Action Plan (2005). It is developed on base of the European trends for employment (2003) and the recommendations in the reports of the Commission (2004) considering the employment and learning problems in order to achieve the Lisbon goals. Now a national system of indicators for monitoring and accounting the progress is developing in Bulgaria. The strategy for development of the education is connected with the Government Programme, the National Plan for Economic Development till 2006, and the National Plan for Development till 2013, the Strategy on Employment 2004-2010, etc.

The last one gives priority for increasing the investments in human resources in the policy for employment and the labour market. The national plan for economic development is conformed to the two basic formulations of the Common Recommendations of the Council to all the candidate-countries: “to increase the adaptation of the workers in the enterprises” and “more and more effective investment in the human capital and the long life learning”.

Since 2000 the accomplished reform in VET in Bulgaria has set in direction to realize the European goals of the education and training systems, defined in 2001, as well as in order to realize the priorities of the Copenhagen process and the results of its progress. Bulgaria has participated in different initiatives of regional scale – in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in the part “Initiatives for reform in education for the countries in South Eastern Europe”, bilateral projects, projects of European scale, etc. In the Copenhagen declaration’s perspective, Bulgaria has been included in the preparation of the Maastricht’s communiqué, which main goal has determined the new priorities and strategies for European cooperation in the performance of the Lisbon goals in the domain of VET. National Strategy for Development of VET and National Strategy for Introducing the ICT in the Bulgarian Schools have accepted in 2004. By the Framework Programmes on acquisition of professional qualification, developed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science in 2003, mechanisms for identification and recognition of professional competencies adopted by preceded training are created. The Law of VET provides the legislative base on recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

With respect to implement the goals of the Bologna process, the recent changes in the Law of Higher Education, published in State Gazette № 48 on 04.06.2004 set the legislative base to overcome the basic obstacles for transparency of the qualifications given by the Bulgarian higher schools, and mobility. In order to ensure transparency, unprejudiced and equitable recognition of the qualifications in world scale, several ordinances are developed in 2004. They are “An ordinance on state requirements to the basic documents issued by the Bulgarian higher schools and attended European diploma supplement”, “An ordinance on application of credit accumulation and transfer system in the higher schools”, and “An ordinance on state requirements for organization of distance education in the higher schools”.

The European diploma supplement is developed following the model developed by the Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES. The second ordinance introduces the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). A unified credit transfer system in VET and in the higher education (ECVET) is forthcoming to be developed. These documents, together with the ordinances on acquisition of higher education in regulated professions, according the Sector Directives, are serious reasons to improve the quality of higher education by introducing the European standards and practices. Also, the development of the internal university systems for estimation and support of the training quality and the academic staff, which to take into account the opinion of the students, has finished at the end of 2004.

All interested parties are included in the educational and training sphere by three-part organs on national, regional, and local level, as the social partners (national presented organizations of employers and workers) participate in the consultations for development and application of the policies. Basic strategic and comparative studies as printed by OECD, EU, the World Bank and other institutions exert influence in formulation of the educational policies and priorities of employment.

Main difficulty in realizing the national policies for education and training are the limited financial resources. On the present stage, the financing of the Bulgarian education and training is performed mainly by the national budget, with quite limited participation of the business. The insufficient investments could effect negatively onto the quality of training. The employers still do not regard the training as a form of investment. In relation to the priority of improvement the conditions for access to education and training, main difficulties are the poverty and the social isolation, also a big part of the Bulgarian population has no access to information or suffers of lack of motivation.

There are difficulties concerned with optimization of the network of professional schools and the network of higher schools too, mainly due to the big resistance on regional level. Some difficulties exist in determining the needs of training with maximum accuracy, and their commitment with the real future needs. The rates of computerizing the training process and introducing ICT are insufficient too.

Sources: [1-14]

II. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFICIENTLY: FOCUSING REFORM ON THE KEY AREAS

The legislative framework in the education and training system in Bulgaria (Law of National Education, Law of VET, and Law of Higher Education) define the basic aspects of modernizing the national educational system. In view of pre-accession requirements, as well as the current characteristics, the following key areas can be defined as needed modernization in the highest degree: improvement of the educational system's structure; giving up education with high quality (improving the quality and effectiveness of the training process, the training methods, the training base and technical equipment, the didactics as a whole, the training contents, the teaching quality of the teachers, trainers, supervisors, and the teachers in the higher schools; ensuring an equal access to education; commitment of the education with the science; development of the system for control of the education; commitment of the financing and the quality of the education; ensuring an access to and quality of VET for adults; modernization of the training base and equipment; ensuring conditions for including greater number of people in LLL forms; improvement of the initial and permanent qualification of the learners; cooperation and partnership on national, regional, and local level; activation of the employers' participation in the learning process; adoption of ICT in the education and training; investing in the development of human resources; mastering of minimum two foreign languages in the high school's framework.

The investments in human resources are raised to a national goal and they are one of the strategic directions in the Law of National Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria in 2005 together with the adoption of ICT, the improvement of energy effectiveness and development of the scientific researches. The reform in the education sphere with aim to ensure equal access to quality education is engaged with additional investments for adoption of ICT; to embrace the children in student's age by the high school educational system more fully; to promote the Bulgarian participation in national and international programmes and projects; to improve the qualification of the teachers; to improve the energy effectiveness of the Bulgarian schools; to optimize the scholar network; project financing of activities to improve the quality of the higher education. With respect to improve the energy effectiveness of the Bulgarian schools, strategic directions for accomplishment of projects for energy effective overhaul and renovation of school buildings are prepared. The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Utilities and

the Ministry of Energetic and The Energy Resources realize the coordination and control for the entire realization of the projects in the regions.

It is difficult to answer the question about the degree, to which the greater and more effective investing is a key factor in the reforms. It is a quantitative measure, without a special research to be implemented by this reason in national scale. Such research can be implemented using multifactor analysis using statistic methods, because some indefinite requirements are introduced – “bigger”, “more effective”, “key factor”, etc. It supposes significant resources – for research, material and finance resources, and a long time for work. It can be assumed, by expert estimate, that this degree is high. The progress by itself undergoes significant difficulties predominantly of financial aspect for the both of enterprises and educational organizations, as well as for the state. In the recent months, forced investing is registered, especially with respect to computerizing the units in the educational system. It cannot to say the same about the investing in training base and technical equipment of VET for adults. The greater and more effective investing is very important as a key factor in the educational reforms.

Using the EU funds and more especially the funds for pre-accession by the PHARE programme since its beginning is a basic factor for modernization of the educational system and supporting the VET activities for adults. PHARE supports VET for children and adults in its aspiration for higher quality of education and training. The realization of PHARE projects has an essential contribution for development of the reform in VET, as PHARE 2000 - SMAEP (projects in the field of employment and adult education); the project BG2003/004-937.05.03 “Professional Qualification” (an improvement of the Frame Requirements for developing State Educational Requirements (SER) on acquisition of professional qualification in accordance with the European attainments and development and actualization of SER for total 80 professions are supposed); project BG2004/016-711.11.01 “Development of the human resources and promoting the employment” (a realization of actions to improve the VET system, including improvement of SER for total 80 professions is stipulated by it); “Initiatives on the Labour Market” and “Lifelong Learning and Professional Education and Training”, “Professional Qualification” and “Development of The Human Resources and Promoting The Employment” (joint project with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science by PHARE 2002, PHARE 2003, and PHARE 2004-2006 in the field of employment and adult education); “Vocational Training”, “Renewal of Institutions for Vocational Training”, and “Promoting the young employment” (projects with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy by PHARE 2000 and PHARE 2002) for example, a great number of projects by PHARE-TEMPUS in the higher education, etc.

The work on PHARE projects contributes for extension and development of the professional qualification and the working power in view to improve the ability for employment, the professional career and the individual growth. The projects are directed to improve the quality of the vocational training and the perspective for employment by renovation of the school buildings, ensuring modern equipment for vocational training, development of modern training programmes, improving the qualification of the teachers, introducing new training methods, development of a system for tracking the labour market’s needs, development of a method for vocational training of adults, actualization of SER, etc. The resources invested in training and development of educational and training systems by PHARE 2000-2003 are 34.7 million euro, with 9.375 million euro co-financing by the Bulgarian government. The Ministry of Education and Science is realizing the project “Financial Control of The High Education” of the long-

standing PHARE programme to optimize the model of distributing the financial resources. In the recent year, serious attention is drawn on learning how to develop projects to candidate for resources from the European structure funds after 2007.

Training institutions, as schools, high schools, professional schools, higher schools, and centres for VET, are participating actively in the LEONARDO DA VINCI and SOCRATES programmes (especially in KOMENSKI, ERASMUS, and GRUNDTVIG sub-programmes). The transnational cooperation and accumulated experience are used to enhance the quality, to promote the innovations, and to share the good professional practices and systems in Europe. The higher schools participate in a great number of projects with the 6TH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME too. One of the ways for experience exchange between senior Bulgarian specialists in the educational field is by ARION programme.

The Law of VET assumes decentralization of the VET system from national to municipal level, and from municipal to school level, which shall allow more flexibility with respect to the requirements of the local labour market. In 2002, a conception and a programme have accepted about financial decentralization for division of activities financed by the municipal budgets to local activities and delegated by the state activities and determination of standards for the staff's number and standards for maintenance of the municipal schools. The initial VET is financed by the state budget, with few exceptions where the resources are covered by the municipals. Although the financing size of VET increases, it is still lower than the contemporary needs. Sensible investments are necessary for renovation the infrastructure of the high schools and professional schools in the country. For now, the modernization of the training bases is mainly by PHARE programme, but it is relatively small number of schools than the total number of professional schools in the country. With respect to the optimization process of the network of professional schools, despite the statistic data show progress, during the last 6 years the number of professional schools is decreased from 553 in 1998-1999 to 496 in 2002-2004. The optimization process is slow and difficult mainly because of big resistance on regional level. The arguments of the regional administrative structures and the directors of some state and municipal schools are associated with the fact that the students should to have the opportunity to study there, where they live. The municipals even finance classes with minimum number of students. Organizing further education, courses in popular professions are financed sometimes, despite of the registered unemployed with the same profession.

Basic tendencies in financing VET: according EUROSTAT, the Bulgarian public expenditures for education are 4.4 % of GDP in 2000 and 3.6 % in 2001, but they are still lower comparing with many countries in EU (average 5 % of GDP in 2000). The national data show that the public expenditures for education in 2002 are 3.8 % of GDP. With respect to the resources of private investments in education, the national statistic data show 1.0 % in 2001 and 1.0 % in 2002. According the national data, there is growth till 14.8 % of the public expenditures for VET from 2001 to 2002, while the private investments for the same period are decreased to 9.0 %.

Concerning the higher schools' financing, the size of the state subsidy for higher education is 0.6 % of GDP, which is comparatively low public expense. The other countries with higher as well as with lower GDP invest more in its systems for higher education. On the other hand, Bulgaria has lower GDP per capita than all the ex-candidate countries with 28 % of the average level for EU [21].

The investing in professional qualification of the human resources is a part of the common social policy of Republic of Bulgaria, regulated by the Employment Promotion Act and accomplished by the National Employment Action Plan for and the corresponding national programmes. The analysis on the existing tendencies in development of continuing VET till 2004 and the accession's challenges impose the conclusion that there is necessity for tangible increasing of the invested resources. It is necessary to increase significantly the resources invested by the employers for improving the professional qualification of the employed working power in the enterprises. The greater part of organizations for adults training is private. Adults training financed by the state budget can be entrusted to licensed institutions for VET of adults only after competition of offers in accordance with the Law of Public Errands. According to the Employment Promotion Act, a national system for professional qualification of adults is forthcoming to be organized for further improvement of the VET's quality. The system will work on competitive base, unified principles, unified methodical base and social partnership.

The inflow of resources from international aid shall continue to have essential contribution to ensure financial resources for vocational training of different target groups. In 2005-2010, the following sources for financing the further VET are supposed to be used: resources from the state budget (distributed over the responsible institutions, regional and municipal administrations); PHARE programme and the structural funds of EU; international sources; resources from the employers (including by applying schemes for cooperation between the small and middle enterprises and coalescence of financial resources to carry out training for professional qualification); the VET suppliers' private incomes; personal resources for development of the individual working power; other resources of the municipals, local juridical persons, non-governmental organizations, etc.; by sponsors, donations, etc.

The effective use of all possibilities shown supposes high degree of coordination in the process of use the sources, according the priorities of the continuing VET on the different levels. The programme-oriented approach to use the resources from the state budget should be applied in a large-scale. It shall give a possibility the financial resources to be realized to attain the aims of the Employment Strategy 2004-2010 with maximum effectiveness by the responsible institutions as Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Finances, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Utilities, Ministry of Youth and Sport, and other agencies and administrations. All of them shall work for implementing basic priorities of the strategy in the deadlines.

In the area of adult vocational training, the Employment Promotion Act supposes measures for stimulation of the working power and for stimulation of the employers to invest in this process. These measures are realizing now. They suppose, by the Employment Agency for example, for each opened working place for training to be acquired professional qualification and/or probationary period, if an unemployed person under 29 years old is hired on it, to grant amounts of money to the employers during the term of his/her training and/or probationary period, but within a period of 6 months. Also, employers who ensure maintaining and improvement of the workers' qualification can candidate (under defined conditions) for granting of money under the half part of the maximum defined size of the financial resources for training one person. The employers can hire unemployed people for training and work during the time when the employed person on this work place is on training. Also for each unemployed person hired on this place, they can receive amounts of money during the time when this person is at work,

but within a period of 6 months. For each opened work place for probationary period and/or practice, on which an unemployed person is hired, the employer can obtain under specific conditions amounts of money during the term of this probationary period and/or practice, but not longer than 6 months.

Additional financial resources can be granted by a credit for qualification in the subject of economic activity to unemployed people with rights for monetary compensation, who would like to begin self-dependence economic activity after approval of a business project. Amounts of money are granted to an employer, who saves the people's employment when the volume of work decreases or stop working for no more than 15 days, and includes them in training activity for acquisition of professional qualification during this time. If the employer saves the employment of his workers under 12 months, he receives grants for financing the total amount of money for training.

At the same time the Employment Agency organizes training for acquisition of professional qualification, financed by the state budget, in accordance with the labour market's needs, the employers' requirements and the approved plan, as follow: for unemployed with right for monetary compensation for unemployment or unemployed who would like to begin own business after approval of business-project; for workers in micro- and middle enterprises, who have been on labour contract with their last employer during the last 3 months or the requirements for their professional qualification are changed due to concrete changes in manufacturing; people with saved employability by the employer when the work is decreased or stopped for no longer than 15 days.

As a result, the rate of unemployed included in forms of vocational training is increased twice in 2004 than 2002. The total planned and outgoing expenditures for training for professional qualification in accordance with the Employment Promotion Act are increased about 4 times in 2004 than these in 2002. Any special measures to promote investing in VET, private investments by enterprises, families, and persons are not supposed, except the measures supposed in the Law of Income Tax.

The National Programme on Modernization of Education supposes developing of indicator system for evaluating the quality of education in narrow relationship with estimating the effect of the educational policies. All published analyses and independent researches are taken in account during the process of monitoring the policies. A method for monitoring and evaluation of the active programmes and measures on the labour market is developing now. The evaluation criteria cover performance indexes of the programmes and measures, including these on adult training as effectiveness, effect onto the employment and the incomes, stability, organizational and financial capacity.

Sources: [7, 8, 15-21]

III. PUTTING IN PLACE TRULY COHERENT AND COMPRESSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

The lifelong learning in Bulgaria has always been one of its national dignities during the different stages of its development. After accepting the LLL conception and the philosophy of the Lisbon strategy, and developing the Memorandum on LLL of EU, Bulgaria has accepted entirely the basic formulations and ideas of the Memorandum, and has begun to implement them by development of all necessary legislative documents. The national reports developed by the responsible Bulgarian institutions have shown the real state of the situation, our aims and measures for growth of LLL in accordance with

the basic target of the Lisbon programme – knowledge-based society and economics to be built till 2010.

The following patterns can be drawn on national level, with accent on [3] and [17]. The basic elements of LLL concept's implementation in Bulgaria are the VET for adults with aim to improve their employability. Our activities in this direction become more important, as our ability to respond to the requirements for development of the human resources in view of our future accession to EU as well as to respond to the demographic, economic, and global challenges. The European concept on LLL is very popular among the experts in employment and professional qualification, as well as, even though in different stage, among the different groups of population. Despite of this, a serious and professional work for adequate implementation of the LLL concept and good practices on all levels is forthcoming.

The appliance of the policies is in relationship with assimilation of different European models of policies, which emphasize on different approaches and ways to connect the VET with the more widespread LLL strategies. The legal frameworks of VET and LLL follow the European concept of VET and LLL and the appliance of the policies is recognized as a common problem of all the ministries, which are responsible for the corresponding educational and training spheres. These are the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. At this moment, the Ministry of Economics, which is responsible to establish favorable conditions for economic development, is still not considered enough as a partner in this context. The building onto the best practices has positive sides, but the negative ones does not absent too. The dramatic fast economic changes and, as a consequence, the changes on the labour market are accelerated during the pre-accession process.

These processes have enormous effect onto the employability of the people and their adaptability, which must to be supported by VET. By this reason, a planning in short, middle, and long term on all levels, from policy level to personal level, should be done. The attended troubles are the lack of analyzing the training needs of the people and the total motivation of the people to continue training in VET courses. Our aim is VET to be developed more as a profitable investment to transform the human resources to real capital of the nation. The results from vocational training and the next realization on the labour market depend in high degree on the professional choice of the person. The professional orientation is essential and obligatory component of LLL. By this reason, its development is a strategic priority to achieve the strategic goal of EU till 2010. An accomplished national system for professional orientation in LLL aspect does not exist, but the Employment Agency's units provide systematically organized activities for professional consultation. Everybody in need can use their services (unemployed, employed, students, etc.).

The most significant documents and elaborations since our starting position with respect to the development of the LLL concept in our country are:

- ♦ Government Programme 2001-2005 – the forth target here is defined by “Support and improvement of the human resources' quality and their realization on the labour market”. The programme contains a number of directions for LLL development.

- ♦ Joint Report on Estimation the Employment Priorities (2002), which defines as important tasks urgently to grant additional resources for training, to guide the measures for training by priority, to improve the conditions for access to training, etc.
- ♦ LLL Strategy – it supposes activities concerning investments in career growth of the teachers, which shall guarantee their access to knowledge and improvement of their skills. There is written in the National Strategy on Introducing ICT and its action plan that training the teachers to work with ICT is set on three levels – to train the trainers, intensive training courses for the teachers in the schools, and self-study using specialized software. The integrated use of ICT in the educational and training systems by development the training software shall create possibilities to teach the students by modern methods, and to engage the students in the training process more fully.
- ♦ Strategy on Further Vocational Training 2005-2010 – it draws the national priorities for development of continuing vocational training in LLL context. It also determines which are the institutions responsible for it, and orientate the joint efforts of the government, the organizations of employers and workers, and non-governmental organizations to support the growth of this kind of education and training. It includes priorities in direct relationship with the development of the human capital: elaboration of the conditions for access, achievement of effective interaction between the responsible institutions, increasing the investment for continuing vocational training, its scientific capacity, etc. As a result, the number of participants in this kind of training, as well as the number of offered training courses, is expected to increase. The action plan of this strategy is approved and accepted by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers at the beginning of 2005.
- ♦ Employment Strategy 2004-2010, accepted by Decision of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers on 06.11.2003. It contains concrete directions and measures with respect to the development of the human capital, improvement of the educational system, insurance of qualitative initial vocational training, adult training in order to improve their employability, creation and development of national system on vocational training, determining the needs of training, etc
- ♦ LLL Concept of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, approved by the National Council on Employment Promotion in 2004.

Now the Ministry of Education and Science is developing a project of strategy on adults training. In view to share the good European practices the ministry published in Bulgarian the OECD book “Beyond Rhetoric: Adult Training: Policies and Practices” in view to share the book between the educational and training organizations with non-commercial purposes.

The vocational training system for adults in Bulgaria offers initial vocational qualification, additional qualification, and requalification for unemployed and employed people up 16 years old. By it, the system is inscribing naturally in the philosophy of LLL. Its basic tasks are to ensure vocational training which corresponds to the dynamic needs of the labour market and the national social-economic priorities, and to overcome the differences between the results from the education/training and the actual requirements of the labour market. Mastering key competencies is a priority target there and a main principle in development of State Educational Requirements (SER) on acquisition of qualification by professions, and in training programmes by subjects in all educational systems.

The key competencies based in SER are in relationship with healthy and safe practice of the learned profession and saving the environment, mastering competencies for developing and completing reports, application and order forms, CV, knowledge in

Economics, and Labour Law, team work, communication with the team members and clients, work with personnel computer, foreign language, etc.

The National Agency of Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), established since 2000, is specialized to license VET activities and to coordinate the institutions for professional orientation and VET. NAVET ensures development of SER on Acquisition of Qualification by Professions, supports the List of Professions in VET, and coordinates the development activities of strategies on VET's growth and improvement in view to support high quality of VET. The List of Professions in VET includes about 198 professions; it is created in accordance with ISCED-97 and ISCO-89, and appears a base of the VET training programmes. The Strategy on developing the NAVET's activity till 2010 is accepted in 2004.

Its priorities take in account the targets of the Copenhagen process and its development. There are concrete measures for increasing the quality of VET in the action plan of the strategy (2005) in order to ensure employability, development of unified information system "NAVET – Employment Agency"; development of National Lifelong Orientation Strategy; collaboration with the employers organizations to achieve adequate professional knowledge and skills related to the labour market's needs. The unified information system "NAVET – Employment Agency" shall create preconditions for effective interaction and coordination between the institutions of VET and the employment in the country, and to provide information about qualification and prequalification possibilities in the context of LLL.

Accounting the Memorandum's idea – LLL not only contributes for supporting the people to be more competitive and to ensure them potential opportunities for employment, but also it is the best way to fight against the social rejection. The Vocational Training Centres (VTC) licensed by NAVET have the task to set in the centre of attention the individuals and their needs by offering a large variety of courses in actual and modern professions, taking in mind their preliminary knowledge and skills, the concrete needs for qualification of workers with low qualification, the labour market's needs, the government's social programmes, and the new technologies.

The VTC are decentralized institutions of VET system, which provide training for acquisition on initial professional qualification, additional qualification, and re-qualification of people up to 16 years old. After license, the VTC are controlled by NAVET only with respect to the quality of VET and abidance to the legislation in issuing of nationally recognized qualification documents. VTC are mobile training institutions exclusively appropriate for adult training and LLL. The library and culture clubs are another perspective accession form of LLL for the immediate users in Bulgaria. In great number of cases their units are the only one organized structure in the distant settlements, which can offer training base and materials. Their activity can be extended in direction to offer vocational training too.

In accordance with the priorities indicated in the government programme, part "Education and Science", the Ministry of Education and Science is making great efforts and is investing to improve the quality of the teachers staff by organizing short-term and long-term courses for qualification of teachers as in new training contents as well as in new training methods; to work in multi-ethnics environment; investing by priorities in training the teachers in foreign language and informatics, taking on account the need of such knowledge in EU; improving the teachers qualification by collaboration with scientific societies and foundations. Directorate "Students and Post-Graduated Students"

with the ministry participates in implementation of Council of Europe's programmes and initiatives, related to improve the qualification of teachers, teachers in higher schools which teach teachers, authors of textbooks, experts in studying foreign languages and other specialists with the education sphere by participation in different seminars in 2000-2005. Main theme of the seminars is the education in human rights with active participation of the citizens, which has a key importance for development of pluralism democracy. A big part of their efforts is directed to train teachers in subjects related to citizenship education. By them, conditions for supporting the exchange of ideas, the exchange of experience, and the scientific researches have been created. New partnerships and collaborations have been promoted too.

The European Modern Languages Centre in Graz, Austria has organized many of the seminars. Especial attention is devoted to the teaching in History, whose goal is to give knowledge, skills, and tuning to the future citizens of democratic societies. During 2005-2010, the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to EU shall enforce more various approaches for studying foreign languages to be introduced. It will be of great importance in conditions of extended cultural cooperation between the European countries. This activity will include analysis of the linguistic policy and development of strategies for greater diversification, including developing and putting in practice common European reference guides.

Considering the development of bases for further training since the earliest age, the children's access to further training is improved by training the teams for complex pedagogic evaluation with the regional inspectorates on education and the teams in the kindergartens and the schools with aim to introduce them in the new requirements and the evaluation procedure on educational needs of children and students with injuries; developing and introducing individual programmes for training and growth; training and qualification of pedagogical and administrative specialists to work with children with special educational needs in common educational environment; training seminars for qualifying the teachers with the auxiliary schools. In 2005 a national programme and a plan on more fully embracement of the children and the students in scholar age in school are accepted. Their aim is to ensure them conditions for access to education no matter about their ethnic belonging, sex, origin, and religion by creating possibility for each of them to study no matter of their manner of life and economic state.

By accepting the Law of VET, the Bulgarian tradition the students to acquire professional qualification during studying in high school is saved. The SER on Training Contents According the New Training Plan have introduced in 1999-2000. They have ensured unique basic educational preparation for all the students, which forms the basis for acquisition of professional qualification. As a difference to previous years, when the students have received their diplomas for high education after they have passed successfully their exams for acquisition of professional qualification, now the students with the vocational high schools have the possibility to graduate their high education and to obtain their diplomas after they have graduated XII class. In the same time they may pass exams for acquisition of II degree of professional qualification and, if they wish, to acquire III degree of professional qualification by continuing their training in XIII class.

The process of recognizing and validating the non-formal and informal learning in Bulgaria is in initial phase. A step in this direction is the development of Framework Programme on Further Vocational Training for actualization or expanding an acquired professional qualification. The minister of education and science has approved it in 2004. The programme defines how persons with practice in a given profession can obtain

certificate for professional qualification under defined conditions after state exams. Its main goal is the adopted competencies to be recognized in maximum degree. The validation process shall begin in 2007, as the methodological and organizational base must be ensured at a preliminary stage. Some conceptual and strategic treatments in this domain are written in the Conception of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on LLL in view of an improvement of employability and the Strategy on Further Vocational Training in 2005-2010. Actions for preparation, the developing and introducing a system for qualification's validation, acquired by non-formal and informal learning are supposed in the strategy's action plan for 2005.

There is supposed in the national action plan on employment 2005, that a concept for the validation's legal and methodological provision shall be developed. Some actions in this direction are included in projects by PHARE and by bilateral projects too. There are assumed also some possibilities for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The educational system in Bulgaria ensures development of various learning pathways and opened learning opportunities too. Its structure is in accordance with ISCED 97. It gives opportunities for improvement of the educational and qualification level of training in LLL context. The accepted basic laws and legal acts that legislate the educational and training [1, 3, 4, 11] allow the necessary knowledge, skills, and professional qualification in the high and higher education's framework to be adopted, as well as acquisition of professional qualification for those, who have chosen vocational form of training.

The project of Ordinance on Application of the Law of National Education, which now is under construction, supposes to regulate and expand the legal provision of the existing forms of training – the self-study, distance and correspondence forms of training. The legislative base [3] offers daily study, extra-murally study, and evening study or self-study forms of vocational training. It gives also an opportunity to provide flexible training, as training for acquisition of profession by some short courses in a part of profession, depend on the learner's possibilities; training by Framework Programme E with possibility for further training; non-formal learning, etc. Since the end of 2004, the distance education has introduced in the higher schools by legislative way. The distance form of training in the vocational training centres is developing too, but an obstacle is the relatively high price of its informational and communicational equipment.

The updates in [2] suppose activities, norms and procedures to guarantee the access of children and students with special educational needs in the kindergartens and schools by forming teams to estimate their educational needs, to track the dynamics in their progress, and to prepare individual programmes for their training and future progress. The updates in [26] legislate an opening to a work place for the position of "resource teacher", which to teach 5 children/students with special educational needs. In this moment, there are 670 children/students like these, who are trained by 123 resource teachers. Also, by the programme "Employment of teachers training children with injuries" of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, there are organized special courses for unemployed teachers.

Introducing alternative forms of institutional integration, there are successfully working interacting mechanisms between the directors of homes for caring children without parents and the municipal administration. Also, a National Plan on Educational Integration of Children with the Ethnic Minorities is developed in view to create conditions for opposition to discrimination acts. An estimate of the specialized institutions those are caring about children without parents. During the last year, the

Ministry of Education and Science has approved a Strategy on Education and Integration of Children and Students with the Ethnic Minorities. The strategy accentuates onto the educational problems of these children and the ways to solve them. The segregation's concept as a social event is defined there, desegregation models of the gipsy schools are suggested, and a database about the segregated kindergartens and schools, the reception kindergartens and schools in the country is collected too.

With respect to the investing in teachers, trainers, and teachers in higher schools, there is differentiation in the payment system in case of new qualification acquired and improved qualification, but this system needs significant improvement. Serious resources are investing to motivate the teachers to acquire higher degree of qualification. Each obtained higher degree of qualification is taken in account in salary's calculation of the teacher. On the other hand, the accounted difference in payment is small – it diminishes the teacher's motivation to improve his/her qualification.

The activity of the teachers-methodologists is an important element in the investing, because they can, by decreased normative of training hours and one and the same salaries, to train and aid their colleagues. Investing in training teachers in foreign languages and informatics is a priority here. There does still not an entire system for training teachers of adults in Bulgaria. The qualification of adult trainers in their personnel problem, and its improvement is not in relationship with their payment. The andragogy is not widely spread in training pedagogical specialists and trainers, so the adult trainers are few. The qualification of teachers in the vocational training centres is carried out periodically by projects in framework of LEONARDO DA VINCI, SOCRATES, GOPA programmes, etc. As examples of good practices, the training modules for trainers included in a number of employment programmes can be shown.

The state educational requirements ensure the legislative base for innovations in the training plans and programmes, including those for adults. Also, the competitive principle for ordering adult training stimulates the training providers to develop the quality of training, which supposes investing additional resources for renewal the technical equipment and didactic base. In accordance with the European requirements some improvements and innovations are implemented in the training methods, training plans and programmes too. The Bulgarian-German vocational training centres in Pazardjik, Stara Zagora and Pleven, as well as the National Centre on Vocational Development in Sofia with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, are good examples of such activity.

With regard of the aim to create knowledge-based society, the performance of the Bulgarian students in the scale on literacy estimation PISA in 2000 is 430, as the averaged value for EU is 500 (source: OECD, PISA, 2000). The level of participation in education (ISCED 1-6) in 2000-2001 is 44.2 % than average 57.5 % for EU; the percentage of the students that have left school early in 2003 is 22.4 % while the averaged percentage for the 25 countries of EU is 15.9 %. Our aim is to decrease this percentage by 10 % in 2010. The percentage of the students 20-24 years old, that have graduated upper than high education is 75.6 %, as the aim in EU is at least 85 % of the people 20 years old to graduate upper educational degree than this of high school till 2010.

In LLL context, the Bulgarian system for higher education offers education for young people mostly in regular form of education. The transition to mass system and system, which offers flexible training models to promote LLL is a premise to assume that

the age profile of the students studying in the system of higher education, which now is similar of those of the other soon accessed countries in EU, will increase approaching the levels of the 16 countries in EU as Germany, and in some degree – United Kingdom. The degree of participation of people 18-23 years old in the higher educational system (2000) have been about 24 % - a bit higher than this of Hungary and Czech Republic, which are the closest by population to Bulgaria. The percentage of people 30-34 years old who have graduated higher education is about 20 % - quite high than this of a great number of ex-candidate countries, including Hungary and Czech Republic [21].

Monitoring of the activities related to LLL is accomplished in the common aspect of monitoring onto the educational results and the results from adults training for professional qualification, presented above. By developing a common national strategy on LLL, the concrete approaches and indicators, specified for our national practice, shall be identified. Conventional pointers for the results of LLL are the used in VET system and non-formal learning ones as degree of education, degree of professional qualification, number of adults included in vocational training, number of graduated vocational training, number of people participated in various forms of LLL out of the formal educational system, number of educational institutions – schools, vocational training centres, library and cultural clubs, qualitative and quantitative indicators of training documentation, training equipment, financial resources, etc., and their derivative indicators too.

Sources: [1-5, 11, 21, 23-26, 32]

IV. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

Bulgaria is one of the first countries that have accepted the requirements of Bologna declaration. By accepting the Law of Higher Education in 1995, its modifications and supplements in 1999, the beginning is set to develop the new model of higher education.

In 2002, modifications of the Law of Higher Education have introduced the term “regulated profession”. On this base, State Requirements on training by specialties from the List of Regulated Professions have been introduced harmonizing the training programmes and conditions with the European standards and practices for the specialties and professional qualifications related to special regime of recognition. In the same year, some legislative changes have been accepted with goal to ensure flexibility and adaptation ability of the higher education with respect to the labour market’s needs.

They have replaced the Register of the Specialties in the Higher Education by Classifier on the Domains of Higher Education and the Professional Directions. Some domains and directions of education, that are adopted in general in the educational and scientific practice in the world, have been indicated in the classifier in order to implement the Bologna declaration’s recommendation that the specialties must be “clear and comparable”. By this way, an opportunity has given to the higher schools – to offer training programmes and professional qualifications and to prepare students in specialties according their possibilities, in dynamic accordance with the labour market’s needs and the European standards.

According the Law of Higher Education, the Bulgarian system for higher education organizes training after graduating high education. It consists of the following degrees:

- ♦ First degree – with minimum term of study 4 years by the training plan, as the graduated students acquire Bachelor degree. The studying ensures basic widespread knowledge and degree of qualification, which goal is to give widespread opportunities for realization on work place and direct access to the European labour market. About 2/3 of the graduated bachelors continue in master programmes.
- ♦ Second degree – with minimum term of study 5 years or at least 1 year after bachelor degree, as the graduated students acquire Master degree. The studying ensures profound fundamental knowledge, combined by narrower orientation of the training programmes with goal to profile defined or inter-discipline specialty, as well as possibilities for their orientation to concrete labour market's needs.
- ♦ Third degree – with minimum term of study 3 years after acquired Master degree, as the graduated students acquire Ph. D. degree. The study in it is done in scientific specialties.

There is one more legislated degree of education in the Bulgarian higher education – the Specialist degree. It is the shortest degree of acquisition vocational higher education (ISCED 5B) with continuance 3 years and legislated practical orientation of studying. It can be acquired in the colleges, which are structural units in the higher schools or are self-dependent higher schools. Graduating higher education on Specialist degree allows the students to continue their study in higher degree of education or to join on the labour market. The greater part of students graduated on Specialist degree continues in Bachelor programmes.

Important steps to enforce the compatibility of the Bulgarian higher education with the European standards appear the following legislative documents, accepted by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers in 2004:

- ♦ An Ordinance on State Requirements to the Basic Documents Issued by the Bulgarian Higher Schools and Attended European Diploma Supplement – the European Diploma Supplement's aim is to ensure enough and independent data, which to contribute for improving the transparency and for detached and equitable recognition of the documents for education and professional qualification (diplomas, degrees, certificates) in international aspect. It contains description of the essence, level, context, contains, and status of the education and training, which is passed graduated successfully by the owner of the original document, which certifies the qualification, and to which the supplement is attached.
- ♦ An Ordinance № 21 of the Ministry of Education and Science on Application of Credit Accumulation and Transfer System in the higher schools, which is compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Based on full student study load, the credit system ensures the possibility to the students to choose training disciplines, training forms and self-study forms, as well as mobility based on mutual recognition of separated periods of studying for acquisition of higher educational degree. It allows, based on module principle an individual planning the time and the periods of study, and also credit transfer from one higher school to another and from one system of education to another too. The educational credits, acquired by the student are obligatory encrypted in the basic documents issued by the higher school, also in the academic reference and the European Diploma Supplement together with the mark of the schedule of examination marks and its corresponding mark on the ECTS's scale.
- ♦ An Ordinance on State Requirements for Organization of Distance Education in the Higher Schools – it legislates the conditions and requirements for organizing distance form of education in the higher schools with aim to guarantee the quality of training.

This form of education is of equal worth to the regular form of studying with respect to the training plan's contents, the number of credits required for a given specialty, the diploma for graduated educational degree and professional qualification. It can be organized only by higher schools, established in accordance with the legislation (Law of Higher Education) and obtained their corresponding programme accreditation with goal to guarantee the educational quality. The distance form of education gives an opportunity for improving the qualification without leaving the work place. The development of training programmes in distance form of education, designed for people with special educational needs, is promoted by special text in the ordinance.

In view to be more competitive in European and world scale, the Bulgarian higher schools enhance their collaboration with European universities to design jointed training programmes. In part of them, the studying is performed in languages of EU for consolidation of educational processes in Europe and to ensure access to the European labour market by professional qualifications. In 2000-2005, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a methodological system for supporting students, post-graduated students, teachers in higher schools, and scientific researchers during their preparation to take part in competitions for training and post-graduated training abroad.

In 1995, by the Law of Higher Education, the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) have been established. After Bulgaria has joined in the Bologna process, the agency has participated in all the initiatives for building European space of higher education and standardizing the evaluation and accreditation criteria of the European estimation and accreditation agencies with respect to the higher education. After the modifications in the Law of Higher Education in 2004, some conditions have established for supporting the training quality by institutional insurance of post-accreditation monitoring by NEAA. In 1995-2004 the higher schools have developed their internal university systems for evaluation and support the training quality and academic staff's qualify, which takes into account the students' opinion too, and which are a part of the NEAA's criteria. A part of these systems has certified by ISO 9001:2000.

The higher schools' structure is defined by the Law of Higher Education, as the private higher schools have an opportunity to use an organization, different from the approved by the law. The significant autonomy of the Bulgarian higher schools (compared with the countries of EU and the countries-members of OECD), guarantee by the law, gives opportunities for maximum variety of training programmes in educational degrees and post-graduated qualification, in accordance to the individual needs of the students and the labour market's needs. Improving the institutional network and development of new educational forms by legislation of the distance form of education for example expands the access to higher education. The Law on Students and Post-Graduated Crediting is accepted on first reading by the National Assembly in 2005. Its goal is to support people in non-equivalent social state to study in higher schools.

The autonomy of the higher schools allows them to be in collaboration with Bulgarian institutions and with foreign higher education institutions too. Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe (BRIE) Center was established in 2002, as a project in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Its partners are University of Rouse, Romanian-Bulgarian Economic University College – Giurgiu, Academy of Economic Studies – Bucarest, Center for European Integration Studies at the University of Bonn, Chemnitz University of Technology, and European University Viadrina – Frankfurt (Oder). Another examples of long-lasting successful collaboration is between

the Technical University of Sofia and [Universität Fridericiana \(TH\)](#), Karlsruhe and [Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina](#), Braunschweig (since 1990), Association des Universités Francophones, AUF (since 1993), between University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy – Sofia and Technical University Hamburg-Harburg (since 1991), AUF (since 1992), between University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy – Sofia, and Technical University – Vienna, etc. Also, a great part of private higher schools are established by international participation and collaboration.

The relationships between the universities and scientific research institutes are mainly by exchange of knowledge by teaching or by including students in scientific research projects during preparation of their diploma research. The order and conditions for implementing practice training and probationary periods in enterprises, but as a whole the practical training is still one of the weak sides of the system for higher education. Since 2002, annual campaigns are organized by the Ministry of Economics, the Embassy of USA, and business organizations to support the collaborations between the employers and the higher schools for offering practical training and possibilities for future career growth of the students.

Now it is necessary for us to develop a concept of new Law of Higher Education, because its recent modifications since 04.06.2004 have not improved it too much. By this reason, a work group is established to develop the parameters and the philosophy of a new Law of Higher Education. It must solve the problem about the terms of study for Bachelor and Master degrees (schemes 3+1 or 3+2, instead of the existing now schemes 4+1 and 4+1.5). It is forthcoming the status of college's education to be legislative changed now, because it appears aside from the Bologna process. Also, it is necessary to optimize the number of the higher schools in Bulgaria – in this moment they are 51, including the colleges. A question appears - which is the most reasonable way to do this? In this case, the administrative measures are unwarrantable. There are too much higher schools with relatively low number of students too.

Their profile allows on a first time to do their association, and next - their fusion to the large universities. This process cannot be completed without joint efforts of the business, the users of specialists with higher education, and the NEAA's participation and the results from the post-accreditation monitoring. We are working in this moment to improve the apportionment mechanism of the higher schools' financial resources taking an account to the accreditation's results, searching on a side of the candidate-students, searching on the labour market and the educational costs, including development of rules for accounting the expenditure of the resources, the training and the scientific-research activities. It is necessary to improve the balance of the studied specialties, because the share of students studying social, economic and law sciences in 1999-2000 is almost 50 %, than average 30 % of the students in EU. The share of students studying natural and computer sciences, according to [21], is 4 %, than average 12 % of the students in EU. But these 4 % do not account the fact that computer sciences are fundamentally studied in specialties of professional direction "Communicational and Computer Technique" in the technical universities, and by this reason they fall in the percent of students studying technical sciences and manufacturing – about 13 % in 1999-2000, than average 14 % of the students in EU. Everything supposes implementation of adequate government policy and designated financing of determined specialties and to stop financing specialties, which cannot be inscribed in the public practice in Bulgaria.

Sources: [11-14, 21, 27-29]

V. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

The VET reform in Bulgaria, implemented since 2000, is directed to realize the European goals in development of the educational and training systems, defined in 2001, as well as the priorities and the results of the progress of Copenhagen process. After 01.01.2005, when the decision of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe about establishment of EUROPASS begins to operate, the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible about the Bulgarian participation in the implementation of EUROPASS. The unified information system “NAVET – Employment Agency” can serve as a base for accession to EUROPASS.

The policy of the Ministry of Education and Science for the VET’s development establishes conditions for flexibility of the system. It gives a chance to the students to acquire different degrees of qualification during their studying in high education, and a plenty of opportunities for further training. The frame programmes for acquisition on professional qualification, legislated by the Law of VET, are applicable as to the initial VET, also as to the further vocational training. They define the frame of the training, by expressing in a concrete form the conditions for access to the degrees of professional qualification (from I to IV degree), and for acquisition of a particular professional qualification, actualization of an acquired qualification or improving given already acquired qualification. The evaluation of the students’ progress is based on State Educational Requirements on Evaluation. The final rating of the competencies and skills for finishing vocational training is obtained by taking school-leaving state exams for graduating high education, and state exams in theory and practice of the profession for acquisition of the corresponding degree of professional qualification. The evaluation of the vocational schools’ quality is performed by the Educational Regional Inspectorates. There are not unified evaluation criteria. In general, they are the interest to the school, the number of students dropped out, resource providing, etc.

The quality of training in vocational training centres (VTC) is guaranteed by a procedure for licensing. The quality of training, organized by the Employment Agency, is guaranteed by assigning right for training – after competition between VTC licensed by NAVET and according the Law of Public Offers. Since 2001, a monitoring system for VTC has existed after approval by NAVET. An object of monitoring are: the activity of VTC with respect to the NAVET’s criteria’s application and implementation; the legislation’s abundance; the vocational training’s effectiveness and its correspondence to the requirements of the Law of VET, defined by the NAVET’s criteria; workability of the system for ensuring the training quality; resource insurance, etc. NAVET have developed a system for further control of the licensed VTC for prevention and ensuring the training quality in the further years.

The legislative initiatives in the field of recognizing diplomas and professional qualifications, undertaken in order to implement the requirements of Council Directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC, are developed in two basic directions. Considerable part of the law framework, which legislates the recognition procedures is under updating. Modifications and supplements in some legislative acts are done to harmonize the national legislation with the legislation in the Community, new laws and acts are developed too in addition to the existing legislative base. The national legislation is fully complied with the legislative measures of EU with respect to 92/51/EEC, as the Law of VET (1999) for example. It is developed completely in accordance with the requirements of the directive together with experts with the European Commission. The mobility of training in VET Centres gives an opportunity for credit transfer (passing separated training modulus finishing with certificates for vocational training).

In the framework of the project with the European Foundation for Training “Spreading of the Copenhagen process” in 2005 is supposed the books “System for Self-Evaluation of VET Systems and Providers” and “Practical Manual for Forming Policies in Lifelong Orientation” to be published in Bulgarian. Next NAVET plans to organize widespread discussion of experts about the opportunities for their use to refine the policies and activities in order to improve the quality of VET on national level and to develop a national strategy for lifelong orientation.

The low-qualified groups and the people in non-equivalent social status usually are with graduated class of the initial or the basic school. According the Law of VET, there is a special requirement for input educational level to include somebody in vocational training for acquisition of professional qualification. The most suitable training for this group is probably vocational training with acquisition of first degree of professional qualification – it requires VI class to be graduated (Framework Programme A for initial vocational training with acquisition of first degree of professional qualification). In the List of Professions in VET, there are included professions with acquisition of first degree of vocational qualification. If the persons are graduated VIII class of a class of high education, they can train in professions with higher degree of professional qualification.

The vocational training of groups in non-equivalent social status (low knowledgeable, low-qualified, unemployed) is a basic ascent in the active employment policy. It is carried out by literacy programmes, qualification and employment programmes with aim to improve their employability, competitiveness on the labour market, and their chances to find job by education, qualification, and forming their active behaviour on the labour market – for example by the programme for liquidation of illiteracy, qualification, and employment of inhabitants in regions with ethnically mixed population; the National Programme “From social aid to employment”; the programmes “Overcoming the poverty”, “Beautiful Bulgaria”, the National Programme for People With Injuries; the Refugees Programme, etc. – they have an module for liquidation of illiteracy or professional qualification of unemployed, which is directed predominantly to groups in non-equivalent social status. The adult training in a part of profession (Framework Programmes D) is also appropriate for people with low literacy or illiteracy – it does not require input educational level. It finishes by taking exams in theory and practice. They are state exams using national examination programs, if the aim of training is acquisition of degree of professional qualification.

The SER on Acquisition of Professional Qualification legislate the basic competencies, which are adopted as in the vocational as well as in the basis educational preparation; the requirements of input educational level for training in a given profession; the labour activities, objects and tools, knowledge and skills necessary to the practice of a given profession; chances for professional realization and improvement of qualification. They predetermine the face of each profession in the greatest degree. SER contain description of the goals and contains of the training programmes; requirements to the training equipment and the learners; general evaluation criteria of the state exams in theory and practice. Some competencies necessary for acquisition of profession with higher educational level are mastered in the VET framework too. The SER’s application gives an opportunity for alike quality of vocational training provided by the training institutions within and outside the national educational system, achieving transparency of the training process, use of one and the same evaluation criteria, insurance of suitable training with respect to the labour market’s needs, equal worth of the certificates issued by different training institutions, an opportunity for harmonization with respect to the European standards with goal mutual recognition of the certificates. The employers

participate in the process of SER's evaluation and actualization as members of the work groups, as well as during their evaluation by NAVET; one of the reviewers is obligatory employer, also the profession's profile is presented in the associations of branches of industry. All these steps are a guarantee for our ambitions the developed projects of SER to be conformed in maximum degree with the labour market's requirements. Information about each profession and its corresponding vocational training with respect to SER, which are published in State Gazette, are published on the NAVET's website.

The commitment of the vocational education and especially the adult training with the labour market's requirements and needs is of major importance also for the employment as well as for the quality of training. The state reception-plan in the vocational schools is conformable to the labour market's requirements, and the activity in determining the needs on the labour market is improving continuously in the time. In 2004, a method for determining the employers' needs of professional qualification of their work power on regional level is developed and applied in practice. Some actions, accomplished by projects by PHARE and bilateral cooperation, are done to improve the method and to predict the needs. Always acting expert council with the Council of Economic Growth is created in order to monitoring, analyses, identification and prediction of the needs of work power with given qualification in separated sectors and regions.

The Bulgarian work power's aging in the recent years imposes continuous actualization of their professional qualification and re-qualification too. The undertaken measures are in context to improve the employability of the groups with unequal state on the labour market. SER can be used by the employers also for hiring workers as well as to modernize the skills of their already hired workers. For example, persons who are trained in a given profession in the past, by browsing SER can understand which their competences are missed, and to announce their desire for participation in training courses in VET Centres. Also persons who are mastered a given profession, but cannot find a job, can find another close profession, for which there are free work places in the moment, and which they will able to master after passing qualification course.

The employers in Bulgaria still are investing in insufficient degree in training of their staff. Such training for now has to be financed by the learners, and probably this is the reason for the lack of enough ordering of such courses. The legislative base and opportunities for improving the qualification and the competencies of older workers by courses and extramural training in the art schools is developed. Since 2000 there have introduced new training programmes for state exams for acquisition of professional qualification. Their goal is to check the degree of mastering the key competencies. Training using ICT, and training in new, modern, and demanded specialties are introduced too, with aim to improve the attractiveness of training. As a result the annual state reception-plan of students in them has fulfilled and the proportion candidates/accepted has increased too.

Considering the trainers' specific educational needs and their role in the training process, the lack of completed system for training adult trainers is a problem. The institutions, which prepare teachers, have to develop training system for the teachers in VET, conformed to the specific features of the profession, the teacher's personal interests and skills, and the age specification of the learners (children or adults). On another hand the employers must give to the teachers a chance to introduce them with the novelties in the branch by ensuring work places, invitations for participation in seminars, etc. It is necessary to reduce the restrictive regime in the ordinance on career growth of the

teachers [38], and to reduce the requirements for labour practice in transition from one degree of professional qualification to another.

The well-timed identification of the needs of VET is of major importance, because they vary in quite dynamical manner due to the non-constant economic growth, the structure reform, dropping down traditional leading branches in the industry and their replacement with others, demographic changes (reduced birth-rate, aging of the population). The VET will pre-orientate itself in greater degree to training and re-qualification of adults in the next years. The early identification of needs and necessary skills with aim to plan VET is a process, in which the employers are the active side.

They must provide information about their needs of qualified workers. Unfortunately Bulgaria is a country with variable economics, with mainly small and middle enterprises, which cannot be sure how long they will exist. As a result, the training by professions in the sphere of tourism and economics is the most wanted, because the people suppose that the competencies mastered in the framework of such training shall be useful for them no matter which will be their labour activity tomorrow.

Sources: [3, 30-39]

VI. CONSOLIDATING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

By reason of factors as the growing number of educational institutions, the diversification of the higher education, the development of different schemes for mobility, etc., the recognition of a given qualification for academic goals has always required full information about the place, time, contains, and the evaluation of the training programmes that lead to it. In many cases, the existing documents for qualification do not contain enough information, and by this reason they are not transparent. From this point of view, it is important to work with document, which contains information about the acquired qualification that is recognized in international scale. The Ordinance on State Requirements to The Basic Documents Issued by the Bulgarian Higher Schools and Attended European Diploma Supplement is one of the tools that ensure such information. The second tool is introducing the ECTS, by which training periods hold abroad as well as final qualifications in the higher education can be recognized. Third, the distance form of education in the higher schools is legislated too.

The recent updates of the Law of Higher Education have set the base to overcome the main obstacles for transparency of the qualifications offered by the Bulgarian higher schools. At this time NEAA has modified the direction of its activity in order improvement of the quality of the prepared specialists on the different educational levels by the use of external comparative estimates, the auditor or the license on the side of leading European higher schools or associations in EU, which implement evaluation and accreditation.

Further development of unified credit transfer system in VET and in higher education (ECVET) is assumed as an initiative in the framework of Copenhagen and Bologna processes. In relation of this, it is necessary to begin on time a campaign to introduce the Bulgarian educational institutions with the further changes.

As a part of the European dimension of the education, special attention is devoted to training in foreign languages, ICT, and also training in subjects related to citizenship education, education in human rights and intercultural education in the schools from the

formal educational system. As example of good practices, it is included by training in Bulgarian Language and Literature, Philosophy, History, World and Personality, and also presents in the training in foreign languages. Priority teacher training with respect to these subjects is also provided. A lot of initiatives related to 2005 – The European Year for Citizenship through Education, proclaimed by the Council of Europe as an initiative of Republic of Bulgaria, are also implemented [40].

Considering the measures for development of adequate organizational framework in order to improve the quality of mobility and development of virtual mobility, major attention is devoted to development of training for acquisition of key knowledge and skills for adults. The language training for adults is also intensified, including professional knowledge and skills in foreign languages. The results from projects by PHARE, LEONARDO DA VINCI, SOCRATUS, MINERVA, and other programmes are used, shared, and multiplied too. The European instruments as EUROPASS for transparency and mobility of certificates for education and professional qualification are also popularized.

With respect to the policies, which ensure greater mobility of the adult learners for acquisition of professional qualification, development of a system for improving their qualification is supposed in the National Strategy on VET. As the main part of these learners are teachers in the schools of the educational system, it is necessary to them to pass training for application of the andragogy's principles, approaches, and methods. They also have to pass training for actualization of their knowledge in the particular discipline with respect to the actual employers' needs of workers with modern qualification. All these directions are set in the European requirements for quality of training. The system for improvement of the teachers' qualification is built on the principle of voluntary participation.

The teachers can take part in various qualification forms as they wish or by recommendation of the employer (the director of the school) or the regional educational inspectorate. Priority groups for including in training for improving the qualification are teachers in subjects, for which there are new SER adopted, and pedagogic specialists that have occupied new pedagogical post in the educational system or that have returned at work after interruption of their pedagogical practice for more than 3 years. The purpose of the qualification programmes is differed according to the position, specialty, and qualification level of the teachers. Special attention is devoted to the training programmes, related to the professional and the career growth of the teachers by acquisition of qualification degrees.

The adoption of widespread knowledge, which is set in SER on vocational training, gives an opportunity for mobility as within the country (regional mobility), as well as mobility in the framework of the professional direction. One possible short-term training or self-study shall be enough for a person to cope with activities that are typical for other professions within the same professional direction. Legislative measures promoting the mobility are supposed for the adult participants in training for acquisition of professional qualification. Such measures are granting scholarships, granting recourses for daily expenses, transport and accommodation expenditures, training materials, and etc. These measures and possibilities will increase and become more colourful in the next years.

Increasing the resources for financing the training of unemployed persons (from 200 BG levs in 2002 to 450 BG levs in 2003) contributes to achieve higher quality of the results from vocational training. By this way some conditions for improving the quality of the training programmes and training contents are established. Also, there are included

additional modules and themes, related to the professional culture, communicative knowledge and skills, development of personal qualities of professional importance. All this contributes to increase the mobility of the work power among the different economic sectors, branches, and activities. It appears as major factor for the mobility of the work power in professional, qualification, and territory aspect.

The main difficulties in the education and training system are financial and related to development of the technical equipment and didactic base. Financing by voucher system is based on investing redirection from direct subsidizing of the schools and the universities to the direct users of the service (students in the schools and in the higher schools). Introducing the voucher system is hindered of the lack of legislative base and a lack of good practices in the country. Also, larger popularization is necessary with respect to the national and European strategies, policies and concrete documents concerning the education and training on all levels and educational degrees, including vocational training, adult training, and the work power's level of professional qualification in Europe and in the world.

Several tendencies exist in view of consolidation of the European dimension of education. In the general education's framework: more competencies must be mastered for successful realization of the learners on the labour market; the choice of profession to be postponed to later age (after X class for example); including vocational training as obligatory selected subject or self-dependent selected subject in the lower classes, but in manner to give the person a chance later to change the trained profession without additional training. It is necessary to change the role of the teacher (from lector to consultant), which includes training related to novelties in the professional sphere, new teaching methods; work with personnel computer, internet, studying foreign languages. Considering the higher education, it is necessary to improve the traditional system of teaching based on lectures, with aim to give the students the chance to have more self-study, developing their own independent thinking and analytical approach of solving problems and decision making. Some difficulties have already existed to do this.

These are difficulties with respect to ensure the students access to modern textbooks and manuals, including modern literature and reference base written in the basic languages in EU. Development of an informational system for control of the higher education is forthcoming, as an inseparable part of the informational system of the "Education" branch. It shall improve the effectiveness of the control in the higher education, and will ensure the necessary information for the national statistics. A national academic communicational network, connected with the European networks of higher education, will be developed too. It will spread all over informational problems related to exchange of students and teachers in the higher schools in EU.

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