



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
Ministry of Education, Youth and Science

NATIONAL REPORT

CONTRIBUTION TO THE JOINT PROGRESS REPORT OF THE COUNCIL AND
THE COMMISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND
TRAINING
EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2020

Sofia, May 2011

Contribution to the national reform programmes (about 2 pages)

Question 1:

Provide brief information about the main elements in the area of education and training set in your National Reform Programme:

One of the priorities set in the National Reform Programme (2011-2015) is competitive youth: reducing the share of early school leavers, increasing the number of graduates, encouraging young scientists, providing jobs for young people in Bulgaria.

The 4th national target of Bulgaria for achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy in education and training consists of two sub-targets: reducing the proportion of early school leavers to 11% by 2020 and increasing the total number of graduates aged 30 to 34 to 36% by 2020. These national sub-targets were adopted by Decision of the Council of Ministers on 5 May 2010 and were subsequently laid down in the National Youth Strategy (2010-2020).

The priorities in education aim at:

- improving the quality of education;
- linking educational programmes to the actual needs of economy;
- ensuring that education is accessible to all and opening up the education system;
- creating conditions and environment for implementing in practice the educational concept of Lifelong Learning;
- attracting young people to the development of industry policies;
- turning Bulgaria into a country of knowledge and innovations.

The reform in the education and training system will help to raise the skills level of the workforce, people's competence, the qualification of low-skilled workers and will contribute to a better cohesion with the modern development of society and with employers' requirements and needs in accordance with Integrated Guideline (IG) 9. The successful implementation of measures aiming at improving the framework of the education and training system is closely related to achieving the 4th national target, yet it will also facilitate the achievement of national targets 1 and 5 in accordance with IGs 7, 8 and 10.

The reform in this area will be supplemented by the expertise of the World Bank which will provide analytical and consultancy support for *improving the quality of lower and upper secondary education* by enhancing the schools' reporting system and for *improving the quality and importance of higher education* by improving the management of universities, implementing stricter control over the accreditation of educational establishments and linking government funding with results. The specific measures in lower and upper secondary education will comprise improvement of the system for external evaluation of the quality of education, as well as the introduction of school mechanisms for enhancing the role and commitment of parents and municipalities in the managerial decisions of schools. The World Bank will also assist the government in the implementation of the school education reform which is under preparation.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MEYS) will be able, through the national programmes, to envisage funding of specific measures and activities for improving the quality of Bulgarian education, and for more complete inclusion and keeping in school of children at the age for mandatory education. The national programmes are ratified annually by the

Council of Ministers. By its Decision of 4 April 2011, the Council of Ministers approved nine such programmes¹ for 2011.

In short-term aspect, the NRP envisages the implementation of the following major measures in education:

- building a network of career development centres;
- elaborating a draft law on pre-school and school education and related draft by-laws in order to outline the new educational environment focusing on children and students;
- implementation of the nine national programmes for development of upper secondary education approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers dated 4 April 2011.

In medium-term aspect, by 2015 a number of measures for modernization of the education system will be applied, some of them being the following:

- introducing a new education structure for ensuring equal access to education; this will help to overcome the main deficiencies of the current education structure, i.e. the existing inequality among students in different types of schools due to learning different general education minimums; the absence of permeability of the system and the absence of diplomas (only a certificate of completed education stage is issued) upon reaching that age; inadequate conditions for developing the potential of every child taking into account his or her interest, needs and abilities.
- ensuring all-day organization of the school day for first-grade students in state and municipal schools.
- optimisation of the school network in accordance with demographic processes for more efficient use of resources; improving the education inspection system.
- developing the system for evaluation and control of the education quality at different levels as a base option for development and implementation of policies for preventing dropping out of school (and contributing to the achievement of national target 4) and for achieving higher levels of education; the system will encourage participation and assuming responsibility which are directly linked to social inclusion and minimizing social isolation (in performance of national target 5).
- building an effective system for qualification and career development of teachers and trainers which will contribute to the improvement of the quality of upper secondary education. The new Law on pre-school and school education will set the qualification of teachers and trainers as a main priority in upper secondary education. For the first time, in view of the specifics of the profession and the need for constant improvement of the level of knowledge and skills of teachers and trainers, qualification will become mandatory and will aim at satisfying the changing needs of children and students. Teachers' and trainers' qualification will focus on specific approaches and methods of working with children having special educational needs, with children of various ethnical origins, with gifted children, and with children being at risk of dropping out.

Reforms in higher education aim at ensuring adequate link between higher education and the labour market in accordance with IGs 9 and 8.

Achieving the targets will be facilitated by a system for rating universities which will provide an objective comparison base and will be based on indicators for assessment of the actual quality status in the network of universities. These measures will increase students' competitiveness at the national and European labour markets and will ensure transparency of the higher education's achievements and quality. Providing opportunities for conducting

¹ Optimisation of School Network; Qualification; Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at School; School: Territory of Students; System for National Standard External Evaluation; Modernisation of the Vocational Training System; Care for Every Student; Creating Accessible Architectural Environment; National Language and Culture Abroad.

internships in real working environments will contribute to increasing the quality of higher education and improving its connection with business. The creation of a system promoting the motivation for achieving better results in education by providing additional students' scholarships and awards will contribute to ensuring equal access to education, which leads to greater motivation and interest of students in the education process.

In relation to the creation of conditions for increasing the flow of public and private resources to the higher education, the implementation of the Student Crediting Programme started. The effects of applying the Law on Crediting Students and PhD Students will be sought in sharing education costs between the state and the students, promoting competition among universities for providing a better-quality higher education and ensuring equal access to higher education to all irrespective of their social status. The implementation of this programme will assist to address growth factor 2, relating to the improvement of public costs efficiency and ensuring the reallocation of public costs to activities which increase the economy's growth potential, and to the performance of national target 4.

In medium-term aspect, by 2015 a number of measures will be applied in higher education, some of them being as follows:

- updating the regulatory framework;
- elaborating mechanisms for maintenance and development of the rating system of universities in Bulgaria published in 2010.
- developing mechanisms for conducting internships in real working environment;
- providing student scholarships for equal access to education and increasing motivation for better results;
- creating a model system for qualification and career development of the academic staff.

The successful implementation of this measure will contribute to improving the quality of education services rendered by Bulgarian universities. This is related to increasing the competence in key areas such as foreign language skills, skills for using information and communication technology in the education process and acquiring specific professional knowledge and competences connected with modern education programmes. In order to improve the quality of education services, draft mechanisms will be elaborated for monitoring, evaluation, forecasting and planning trainings for improving the qualification of the teaching staff at universities.

Leaving school early (ABOUT 3 pages)

Question 2

What measures have you taken in your country to reduce the number of early school leavers?

The Programme for development of education, science and youth policies in Bulgaria (2009-2013) sets the following strategic goal: Ensuring equal access to education and opening up the education system. Measures have been contemplated for reducing the number of students left out or dropping out within the age for mandatory education. In performance of the targets set, a two-year mandatory pre-school education was introduced from the 2010/2011 school year which comprises children aged 5 and 6.

In order to prevent dropping out of school and ensuring equal access to education, an all-day education organization was introduced for first-grade students, which in the 2011/12 school year will also include second-grade students and will expand by stages.

Considering the need for preventing early school leaving, under Human Resources Development Operational Programme on 04.11.2008 a procedure for direct financial grant was launched on scheme BG051PO001-4.1.02: Education services for students lagging

behind the education and for gifted children, Component 1: Support for children lagging behind the education, with MEYS as beneficiary through the Education Programmes and Education Contents Directorate. The financial aid is in the amount of BGN 2 933 173 of which BGN 2 493 683.25 from the European Social Fund and BGN 440 061.75 national co-financing. The main measures contemplated in the project are as follows:

- Additional work (4 hours a week) with students (grade 1 to 4) for overcoming gaps and lagging behind the teaching material. It is contemplated to include children at pre-school age, mostly those whose family language is not Bulgarian. The project will cover at least 2000 children and students;
- Training of teachers working with children from the target group, at least 2 seminars with 2 training modules each, for working with children whose family language is not Bulgarian and with children having training problems. The project will engage 400 to 450 teachers;
- Adapting information system for collecting and maintaining a database of children who have dropped out of school or who are at risk of dropping out.

The Care for Every Student National Programme, module for ensuring supplementary education to students for increasing the level of their achievements in general education, was adopted in 2008 and has been implemented annually.

The beneficiaries of the programme are municipal and state-owned schools which were invited through the regional education inspectorates based on the results of external evaluation. The objectives of the programme module specified above are as follows:

- providing an opportunity for supplementary education of children having problems learning the teaching material;
- motivating teachers for work with the students, taking into account their individual abilities and interests;
- promoting the implementation of innovative approaches in teaching and learning for children having different abilities.

2.1 Measures for analysis of the situation and monitoring of early school leaving (e.g.: collecting information, studies and research):

The data about students included in school at the age for mandatory education is entered into the information system of MEYS – AdminM. The scope of the data for each following academic year and the necessary changes in the data structure and type are specified for each school year. The upper secondary education data is collected four times a year. The information system enables MEYS to receive information about the movement of students at the level of comparing the students' data by date of unifying bases, and also reports on students dropping out and transformed schools.

Within the project of education services for students lagging behind the education and for gifted children, Component 1: Support for children lagging behind the education, a module has been developed to the information system for collecting and maintaining a database of children at risk of dropping out of the education system. The module will be approbated by filling in data of the project target group and will then be provided for entering and collecting data about all children.

2.2 Note the priority areas where your country's measures are focused: (target groups, education sectors):

A major problem for the education system is the great percentage of students who drop out of school early, who fail to enrol in any education and do not enter the labour market. There are social groups in which the level of risk for the normal physical, social and

psychological development of children is higher. The problem is rather grave in some of the ethnic minorities, e.g. children of Romany origin, as the psychological and socioeconomic living conditions reflect on the education process. In order to assist children who are absent from school at the very beginning of school education and therefore have gaps in the knowledge, various measures are taken to provide regulatory, financial and organizational conditions for supplementary education.

By financing on project principle of 352 schools in the Care for Every Student National Programme in the 2009/2010 school year, supplementary education was provided to 6 015 secondary school students for raising the level of their achievements in general education. 4 372 registered progress. The positive effects of this policy provide grounds for expanding the programme scope in the next academic year by including students from more grades, even 6-year-olds from the mandatory preparatory group.

The expansion of the opportunities for supplementary education of children having problems in learning the teaching material helped to achieve additional effects related to motivating teachers to apply innovative approaches for work with students taking into consideration their individual abilities and interests.

With regard to reducing the number of students dropping out through the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, operating axis 4: Improving access to education and training, the project for education services for students lagging behind the education was implemented. The project included in supplementary education 7 305 students from the initial stage of lower secondary education and children from the preparatory groups.

2.3 Measures for prevention of early school leaving. Note the most efficient measures taken at the education system level, at school level and in support of individual students:

As measures in this area we may note the national programmes ensuring conditions for access to education of students at the age for mandatory education, irrespective of their ethnical group, gender, origin and religion, and creating opportunities for everybody to learn regardless of their place of living and economic status, through the following directions:

- providing supplementary education to students in primary and lower secondary education.
- providing textbooks and teaching aids for first- to seventh-grade students in state-owned, municipal and private schools in Bulgaria.
- optimisation of the school network by providing transport to state-owned and municipal schools for students in primary and lower secondary education;
- providing snacks and/or fruit, and/or milk/tea, including yoghurt products, to every student in I - IV grade and in the preparatory groups.

In 2004 MEYS developed and adopted a Strategy for education integration of children and students of ethnic minorities which was updated in April 2010. Every school develops a plan for implementing the strategy, with specific measures against dropping out.

In 2010 we made active use of the mechanisms of programme budgeting, and a module for support of all-day education for primary school students was implemented under the National Programme titled *School: Territory of Students*. 1053 project proposals were submitted and evaluated in respect of the module. The number of submitted projects shows clearly the system's needs for such organization of education at the initial stage which would be particularly beneficial to students of minority origin whose mother tongue is different from Bulgarian and the mastering of which, due to staying all day in Bulgarian-speaking environment, definitely leads to improving the quality of education and at the same time is an active measure against dropping out.

As an effective measure we may note the integration of students of Romani origin in the so-called "enrolment schools" where practical desegregation takes place since the classes

include 5 to 6 children of Romani origin who are educated in the competitive environment of children from the majority. According to data provided by the Regional Education Inspectorates, in the recent years the number of enrolment schools in the country reached 165, and a trend for their increase is noticed.

An effective and efficient measure is the work on improving the quality of education in segregated schools. Efficiency is reported based on external evaluation of the students' knowledge by external assessment in fourth grade which has been conducted in the Bulgarian education system since the 2006-2007 school year.

2.4 Measures for compensating early school leaving. What are the most efficient measures taken in your country?

In the last three years in Bulgaria the proportion of students leaving early the education system stabilized (at about 14%). In the most part the early leaving of the education system is due to socioeconomic reasons. The trend persists of the greatest number of students dropping out at lower secondary stage and decreasing the number of students dropping out of primary school. We should also note the trend for increasing the percentage of students coming back into the system.

In order to support families and children and keeping them in the education system a number of programs are underway to provide free textbooks to all first- to eighth-grade students, transport, snacks. After the introduction of the mandatory one-year pre-school education, which will become two-year by 2012, we successfully began the gradual introduction of all-day education which will comprise all students from first to sixth grade.

The introduced mandatory national external assessments on subjects at the end of each education stage help to follow the processes in the system and to take measures for optimal support to students. Conditions are provided for maximum use of school time ensuring substitute teachers by subjects. Financing is provided for individual work with students with outstanding gifts in different areas, and conditions are ensured for additional work with students lagging behind.

Opportunities have been created for acquiring professional qualification by persons who have left school by expanding the state admission plan for acquiring first level of professional qualification by students who have left school after sixth, seventh and eighth grade; opportunities for acquiring education and/or only of second or third level of professional qualification in evening or part-time/distance forms of learning.

Concurrently, various projects involve teaching adults to read and write or include training for acquiring professional qualification and/or requalification.

Higher education (about 3 pages)

Question 3

What measures have been taken by your country to increase the number of graduates from universities or equivalent?

The Law on crediting students and PhD students (promulgated State Gazette, No. 69 /2008, amended and supplemented, No. 99/2009) regulates the terms and procedures for crediting students and PhD students by state financial aid. A programme for student crediting is also implemented. The goal is to improve the conditions for access to higher education.

Within the Student Scholarships and Awards Project financed by the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, the existing system for providing student scholarships was supplemented by using funding from the European Social Fund. The aim was to create a system for raising the motivation for better results in education and for ensuring equal access to education. Within the project comprising the winter and summer terms of the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years, scholarships were granted to an average of 16 355 students per term and awards to an average of 7 620 students per term. The sum of the scholarships provided amounts to BGN 27 848 610 and the awards amount to BGN 6 095 600, i.e. students received a total of BGN 33 944 210.

Creating conditions for active involvement of Bulgarian students and the academic staff in European mobility programmes promotes mobility among students and teachers.

3.1 Measures for increasing admission to higher education, including expansion of the access of less represented groups:

In the recent years a trend persists in Bulgaria of transition from elite to mass system for high-quality higher education. Universities simplify admission models in order to attract more students. Following a decision of the academic council of the relevant higher school, admission may take place even without a competitive examination based on the successfully passed state matriculations which precondition the access to higher education.

For socially isolated and disadvantaged groups universities provide easy terms and procedures for admission and education. Additional reliefs are provided to applicants raised in homes for children deprived of parental care, to mothers with children under 6, to cadets at higher military schools and to PhD students in the last two years of their doctorate. A consistent and purposeful policy is conducted for improving the conditions for education of students with specific education needs which already yields positive results to a great extent. The nationally represented associations of people with seeing, hearing and other disabilities provide specialized advice and information about students with specific education needs related to the provision of additional options for financial and social support.

Within the Student Scholarships and Awards Project funded under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the European Social Fund, scholarships and awards were granted for high results achieved by students. The aim was to encourage their active participation in the education process and to support their financial status.

We developed and are successfully implementing other projects supported by MEYS, e.g. the scholarship programme for medical students and residents of Romani origin (the Open Society Institute jointly with the Roma Education Fund). The programme was conducted in 2009 and 2010. Its objective was to promote the inclusion of a disadvantaged group in higher medical education thus creating prerequisites for improving the provision of health services in the Roma community and for facilitating the overcoming of discrimination in the health care system.

3.2 Measures for increasing the number of higher education graduates:

The Law on crediting students and PhD students adopted in 2008 and the Programme for Student Crediting are examples of measures for achieving that goal. Moreover, in the Student Scholarships and Awards Project funded under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, the existing system for granting student scholarships was supplemented using funding from the European Social Fund. The aim was to create a system for raising the motivation for better results in education and for ensuring equal access to education. Within the project comprising the winter and summer terms of the 2008-2009 and

2009-2010 academic years scholarships were provided to an average of 16 355 students per term and awards to an average of 7 620 students per term. The sum of the scholarships granted amounts to BGN 27 848 610 and the awards amount to BGN 6 095 600, i.e. students received a total of BGN 33 944 210.

Mobility (ABOUT 2.5 pages)

Question 4

What measures have been taken by your country for promoting mobility for education purposes?

Bulgaria actively supports the efforts for overcoming the obstacles to mobility for education purposes and for its promotion at all levels of the education system and in various aspects of informal and independent learning. The necessary legislative framework has been created, specific instruments have been developed and are used for ensuring opportunities for involvement in various forms of academic mobility (system for accumulation and transfer of credits, issuing diploma attachments, etc.), opportunities are promoted and used within the sectoral Erasmus Programme, the Programme of the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area, bilateral agreements, etc. Efforts are also applied for overcoming the obstacle pointed as one of the main obstacles to mobility: the inadequate level of foreign language competence. Within the project for increasing the qualification of lecturers in universities funded under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the European Social Fund, almost 600 lecturers from all universities passed training courses in English, French and German. Apart from raising the foreign-language competence of lecturers, this creates new opportunities for participation in mobility programmes, and also increasing the number of subjects offered in foreign languages.

4.1 Measures for promoting mobility for education purposes (incoming and outgoing) in various education sectors (school, vocational education and training, higher education, adult training):

- promoting the opportunities offered by the sectoral programmes of Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci for work of Bulgarian schools (including professional high schools) on European education projects: conducting informational events in Haskovo, Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, Kyustendil, Targovishte, Sofia, Burgas, etc. The information campaign is conducted systematically throughout the country comprising all district centres and including visits to smaller towns.
- issuing informational materials designated for distribution during informational events and events dedicated to the Lifelong Learning Programme: informational bulletins, leaflets about the sectoral programmes of Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig; compendiums of successful projects in all sectoral programmes.
- issuing informational materials regarding individual activities targeting specific groups of prospective participants in the Lifelong Learning Programme: prospective teachers; prospective participants in the Erasmus Programme.
- issuing a leaflet about the options before community centres and libraries as recognized education centres for adults in Bulgaria, for work on the Grundtvig Programme. Systematic joint work with libraries in the country as support for those significant education institutions. Holding informational seminars at those establishments about the opportunities provided to them by the Grundtvig Programme focusing on adult education.

- in 2010 training was conducted for raising the qualification of teachers and staff at homes for children deprived of parental care, in response to the objective for prevention of early dropping out of school and also for increasing the qualification of teachers working with disadvantaged children.
- issuing a collection of Good Teaching Experience materials based on the good experience from European education projects. Launching a series of collections on this subject to be issued in the following years.
- promoting the opportunities provided by the Erasmus Programme to students by organizing informational days for students 4 times a year in different cities of the country, issuing informational materials distributed, apart from universities and schools, at any organized events, including national and international education forums.
- in 2011 a campaign was launched for presenting the opportunities provided by the Erasmus Programme including students from the last grade of upper secondary education.
- conducting thematic monitoring in relation to the recognition of the periods of education of students. The results are submitted to the institutional and operative coordinators, representatives of universities in Bulgaria participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme for the purpose of finding a solution for overcoming that obstacle to mobility.
- increasing the number of organized intensive language courses for learning the Bulgarian language and culture for admitted students from 3 to 6.
- issuing a Bulgaria Discovered brochure intended for informing admitted students.
- systematic updating of the Bulgaria section on the website of the European Commission about the Erasmus Mundus Programme, the Study in Europe Section.
- increasing programmes in which teaching takes place in a foreign language.

4.2 Measures for promoting mobility for education purposes of teachers and staff in the field of education from various education sectors (school, vocational education and training, higher education, adult training):

- information campaign designated for the various target groups, including organizing seminars, issuing and distributing informational leaflets.
- on-site visits at schools, kindergartens, community centres, libraries and youth centres throughout the country upon invitation by their teachers and staff for dissemination of information about the opportunities for work on European projects before the respective social group.
- providing opportunity for participation in international contact seminars for expanding partnerships, exchange of experience and raising qualifications.
- providing opportunity for participation in individual qualification activities for education in the area of formal and informal education.

4.3 Steps for identifying and decreasing the barriers to mobility for education purposes:

- constructing school curriculums with integrated contents: their main purpose is to guarantee mobility of the education product by ensuring building on with increasingly more dynamic contents in the most important subject areas (Bulgarian language and literature, foreign language teaching, mathematics and information technology, civil education).
- ensuring greater practical application of education and its focusing to particular results.
- a project is being developed within the National Qualification Framework which is based on the approach focusing on the learning results.
- start of discussions and preparation for the participation of Bulgaria in the new activity within the Comenius Programme: the activity of Individual Student Mobility. Disseminating

information about the activity among Bulgarian schools and teachers; discussing the activity and formulating an opinion (advantages and problems) during the traditional Days of the Comenius Programme in Bulgaria.

New skills and jobs (about 2.5 pages)

Question 5

What measures have been taken by your country since 2009 for improving compatibility of the skills built with the requirements of prospective jobs?

A purposeful policy is conducted for strengthening the links between education and the labour market by:

- studying the requirements of the business for personnel and the development prospects in short and long term;
- development of an orderly system for tripartite partnership: university graduates – career centres – employers;
- creating an efficient system at national and academic level for research of the labour market;
- strengthening the links between higher education and business;
- modernisation of the technological and research infrastructure;
- selection of the most suitable methods and techniques for offering and recruitment of new skilled staff;
- improving the coordination between higher education establishments, the non-government sector and the business.

5.1 Recent measures for improving the projection of necessary skills (in addition to the information by Evridika from June 2010):

In 2008, by an order of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, an interdepartmental work group was formed for development of a national System for studying and forecasting the needs for workforce with a definite qualification in Bulgaria. The work group includes representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, ministries in charge, the National Vocational Education and Training Agency, the nationally representative organizations of social partners, the Bulgarian Academy of Science and the National Statistics Institute.

The work group elaborated a concept for structuring and institutional construction of the system for studying and forecasting the needs for workforce with a definite qualification in Bulgaria. The aim and scope of the system, the main system elements and the stages for implementing the activities have been determined. According to the concept, the forthcoming tasks are the systematization and unification of all sources of information and data about the needs for workforce with a definite qualification, including European and national studies and analyses, determining the sources and methods for collecting information; the tools and instruments, the institutions responsible; the sources and terms for financing the system.

In view of the concept elaborated and the forthcoming tasks to be performed, in 2009 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed and won the project titled *New Skills for New Jobs in the New Economy – Forecasting and Policy Implications* within the European programme PROGRESS. The project was launched at the beginning of 2010. The strategic partner of the Ministry in the project implementation is the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Issues and Protection of Consumers of Austria. The main goal of the project is developing a

component for forecasting in the Bulgarian national system for defining the needs for knowledge and skills based on certain European practices and foreign experience. It is envisaged within the project to elaborate and pilot test a component for short-term forecasting of the “barometer” type, within the national system for defining the needs for workforce with particular qualification.

In view of developing and testing a model for medium-term forecasting of the development of the labour market and the needs for knowledge and skills in Bulgaria, a call for proposals will be opened for selection of a contractor. The expected results to be achieved by the potential contractor are related to the development of a theoretical macroeconomic model based on which an econometric model will be elaborated for forecasting the supply and demand of particular knowledge and skills; defining the main information sources, determining variables (exogenous, endogenous and instrumental) to be used, econometric models and stochastic equations, parameters and ratios; development of IT software (code) for forecasting the supply and demand of workforce; testing the model and providing data and a report on the test results.

5.2 Recent measures for using the results in planning the education and training process, for informing and orienting:

In recent years business entrepreneurship in its various forms is considered in the system of higher education as one of the positive professional alternatives for young graduates. Universities provide their students with in-depth knowledge about all forms of entrepreneurship, including the social and solidarity economics, encouraging them, e.g. to establish their own companies and corporations.

In this regard we would like to point out the implementation of two good practices:

1) The business faculty of the University of National and World Economy maintains an entrepreneurship department and an entrepreneurship major in view of creating prepared entrepreneurs and managers in a dynamic business environment, including interdepartmental and multicultural environments.

2) The Veliko Tarnovo University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, the Department of Organisation and Methodology of Social Activities, opened in 2009 a bachelor major for entrepreneurship in the social sphere. The first students in this major were admitted in the 2009-2010 academic year. In 2010 the department also developed a master’s programme in social entrepreneurship, and the education is conducted in the form of distance learning.

Budget for education (about 2 pages)

Question 6

How did the economic and financial crisis affect the budgets for education and training of your country (if appropriate, give examples of the development of particular education sectors)?

For 2009: by the Law on the National Budget of Bulgaria for 2009 the noninterest expenses and transfers were set at 90 per cent. The education budget for 2009 was performed at 90 % of the eligible costs, both with regard to delegated activities for education, preparation and training of children and students at state-owned and municipal kindergartens and with regard to state-owned universities.

For 2010: with a view to minimizing costs and efficient use of financial resources in the second half of 2010, in accordance with the Law amending and supplementing the Law on the

National Budget of Bulgaria for 2010, the budgets of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science and of state-owned universities were reduced by 20 %. The adjustment of the expenses for 2010 imposed optimization and restructuring of the expense commitments for the year and implementation of structural changes.

The decrease of expenses in the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science for 2010 did not affect the expenses for the education activities delegated by the government (the budgets of schools and units applying the delegated budgets system). The amount of the unified expense standards for upper secondary education stayed at the 2009 level.

For 2011: the budget for education stayed at the adjusted level of the expenses for 2010; the funding of the delegated education activities for schools and servicing units stayed at the 2009 levels and the subsidy of state-owned universities for 2011 remained at the level of the revised budget for 2010. The Law on the National Budget of Bulgaria for 2011 approved admissible maximum amounts of liabilities to suppliers and to employees of organizations disposing with budget credits who are delegated on long-term assignments.

As a whole, the economic and financial crisis led to limiting the expenses for investments both in the upper secondary and in the higher education. The salaries of teachers and trainers stayed at the same level and actions were taken for optimizing the maintenance expenses in the education system. There was also a strong reduction of the expenses for conducting policies and reforms in upper secondary education, and from 2009 to 2011 the funds for national programmes for development of the upper secondary education decreased from BGN 263.4 million to BGN 30 million.

As a result of the economic crisis, in 2010 the national budget for active policy on the labour market was reduced almost to a third (from BGN 190 million in 2009 to BGN 65 million in 2010), and the prevailing portion of funds was directed to ensuring employment of the workforce. Due to the limited funds for adult education, an important role is played by the opportunities and financial resources provided by the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP), co-financed by funds from the European Social Fund. In 2010 the funds for overcoming the negative effects of the economic crisis contemplated in HRD OP amounted to BGN 373 million (almost EUR 191 million) within six separate procedures for providing financial grants. This considerable resource is directed to creating employment, promoting workforce mobility, support to workers and employees who have transferred to part-time jobs and training unemployed and employed people. Two of the priority directions of HRD OP focus directly on financing projects for workforce training (employed and unemployed people), including training of persons from the disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and also training inactive persons on the labour market. The training which is financed is training for acquiring entrepreneurship, management and business skills for starting own business and self-employment, training for acquiring professional qualification in specific professions, training for acquiring key competences, teaching reading and writing.

Lifelong learning strategies (ABOUT 2 pages)

Question 7

What is the progress of your country regarding the development and implementation of a consistent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?

7.1 Does your country have such a strategy (note where it is implemented):

The national lifelong learning strategy (LL) of Bulgaria was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 30 October 2008 for the period 2008 – 2013. In 2010 an Action Plan was adopted for 2010 – 2011. An Action Plan for the period 2012-2013 and a report on the past

two-year period are under preparation. The goal of the strategy is to create conditions for all citizens of Bulgaria to develop their personal and professional knowledge, skills and abilities for improving their own welfare and the competitiveness of national economy. The objectives set in the LL Strategy are performed through partnerships of national, regional and local authorities with the social partners and the representatives of the civil society. The effect for society is in the forming of lifelong learning attitudes and reducing the number of citizens with primary and lower secondary education.

The following more important measures laid down in the 2010 – 2011 Lifelong Learning Action Plan are in the process of implementation:

- developing a system for studying and forecasting the needs for workforce with a definite qualification;
- analysis of schemes for financing LL within the EU;
- organizing training for learning reading and writing and acquiring key competences by persons over 16 within the Teaching Reading and Writing to Adults project;
- offering training programmes to persons who have left school early;
- applying programmes and projects for training people with disabilities;
- training employed and unemployed people, including by training vouchers;
- preparing proposals for changes in the regulatory framework.

7.2 Briefly, note the main measures regarding the principles of shared responsibility, efficient financial mechanisms, flexible learning ways and the quality of initial and continuing training:

In October 2009, a decree by the Council of Ministers introduced training vouchers as a new mechanism for financing adult education. As a start, training vouchers are applied in implementation of projects for training employed and unemployed persons financed within the HRD OP, priority axis 1: Promoting sustainable employment and development on the labour market encouraging inclusion, and priority axis 2: Increasing productivity and adaptability of employed people.

Training vouchers are used to finance training for acquiring professional qualification and training for acquiring key competence. The professional qualification training may be for acquiring first, second or third qualification level or by a part of a profession, and the trainings for key competences are defined according to the European Qualification Network. Training vouchers are registered securities with fixed par value in BGN enabling their holders to enrol in training courses. The National Employment Agency is the only entity authorised to issue vouchers maintain a public register of the provided vouchers, and also of any vouchers which are destroyed, damaged or lost.

Voucher trainings are financed fully by the Human Resources Development Operational Programme and no co-financing is required from the voucher holder or from any employer. The value of vouchers depends on the type and length of the selected training: from BGN 400 for training in a part of a profession at first qualification level (with a duration of no less than 200 teaching hours) to BGN 1800 for training for acquiring third qualification level (with a duration of no less than 960 teaching hours) and from BGN 70 for trainings in the key competence of communication in the native language (with a duration of no less than 16 teaching hours) to BGN 700 for trainings in the key competence of communication in foreign languages (with a duration of no less than 300 teaching hours and three levels of training). The value of the vouchers includes all training-related expenses.

In 2010, within three schemes of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, the following training vouchers were used:

- *I can* – for training for professional qualification and/or key competences of employed persons;
- *Development* – for training for professional qualification of persons laid off as a result of reorganization or closing down of the enterprise, decrease of the work volume or closing down a part of the production;
- *Adaptability* – for training for professional qualification of employed persons who have switched to part-time work.

Quality assurance of adult education

In order to assure the quality of adult education, a new methodology has been applied since the beginning of 2009 for evaluating the proposals for professional orientation and adult education organized and financed by the National Employment Agency. The methodology is applied to evaluation of proposals for vocational training, training for acquiring key competences, motivation training and teaching reading and writing. It assesses the three main factors for providing training: teaching programme, teaching team and facilities. The evaluation of proposals for vocational training is made by external experts nominated by the social partners.

In order to ensure better quality of training, the Law on Promoting Employment provides options from the national budget for active policy on the labour market for subsidies for adult training and trainers, development of teaching materials and aids, activities related to organizing the selection and assessment of institutions for adult education organized and financed by the National Employment Agency.

In December 2009, the Minister of labour and social policy approved by an order a mechanism for quality assurance and control of adult education organized by the National Employment Agency. The mechanism was elaborated by an interdepartmental work group including representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, the National Employment Agency, The National Vocational Education and Training Agency, the General Labour Inspectorate, the social partners and independent experts in the field of education.

The mechanism applies to all types of adult training (for teaching reading and writing, for acquiring professional qualification, for acquiring and improving key competences and for motivation training), organized by the National Employment Agency and financed by funds from the national budget for active policy and under HRD OP. The whole training process is comprised: organizing, conducting, completing and certification, as well as the evaluation of the training results. Requirements have been defined regarding the facilities for conducting the training; the used equipment, teaching materials and aids; the team of trainers, the organisation and conducting of the training: attendance of classes, ongoing assessment of the acquired knowledge and skills by tests, independent assignments, interim examinations, etc.

Training control is performed by checking documents and on-site inspections in respect of compliance with the regulatory requirements and the contractual obligations of training institutions and of the persons included in the training. Questionnaire cards completed before, during and after the training are used to study the expectations, opinion and satisfaction by the training of both trainees and trainers.

Control is performed by the National Employment Agency and its territorial divisions jointly with representatives of the regional education inspectorates (if the training is conducted by schools), the National Vocational Education and Training Agency and the social partners.

Other important reforms in the priority areas (ABOUT 2 PAGES)

Question 8

What is your country's progress with regard to implementing the reforms in the priority areas not covered directly in questions 2-7? (Please, note the relevant priority area and make a brief description)

The implementation of the National Reform Programme of Bulgaria (2011-2015) is connected with the following national targets:

• **National target 4: A portion of early leavers of the education system of 11% by 2020 and a share of 30-34 year-old university graduates of 36% by 2020**

The measures contemplated for achieving national target 4 are divided into the following priority areas:

- Adopting a Law on school education and introduction of a new education structure

Legislative changes are prepared which should settle fully and unambiguously all relations developing within the system of pre-school education and preparation of education. They will result in changes in education standards and the teaching curriculum, and also to strengthening the link with extra-school communities and with parents. The introduction of a new education structure is connected with the development of the system for evaluation and control of the education quality. The essence of the change includes both the organisation of the education process supported by new education technologies and interactive methods and forms of work and the expected results from training focusing on the key competences and practical application of the knowledge. The aim is that the new teaching contents should be integrated and should encourage students for creative, logical and independent thinking, for providing clear and accurate arguments, for assuming responsibility and for taking individual and collective decisions.

- Creation and introduction of a system for management of the education quality at different levels

The creation and introduction of a system for management of the education quality at different levels and the creation/reorganization of a network of supporting institutions of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science ensure the basic possibility for developing and applying policies for preventing dropping out of school and for achieving higher education levels. The system encourages participation and assumption of responsibility which are directly linked to social inclusion and minimization of social isolation.

- Increasing the number of children included in pre-school preparation forms

In this year, by the Law on National Education, mandatory admission of children to pre-school education and preparation from the age of five was regulated which was introduced into practice in order to increase the number of children included in the education system from an early age.

- Building an efficient system for qualification u career development of teachers and trainers

The building of an efficient system for qualification and career development of teachers will contribute to the improvement of the quality of upper secondary education. The profession specifics and the need for constant increase of the knowledge and skill levels of teachers and trainers, the qualification will become mandatory and will aim at satisfying the changing needs of children and students. The qualification of teachers will focus on specific approaches and

methods of work with children with special education needs, children of different ethnic origin, with gifted children, and with children and students at risk of dropping out. A new system will be introduced for assessing the quality of the teachers' work which will be based on the new differentiated payment model.

The reforms started in 2009/2010 aim at increasing the quality and applicability of knowledge and skills, increasing the participation in the education process by making economically efficient use of the available resources and development of lifelong learning as a way of thinking stimulating every individual to become aware of their own need for constant acquiring of new knowledge, skills and competences.

In order to improve the quality of vocational education and training, steps have been taken towards decentralization of the school system, introduction of a systematic approach for assuring the quality of vocational education and training, towards development of a career orientation system, increasing the attraction of education and active involvement of the social partners in the process of practical training. A decision was taken for the introduction of the credit system in vocational education and training which will create prerequisites for building links with the higher education system and will provide an opportunity for a faster permeability from the education system to the labour market.

Achieving the goals and priorities in the education sector is facilitated by the Human Resources Development 2007-2013 Operational Programme, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the national budget of Bulgaria, and the national programmes for development of upper secondary education.

The Operational Programme funds initiatives focusing on:

- improving the quality of education and training services;
- modernizing the education and training system;
- strengthening the links between vocational education and training institutions and the labour market;
- facilitating the access to education and training of disadvantaged groups;
- more comprehensive inclusion of children and young people in the education system;
- development of a lifelong learning system.

The national programmes for development of upper secondary education are used to finance activities relating to:

- improving the quality of the education process;
- developing an efficient and optimal school network meeting the interests and abilities of children and students and the socioeconomic profile of the region;
- increasing the qualification of teachers and school principals and creating conditions for popularization and exchange of innovative education practices;
- strengthening students' interest in participation in national competitions and national and international contests;
- providing supplementary education to students for increasing the level of their achievements in general education;
- improving the conditions for implementing education activities contributing to the strengthening of Bulgarian spirituality, to the preservation of the national consciousness, way of life and culture.

● Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training systems

The successful implementation of the measures in performance of this objective is closely related to achieving national target 4. The specific measures in lower and upper secondary education will consist in improvement of the system for external evaluation of the education quality, and the introduction of school mechanisms for enhancing the role and commitment of parents and municipalities in the schools' managerial decision-taking.

1. PROPOSALS FOR PRIORITY AREAS FOR THE NEXT PERIOD (ABOUT 1 PAGE)

Question 9

Within the four broad strategic goals described below, the Council defined the medium-term priority areas for the period 2009-2011. Which medium-term priority areas would your country wish to cooperate in during the next period (please, indicate the importance level: high, medium or low)?

9.1 To turn lifelong learning and mobility into reality:

- medium importance

9.2 To improve the quality and efficiency of education and training:

- the role of teachers and trainers for improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

- high importance

9.3 To promote equality, social cohesion and active citizenship:

- high importance

9.4 To encourage innovations and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:

- medium importance

9.5 Other comments:

To item 9.2: in order to meet the 21 century education requirements, teachers and trainers should take a much more active stand in the school processes and should be much more than followers of orders observing the regulatory framework. They should focus increasingly on the learning and teaching processes and their results. A teacher turns from a basic source of knowledge into a mediator for children and students in mastering the knowledge fundamentals and building practical skills for full participation in social processes.

Greater decentralization is connected with greater autonomy of schools, greater responsibility for their performance and more efficient use of modern practices in the teaching process. School management has a great influence on the efficiency of teachers and their work conditions, and also on the results of students' achievements. Today school managers are facing new challenges relating to the technical progress and globalization. The school principal implements the government's policy in the area of education and the proper organization of management of the school staff, the education process and the overall administrative, management and financial activity at the school. The principal's actions for performance of the clearly defined aims and tasks related to the education process and the students' achievements include controlling the quality of the teaching by the teachers at the school, direct monitoring in the course of teaching and providing feedback to students and teachers.