

National Report from the Republic of Bulgaria for EMN study on Immigration of International Students to the EU

2012

Executive Summary

The study reveals the frame and the structure of the higher education system in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the responsible state institutions in this field. The regulations and requirements concerning both the obtaining of a higher education degree in the country and the obtaining of a legal residence status for TCNs who have chosen to study in a Bulgarian university are fully presented here.

For the purpose of preparation of this study all the accredited higher schools in Bulgaria have been questioned, as well as the Ministry of education, youth and science, the National statistical institute, the Employment Agency within the Ministry of labour and social policy.

The statistical data presented here are up-to-date and relevant to the topic and purpose of the study. These data are the official information provided to EUROSTAT.

Enlisted are agreements concluded with third countries enhancing the access of alien students in Bulgarian universities. Presented are both current joint programmes providing education to TCN students and programmes financially supported by EU.

The available at present analytical documents – strategies and programmes in the field of higher education are referred.

Conclusions have been drawn on the basis of the information gathered and the current data leading to the focus of the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study was drawn up in accordance with the requirements of Article 9, item 2 of Council Decision (2008/381/EC) of 14 May 2008 establishing a European Migration Network which states that the annual programme of activities shall include the preparation by each National Contact Point of studies, following common specifications, covering specific migration and asylum-related issues necessary for the support of policymaking.

The object of this focused study – a part of the work programme 2012 of EMN is the immigration of TCNs towards EU for the purpose of study.

The first universities in medieval Europe emerged as international communities. The appearance of nation states affirmed the national universities' model and the direct and dominating linking of the higher education goals with the development of the separate nations. During the last decades an expanding process for internationalization of the higher education has been observed which has been implemented through intensified students' and professors' mobility, establishment of foreign higher schools as well as through striving for achieving coherence and comparability of the educational qualifications provided in the different countries.

The processes of economic and cultural globalisation as well as the increasingly intensified development of the modern informational and communicational technologies objectively predetermine the outspreading of the internationalisation in the university education. It is neither possible nor desirable that Bulgaria stays away from the external influence using restrictive and prohibitive legislation. The only way to counter the negative consequences from the internationalisation of the higher education (the widely spread students' preference to study abroad or in a foreign university) is the growing competitiveness of the Bulgarian higher schools.

Since its accession to the European Union in 2007 the Republic of Bulgaria has been an active participant in formating and conducting the Community policy, including the highly important development of unified educational environment, envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty.

The TCNs' access to the member-states' higher education is part of the overall mechanism of the academic system. The students' and professors' mobility is an important factor for the development of the academic system. The mutual recognition of university diplomas within the EU has been negotiated.

In 2004 the "Open Society" Institute elaborated a "Strategy for development of the higher education" as a part of the project called "Strategy for social-economic and political development of Bulgaria 2005-2010: sector policies" by prof. Pepka Boyadjieva and prof. Georgi Dimitrov. The aim of the strategy is the evolution of the Bulgarian higher schools into partners even to the European universities in their educational, research and cultural missions, providing effective process of training, good education and competitive vocational preparation in the free European and world labour market.

Their study lies on the thesis that the higher education is an individual and social good and for that reason it has to be regarded as a personal and public responsibility. It is not and shall not be a responsibility of the state only but also a responsibility of the individual and of the whole society represented by the different organisations (incl. the private ones) and associations. The equal access to the different degrees and forms of higher education is a basic civil right but it depends on the potential and the resources of each individual to take advantage of his right. Each national higher

education system is a socially recognized mechanism to mitigate the social disparities through the principle of meritocracy.

In the modern societies the higher schools participate in the educational services market as the main result of their activity has its market realisation. The universities' activities cohere with the market mechanisms as the free competition is the key engine of their progress. However, the tertiary education remains an area where the academic values and standards prevail and predetermine the relations between the actors in the academic community.

The quality, diversity and flexibility of the higher education define the progress of Bulgarian society into a society that:

- appreciates each individual and encourages the personal development and initiative;
- maintains stable economic growth, based on innovations and application in practice of the results from scientific researches;
- preserves and enriches the human values and the positive national traditions.

The main goals of the higher education are:

- to create opportunities for every one to obtain education that stimulates and develops to a highest extent one's abilities and personal resources while deliberately removes any conditions for discrimination (in regard to sex, race, ethnics and nationality, religion, political beliefs, social disparity);
- to prepare for successful vocational and civil realisation in a dynamic labour market beyond the national boundaries in an open democratic society.
- to discover opportunities for learning throughout life for personal improvement, better professional realization and active participation in the social life;
- to create and disseminate knowledge, to promote the understanding of the world and the enrichment of the global material and spiritual culture;
- to facilitate the in-practice application of highly specialized knowledge and skills in all areas of society;
- to be intellectual and moral critic of the society for the purpose defending the democratic rule of law and the rights and freedom of the individual.

3. Principles of the higher education system

The achievement of the formulated goal and the adopted understanding for the purposes of the university education implies the higher education system to evolve into open, pluralistic, flexible and transparent for the consumers and the society. This means that the higher education system should comprise of schools which:

- differ in status (state and private), mission, aims and structure;

- are self-governing and capable of self-development and self-regulation;
- are innovative and responsible for their initiatives;
- are adaptive and responsive to the changing individual and social demands;
- are financially effective;
- are publicly responsible and open to public control and accounting;

Among the main priorities should be highlighted:

- Establishment of a new model of development and management of the higher education system and of the separate higher schools redefining the role of the state and changing the mechanisms of interaction between the state, the bodies of the autonomous academic self-regulation, the higher schools and the network of the higher education addressees;
- Effectiveness of the resources and finances for the purposes of the academic development and its stimulation through diversification of the financial sources in terms of public transparency and establishment of mechanisms for academic responsibility;
- Stimulation of the research work in the higher schools while linking with it the process of learning;
- Internationalisation of the higher education and its stable incorporation in the international academic networks;
- Development of various forms of lifelong learning;

According to the National strategy for development of the higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria adopted in 2004 the key challenges which Bulgarian higher education faces today are:

- The establishment of European and global education market;
- The large scale of the higher education accompanied by increasing heterogeneity of the student community;
- Diversification of the educational institutions and the emergence of non-university educational sector;
- The demographic trends in the country deriving from the reproductive and migration processes;

Specific measures have been identified for internationalisation of the higher education and its stable incorporation in the international academic networks:

- Building of real networks between Bulgarian and foreign universities based on common activities;
- Attracting foreign lecturers;

- Promoting (and legal regulation of) new forms of education exchange in the frame of European cooperation such as the dual educational levels, joint Master programmes, etc.
- Attracting foreign teachers as external evaluators;
- Establishing of national fund supporting the scientific specialisations and secondments of Bulgarian lecturers;
- Overall review of the organization and functioning of higher schools (including the financing mechanisms) in connection with the imperatives arising from the free movement of students and the actual implementation of the credit transfer system;

The overall change in the higher education system aims at constantly improving the quality through incentives for better institutional and individual performance of the academic activities, which - in turn - will help strengthen the prestige of academic life and will motivate students and teachers to actively participate in it.

The main objective of this study is to provide an overview of migration policies regarding students. The focus of the study will trace the migration behaviour and in wider aspects - students behaviour.

1.1 Methodology

Currently, there are 51 higher schools in Bulgaria (37 public and 14 private). This comprises 42 universities and higher schools, and 9 independent colleges.

Inquiries were made to all universities in the country to provide the information necessary for the study preparation according to the EMN specifications, namely:

- Revenues generated by the students – third country nationals;
- Implemented measures to attract students- third country nationals;
- Availability of EU-funded programmes;
- Transnational cooperation in the training of foreign students;
- Agreements with third countries and procedures facilitating the admission of foreign students;
- Access of international students to information on admission conditions to the university;

- Number of students - third country nationals (stock/number and flows) in the Member States in comparison with other statuses, and with any other stock/number and flow profile of students (nationality, gender).
- Statistics of the number of TCN students that have successfully completed their training;
- Information campaigns conducted to promote training opportunities for foreign students in the university
- Public debates in the area.

The Employment agency under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has been asked the following questions:

- Are the TCN students allowed and under what conditions to work or to be self-hired during their education? Are the TCN students able to apply for job permissions and to get such permissions without leaving the territory of Bulgaria?
- Number and profile (nationality, age, gender, course level) of foreign students who have access to the labour market;
- Number/percentage of denied applications of TCNs for access to the labour market;

Ministry of Education, Youth and Science was invited to submit summary data on:

- Possibilities for transnational cooperation in the training of foreign students;
- Revenues generated by TCN students;
- Measures implemented for attracting TCN students;
- Availability of EU funded programmes;
- Agreements with third countries and procedures facilitating the admission of foreign students;
- Access of TCNs to information regarding the admission conditions in Bulgarian higher schools;
- Implemented information campaigns to promote training opportunities for foreign students;
- Number of TCN students (stock/number and flows) in the Member States in comparison with other statuses, and compared to any other stock/number and flow profile of students (nationality, gender).
- Statistics on TCNs who have successfully completed education;

The National Statistical Institute has been questioned about the following:

- Information regarding the profile of TCN students/PhD students in Bulgaria for the period 2007-2011 divided by grades as follows:
 - Vocational bachelor;
 - Bachelor and Master;
 - PhD;

It should be mentioned that the preparation of this study was to some extent hampered by the fact that not all universities provided the necessary information, and some of the answers were not complete.

In the current study are also used as sources: a publication by Asya Kosareva in “Standart” daily newspaper/14.05.2012, a report on the Execution of the sectoral programme “Erasmus Bulgaria” by the Human Resource Development Centre, results of the survey “The Attitude of the foreign students in the South-West University “Neofit Rilski” towards education” 2002-2003 by team of authors: M. Serafimova, V. Milenkova, M. Marinov and A. Cvetkov.

1.2 Definitions

In the Republic of Bulgaria the higher education is acquired in universities, institutes and academies as they all have academic autonomy. The higher education is regulated in the Law on the higher education (1995) and the Law on Academic Degrees and Titles. The universities and the higher schools provide training in the degrees "Bachelor" (four-year programmes), "Master" (five-year programmes or minimum one year after the degree "Bachelor") and "The Doctor" (minimum 3-year programmes). The admission to the universities is carried out following entrance exams. Being autonomous each university determines independently the content of its examinations. Before the Law on the higher education (1995) entered into force there were no education and qualification degrees but just diplomas for completed higher education.

Independent Colleges - they provide 3-year professionally oriented programmes in various fields, leading to the acquisition of a “specialist” degree. The “Specialists” are given the rights to continue their studies at Bachelor's level or to access the labour market. Before 1995 these institutions were called semi-higher institutes with two and a half to three years duration of training. They issued diplomas for completed semi-higher education.

First stage of tertiary education - lasts for at least four years and leads to the **Bachelor's** degree (*Bakalavr*) in many fields. However, there are some fields where the Bachelor's degree does not exist and where studies lead directly to the second stage of studies (Master's degree level). According to the most recent amendments to the Law on Higher Education, the Bachelor's degree also gives access to doctoral studies with duration of four years.

Second stage of tertiary education – “Master” This stage of study lasts for five years after completion of secondary education or one year after obtaining the Bachelor's degree. Students usually must complete a thesis and pass a state examination. The former Diploma for Higher education, awarded before the 1995 law, is officially regarded as being equivalent to the Master's degree. The Master degree enables students to take a three-year university course for a doctorate (the *Doktor*).

Third stage of tertiary education: This stage is the third degree in the higher education system and leads to the title of “**Doctor**”. It is obtained on the basis of individual research and following the defence of a thesis. It replaces the former “Candidate of the Sciences”. The Law on Higher Education of 1995 grants all “Candidate of the Sciences” holders the right to use the title Doctor.

2. THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

2.1 Structure of national education system

The arrangements for the admission of third-country national students to Bulgarian universities are regulated by the Ordinance on the State Requirements for Admission of Students in Higher Schools of the Republic of Bulgaria, adopted by Decree № 79 of the Council of Ministers in 2000 (amend. and supplemented issue 79 from 06/10/2009).

The documents submitted by the candidates must be certified, translated and legalized in accordance with the provisions of the international treaties of the Republic of Bulgaria and the country where they are issued, if no such treaty - the general rules of certification/translation are applied.

According to the Law on the Higher Education, the higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria shall enjoy academic autonomy.

The academic self-government is occurring in the freedom of association with Bulgarian and/or foreign universities recognized by the national law for joint training of students and postgraduates, for their study and lifelong learning.

The higher schools are entitled to participate in information campaigns to promote opportunities for application and training of third country nationals for a fee.

According to the National Statistical Institute, the higher education system in Bulgaria is characterized by the following indicators:

For the academic year 2007/2008: Total of 9 110 TCN students.

For the academic year 2008/2009: Total of 9 472 TCN students.

For the academic year 2009/2010: Total of 10 034 TCN students.

For the academic year 2010/2011: Total of 10 281 TCN students.

For the academic year 2011/2012: Total of 11 079 TCN students.

As mentioned above, there are 51 higher schools in Bulgaria (37 public and 14 private). These are 42 universities and higher schools, and 9 independent colleges.

The higher schools are accredited and established under conditions and procedures provided by the Law on Higher Education. They are legal entities with the following scope of activity:

- Training of specialists capable of developing and applying scientific knowledge in various spheres of human activity;
- Upgrading the qualifications of specialists;
- Development of science, culture and innovations.

Higher schools may engage in research, production, art, sports, curative and other activities in accordance with their specificities.

The higher schools provide quality education and research through a system of internal assessment and keeping the quality of education and academic staff, which includes the examination of students' view at least once a year.

The functioning and structure of this system as well as the procedure to study students' opinion and to disclose the results are set out in the Rules of Procedure of each university.

Every higher school issues a diploma for degree completed in higher education, a European Diploma Appendix, a vocational qualification certificate and other relevant documents specified by an ordinance adopted by the Council of Ministers.

The diplomas are recognized by the state when the training is conducted in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and state requirements.

The State creates conditions for free development of higher education as well as conditions for access to higher education by:

1. developing and implementing national policy for the progress of higher education as well as by ensuring academic autonomy of universities;
2. taking care about the quality of training of specialists and research;
3. subsidizing the education of students in public universities, and under certain conditions providing scholarships, dormitories and canteens;
4. establishing and maintaining a system of credit for payment of tuition fees and maintenance, and in certain circumstances providing social benefits to students, PhD students and postgraduates;
5. Providing property of the state universities and providing tax relieves and other incentives to all higher schools in carrying out their activities;

6. Setting conditions for state recognition of diplomas issued by universities in Bulgaria and abroad.

The State exercises its functions in the management of the higher education through the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers.

The National Assembly:

- by the power of a decision establishes, transforms, renames and closes universities, branches and departments, which conduct training in the regulated professions;
- every year sets the subsidy for each state higher school by the Law on the State Budget.
- adopts a Strategy for the Development of Higher Education, which contains the national priorities and goals for the development of the higher education, as well as measures for their implementation.

The Council of Ministers:

1. establishes guidelines for national policy on higher education and proposes for adoption by the National Assembly the Strategy for the development of higher education;
- 2 proposes before the National Assembly for the opening, conversion, renaming, or closing of higher schools, and for the amount of the annual budget allocation for each state university;
3. establishes, transforms and closes down faculties, institutes, branches and colleges affiliated to state universities, based on the request from the given university and/or the proposal of the Minister of Education and Science, as for the branches and vocational colleges it is necessary to indicate the directions of conducted training;
4. approves the Classification of higher education and professional fields;
5. approves state requirements for obtaining higher education degrees, and specialities of the regulated professions as well as state requirements for the organization of distance learning;
6. annually by 30th April approves:
 - a) after proposal of the Minister of Education, Youth and Science based on proposals received from state universities, the number of students to be trained in accordance with the capacity of the higher school, with the professional fields and specialities of the regulated professions;
 - b) after proposal of the Minister of Education and Science based on proposals from private universities the number of students and PhD students, corresponding to the capacity of the higher school and to the professional fields and specialities of the regulated professions in it;
7. approves annually by April 30 after proposal of the Minister of Education and Science based on proposals from state universities fees for application and training of students in them.
8. establishes procedures for granting scholarships in state universities, the access of students and postgraduates to dormitories and other social benefits in all universities;

9. approves state requirements for recognition of foreign higher education with vocational qualification;

10. approves state requirements for admission of students;

11. approves state requirements for content of the documents issued by the university;

12. approves the Rules of Procedure of the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation based on proposal of Accreditation Council;

13. takes a decision on List of regulated professions in Bulgaria, stating the name of the regulated profession, the normative act that determines the requirements for the profession under the Bulgarian legislation, the authority responsible for the recognition of the right to practice the respective regulated profession. The decision is published in the "State Gazette";

14. defines procedures for maintaining the List of regulated professions in Bulgaria;

15. represents the interests of Bulgarian higher education and science before other countries and international organizations and concludes international agreements and treaties.

The Minister of Education and Science is the state body for implementing the national policy for higher education. He:

1. submits proposals to the Council of Ministers; proposals for opening and transformation of higher schools, their main units and branches are made after a positive evaluation of the project by the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation; exception is made for opening of an Institute.

2. exercises functions in coordinating relations between the autonomous universities and the state;

3. organizes the maintenance of an information system that includes:

a) a register of universities with data on their basic units, branches and their professional fields and disciplines;

b) a record of academic staff employed under primary and supplementary contract;

c) a register of all current and discontinued students and doctoral students in education and professional fields;

d) a register of graduates and postgraduates.

e) a register of banks granting credits under the Law on crediting of undergraduates and postgraduates.

4. organizes the recognition and legalization of diplomas of those graduated abroad;

5. appoints Acting Rector of the new or converted state universities until the election, but for a period not longer than six months;

6. appoints Acting Rector for a period not exceeding six months.

7. controls higher schools on the implementation of this Law, where a statement of findings shall be issued within a month on the verifications performed. It shall contain recommendations and deadline for the elimination of the violations; Where a failure to comply with the recommendations within that deadline is present, the Minister of Education, Youth and Science shall make a proposal to the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation on the withdrawal of the accreditation;

The specialized state body on the evaluation, accreditation and quality control of the activities is the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation with the Council of Ministers. This Agency is a budgetary supported legal entity based in Sofia. It operates in accordance with this Law and under Rules and Procedures approved by the Council of Ministers.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency performs postaccreditation monitoring and control on:

1. the ability of the institution and its main units and branches to provide high-quality education and research through an internal evaluation system and by maintaining quality;
2. the implementation of the recommendations given within the evaluation and accreditation process.
3. the observance of the capacity of the higher school, the capacity of professional fields and specialities of the regulated professions.

2.2 National policy framework regarding International Students

According to the Bulgarian legislation in force, access to higher education shall be granted to all EU citizens and third country nationals who are eligible for admission to a higher school, and for third-country nationals - access to residence for study purposes on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be granted as well. The procedure and conditions for granting residence status based on education are detailed in the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations thereto.

Bulgaria ranks 26th among the countries of the Bologna process in higher education quality with 3.7 of all possible 5 points – as much as France and Greece. The ranking of the countries was presented in May 2009 in Bergen, where a conference of the ministers of education of the European countries was held. It was dedicated on the university reforms. Its purpose was to create a single European Education Area by 2010. The ranking was based on the reports presented at the Conference. Among the countries of the region the top position took Slovenia, which is on 24-th position with four points.

In 2010, a rating system of higher schools in Bulgaria was created, within the project "Development of a rating system of higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria." The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science and was funded by the "Human Resources Development" Operational Programme 2007 - 2013 and co-financed by the European Social Fund. The most prestigious universities in the country are the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", which is the oldest higher school, the University of National and World Economy, the American University in Blagoevgrad. The three universities received 199, 121 and 117 points respectively, on a scale of 1 to 200. They were thus granted by 36 companies and 6 recruitment agencies. These universities were referenced by the managing directors of 4,000 SMEs and 400 leading IT companies within a study of ESTAT, that being another attempt to score the Bulgarian universities. These universities were referenced by employers as the largest source of specialists. According to respondents, the best specialized training is offered by the Technical University while the best management skills may be acquired in UNWE.

Bulgarian higher schools are accessible to all third-country nationals who are holders of a certificate of secondary education entitling them to continue their education at universities in the country in which they received their secondary education. Third-country nationals are eligible to apply for a doctorate after obtaining a master's degree. Students who completed their higher education abroad are entitled to apply for PhD studies after their diplomas for higher education are formally recognized. Foreign students in Bulgaria are trained only in regular education programmes.

Third country nationals can apply to study in higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria under:

- Intergovernmental Agreements on educational, cultural and scientific exchange;
- Council of Ministers Ordinances, and
- after having paid the appropriate tuition in full.

Third country nationals can apply in Bulgarian higher schools under the terms and conditions for admission of Bulgarian citizens in higher schools, where they:

- have permanent residence status in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- have refugee status;
- are of Bulgarian origin, being that certified under Decree № 103 of the Council of Ministers of 1993 on the implementation of educational activities among the Bulgarians abroad.

Applicants under Intergovernmental Agreements shall submit the documentation to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) by means of the competent bodies in the countries from which they apply. Applicants shall be admitted under the terms and conditions set out in the Intergovernmental Agreement and those of the relevant higher school. All documents must be

translated, then certified by the competent bodies in the country of application (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the Bulgarian consular office in the country of application (if the application documents were translated there), or by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - consular office in Sofia. All diplomas shall be legalized by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.

The relevant university shall submit the documents of the admitted candidates to the MES in order to be issued for them a long-term visa.

Language courses for foreign students: The training for acquiring language and specialized knowledge lasts not less than nine months and is performed in study groups of no more than 10 persons.

Language and specialized training consists of studying required subjects which are divided into two groups with minimal study hours, as follows:

1. for the humanities – Bulgarian language – 800 study hours;
2. for the rest of the subjects – Bulgarian language – 650 study hours, and specialized courses – 350 hours.

Language training is to be concluded with written and oral exams in Bulgarian language which should be taken before an examining committee. Persons who have successfully completed the language and the specialized training obtain a certificate that conforms to a model approved by the Minister of Education, Youth and Science. This certificate shall be produced by the foreign students upon their admission to the first academic year.

Applicants who are fluent in Bulgarian may make these exams without going through a training course (including through a language training course).

Responsible institutions having jurisdiction and powers in terms of education, residence and access to the labour market of third country nationals who are admitted to a degree of higher education in Bulgaria are:

- the relevant higher school having admitted the third-country national for education;
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science is a public authority responsible for the implementation of the national policy on higher education. As head of this institution, the Minister of Education, Youth and Science shall:

1. exercise functions of coordinating the relationship between the autonomous higher schools and the state;
2. organize the maintenance of an information system that includes:
 - a) a register of the higher schools containing data on their basic units, branches and their professional fields and disciplines;
 - b) a record of the academic staff of the higher schools employed under primary and supplementary contracts;

c) a register of all current and discontinued students and postgraduates, education degree and by professional field;

d) a register of graduates and postgraduates.

e) a register of banks which grant credits under the Law on crediting of undergraduates and postgraduates.

3. organize the recognition and legalization of diplomas of the persons who have graduated abroad;

4. control higher schools concerning the compliance with the provisions of the Law on the Higher Education.

- The Ministry of Interior, through its national specialized structure – the "Migration" Directorate, regulates and controls the migration of third-country nationals residing in the Republic of Bulgaria. The tasks of this Directorate are performed through the following main activities:

- Regulation of the migration processes in the Republic of Bulgaria;

- Administrative control of the residence of third-country nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria. Among the main responsibilities of the "Migration" Directorate - MoI are granting prolonged or long-term residence on the territory of the country provided that the legal basis set out in the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria is met.

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs / Employment Agency /

- The Employment Agency carries out the labour market protection policy, by performing regulated admission of third-country nationals for employment in the Republic of Bulgaria in accordance with the regulations regarding the system of residence and employment of third-country nationals. Employment of third-country nationals is set out in the Law on Employment Promotion and the regulations thereto. /Employment Agency/ Work permits are not required to third-country nationals who are foreign students in Bulgaria. They can work within 20 hours a week during the academic year and the officially announced vacation periods for the respective higher school. Their employment shall be registered in the Labour Bureau by the employer within 3 days following the start of the employment.

For the registration of the employment, the employer shall submit to the Labour Bureau Directorate /LBD/ which is responsible for the employment area of the third-country national 3 copies of a declaration that conforms to a specified model, and the rest of the documents needed.

It is not necessary for the students to leave the country before starting work and performing the registration. The regulated access to the labour market for third-country nationals who are students in Bulgarian higher schools is carried out under a simplified procedure, i.e. only with a

single-time registration and without a market test. They are not required to obtain a work permit, i.e. it is a registration mode.

3. LEGAL AND PRACTICAL CONDITIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL THAT APPLY TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The acquired specialities, the command of Bulgarian language and the relatively high degree of integration in the Bulgarian society during the education of international students in Bulgaria makes specialists in this category a potential group of individuals seeking permanent settlement in the country.

The admission of TCN students in the country is preceded by a preliminary inspection of the files of the candidates aiming at undoubtedly finding out that they meet the necessary conditions, as defined by the Law.

Directive 2004/114/EC was transposed into the Bulgarian legislation through the provisions of the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria and its Implementing Rules.

Common law is provided for in the provisions of Art. 24 of this Law. It is set out that permission for prolonged residence may be granted to third-country nationals who are holders of a long-term visa and are admitted as full-time students in higher schools, secondary education students admitted to the country to study in the secondary education level within an exchange programme or as apprentices without compensation. In compliance with the directive provisions on mobility, it is indicated that the right of continuous residence is also granted to a third-country national who has been admitted as a student in a European Union Member State and who applies to conduct part of the training course which is engaged with or who applies to complement it with a related course of study in the Republic of Bulgaria. The third-country national is granted a permit for continuous residence for a period consistent with the duration of the studies.

The procedures under which this right is granted are provided for in the secondary legislation, the general requirement being individuals to have the necessary resources for subsistence, health insurance and resources to return, in order not to be a burden for the hosting country. Other specific documents are required, as well, to prove that the persons meet the condition on the grounds of which they apply.

3.1 Admission

To enter and reside in Bulgaria, third-country nationals who are foreign students should be holders of **long-term visa** and **residence permit**. The required long-term visa shall be issued by the Bulgarian diplomatic and consular missions after co-ordination with the competent national

bodies responsible for the residence matters. When the persons obtain a visa they may enter the country and apply before the services on administrative control of the third-country nationals for a residence permit to be issued. For this purpose, the persons shall submit an application and apply the necessary documents to prove that they are eligible for the category they apply for. The files with the attached documents are considered by the national authorities competent in the residence matters and, when all conditions are met, a decision on the issuance of a residence permit is made. The decision shall be reached within 14 days, and in cases of factual and legal complexity this period may be extended to one month. The person shall be notified about this decision in written form; in case of refusal to issue a residence permit, there is an opportunity to challenge it in administrative and judicial proceedings. The duration of the residence permit granted to the person shall comply with the duration of the education.

Long-term visa entitles to repeatedly enter the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria within its validity period. Long-term visa shall be cancelled upon issuance of a residence permit by the authorities for administrative control of third-country nationals.

A request for a long-term visa under the Law on Foreigners in Bulgaria shall be submitted through the Consular Relations Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the services for administrative control of third-country nationals in Bulgaria.

Consular officers shall grant or refuse a long-term visa after receiving a permission from the Consular Relations Directorate based on a joint reasoned opinion of the services for administrative control of third-country nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Security State Agency. A decision on a request for a long-term visa of third country nationals shall be taken within 35 business days following the date of the request.

In order to facilitate the procedure, a decision to grant visa to applicants for an education in the Republic of Bulgaria who are third-country nationals shall be taken within 15 calendar days following the date of the application.

Permission for prolonged residence can be received also by third-country nationals who are holders of a visa and are admitted as full-time students in a higher school, secondary education students admitted to the country to study at the average level of education within an exchange programme or as unpaid trainees.

A third-country national who has already been admitted as a student in a European Union Member State and applies to conduct part of the educational period with which is engaged, or to complement it with a related training course in Bulgaria, may be granted a prolonged permission for a period consistent with the duration of the studies.

To obtain the right of prolonged residence on the basis of admission to full-time studies in higher schools, the third-country nationals shall apply the following documents:

1. a certificate of admission to study in the Republic of Bulgaria, issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, and a certificate issued by the higher school stating that the third-country national will receive training during that year;
2. a proof of paid fee for enrolment in higher schools, which shall be produced after the person has entered the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria with a visa.

If the students who are third-country nationals apply for the right of prolonged residence based on their participation in an EU exchange programme, including the Erasmus Mundus programme, or in a bilateral programme or on their admission as students in a European Union Member State, the following documents shall be applied for at least two years:

1. a certificate containing information about the whole process of university education proving that the academic course complements the one that has already been completed, or
2. documents evidencing their participation in an EU exchange programme or a bilateral programme and their admission as students in an EU Member State for at least two years.

The above requirements do not apply when in their course the students are obliged to attend some of the classes in a higher school located in the territory of another Member State.

Services for administrative control of third-country nationals may ask the competent authorities of the first Member State all the necessary information regarding the student's stay in its territory.

Permission for permanent residence can receive the foreigners that have a visa and are accepted for full-time students in higher education, students admitted to the country to study the average level of education in the exchange program or unremunerated trainees.

A TCN who has been admitted as a student in a Member State of the Union, and applies to conduct some of the training course, or to complement his/her study with a related training course in Bulgaria may be granted permission for prolonged stay for a period consistent with the duration of the lesson.

To obtain the right of permanent residence on the basis of admission to full-time students in higher education, the alien applies the following documents:

1. certificate of acceptance to study in Bulgaria, issued by the Ministry of Education and Science and the certificate issued by the university that the alien will be trained during the year;
2. proof of paid fee for enrollment in higher education, which is presented after entering the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria visa.

If the students - third-country nationals apply for right of residence under part in an exchange program of the EU, including the Erasmus Mundus program, or in bilateral or acceptance as a student in a country - EU member for at least two years, the following documents:

1. certificate containing information about the whole process of university education, proving that the course complements the already completed or
2. documents evidencing an interest in an exchange program of the EU or bilateral program and its acceptance as a student in a country - an EU member state for at least two years.

The above requirements do not apply when in its course the student is obliged to attend some of the classes in high school, located in the territory of another Member State.

Services for administrative control of foreigners may ask the competent authorities of the first Member State all necessary information regarding the student's stay in its territory

Generally, the national procedure consists of these two stages – issuing a visa to enter the country and, the second stage, issuing a residence permit.

The national framework does not contain discrepancies between the grounds for issuing a visa and those in which a residence permit is issued. The grounds related to the right of entry and those related to the right of residence are in mutual logical connection.

Exceptions may be in the cases where, while the person formally meets the terms under the directive, he/she may not receive an entry visa and a residence permit when it is justified by reasons of security and public order.

The national legislation provides for some reliefs which are aimed at persons of **Bulgarian origin**. They have been regulated by a government act /Council of Ministers Decree 103 of 31 May 1993/. Special arrangements for carrying out educational activities of the Republic of Bulgaria with respect to third-country nationals and stateless persons who are of Bulgarian origin and live alone or in Bulgarian communities abroad have been set out.

The Ministry of Education and Science annually provides up to 400 positions that are subsidized by the state, for the admission of Bulgarian origin students to a full course of study, including a preparatory course in Bulgarian language, in the state higher schools of the Republic of Bulgaria in specialties and under procedures set out by the Minister.

Students admitted under these procedures shall pay tuition at the rate applicable to Bulgarian nationals.

Every third-country national /including students/ prolongedly residing in the country up to 1 year is granted a residence permit in accordance with Regulation 1030/2002.

Organization has been done to provide third-country nationals sufficient information on the procedures of entry and residence. The websites of the Consular Relations Directorate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education and Science are public and accessible. Boards containing information about the rules and documents that applicants should apply have been exposed. Visiting days in the services of administrative control of third-country nationals have been organized where people can ask questions and require further clarification when needed.

3.2 Stay

If the students who are third-country nationals move from another Member State in order to continue their education in the Republic of Bulgaria, due to the fact that at present the country is not a member of the Schengen area, they need a **visa issued for a long-term residence** with a validity period of one year and the right of residence to up to 360 days. According to the Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for issuing visas and the determination of visa regime, a visa can be issued to third-country nationals who perform scientific research or who are students in training programmes to up to one academic year, or are post-graduate students or trainees.

Below are presented data on the number of residence permits issued for the period 2007-2011 according to the database of the Migration Directorate:

	Total number of granted residence permits	Total number of granted residence permits granted for educational reasons	Ratio %
01.01.2007 - 31.12.2007	27916	6328	23%
01.01.2008 - 31.12.2008	25453	5751	23%
01.01.2009 - 31.12.2009	24080	5887	24%
01.01.2010 - 31.12.2010	23494	5855	25%
01.01.2011 - 31.12.2011	24834	5824	24%

Data on the number of international/TCN students provided by the largest Bulgarian university - Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The numbers are divided by academic years

Year	Total number of international students	TCN students	TCN students by countries	
2006 - 2007	335*	284	Macedonia	44

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			Turkey	155
			China	10
			Russia	6
			Moldova	9
			Ukraine	6
			Other	54
2007 - 2008	1119	744	Macedonia	253
			Turkey	228
			China	13
			Russia	16
			Moldova	58
			Ukraine	58
			Albania	18
			Serbia	60
			Other	40
2008 - 2009	1037	748	Macedonia	210
			Turkey	262
			China	24
			Russia	18
			Moldova	56
			Ukraine	43
			Albania	19
			Serbia	66
			Other	50
2009 - 2010	1021	741	Macedonia	138
			Turkey	278
			China	11
			Russia	30
			Moldova	66
			Ukraine	46
			Albania	23
			Serbia	68
			Other	81
2010 - 2011	886	720	Macedonia	116
			Turkey	242
			China	24
			Russia	25
			Moldova	63
			Ukraine	46
			Albania	24
			Serbia	81
			Other	99

* Number of newly admitted TCN students for academic year 2006/2007

The main flow of TCN students in the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" coming from Moldova, Ukraine, Macedonia, Albania and Serbia are persons having Bulgarian origin and admitted under Decree № 103 of the Council of Ministers of 1993 and Decree № 228/1997. They have been admitted through the Ministry of education, youth and science as students of state-subsidized training entitled to scholarship and dormitory.

For illustration, below are statistics on the international students provided by the largest private university in Bulgaria – the American University in Blagoevgrad.

The data in the first table relate to students who 1) have completed their “Master” studies and 2) who are studying to acquire “Master” degree.

The data in the second and third table respectively relate to students who 1) have completed their “Bachelor” studies and 2) who are studying to acquire “Bachelor” degree.

Reference on the number of international students who have completed Magister graduation, divided by countries and sex , 2006-2011																		
Level	State		2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011			
			Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
5 - Magister	Bulgaria	Bulgaria	10	8	18	14	8	22	13	13	26	11	17	28	19	6	25	
		Total for Bulgaria	10	8	18	14	8	22	13	13	26	11	17	28	19	6	25	
		%from the total number of students	100%	89%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	94%	97%	100%	100%	100%		
EU Member states		Great Britain		1	1													
		Ireland						0										
		France															0	
		Total for the EU MSs	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%from the total number of students	0%	11%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Third countries		USA										1	1					
		Total for third countries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	
		%from the total number of students	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	

Reference on the number of international students who studied for Magister degree, divided by countries and sex , 2006-2011																	
Level	State		2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011		
			Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
5 - Magister	Bulgaria	Bulgaria	24	17	41	30	22	52	26	29	55	30	23	53	28	20	48
		Total for Bulgaria	24	17	41	30	22	52	26	29	55	30	23	53	28	20	48
		%from the total number of students	100%	94%	98%	100%	96%	98%	96%	94%	98%	100%	92%	96%	100%	91%	96%
EU Member states		Great Britain		1	1												
		Ireland					1	1	1	1							
		Poland														1	1
		France														1	1
		Total for the EU MSs	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
		%from the total number of students	0%	6%	2%	0%	4%	2%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	4%
Third countries		USA								1	1		1	1			
		Turkey											1	1			
		Total for third countries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	0
		%from the total number of students	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	8%	4%	0%	0%	0%

Information for number of graduates degree "Bachelor", by country and gender, 2006-2011

		Reference on the number of students graduated "Bachelor" degree, divided by countries and gender, 2006-2011																
Level	State	2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011				
		Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total		
5 - Bachelor	Bulgaria	Bulgaria	81	55	136	85	81	166	88	95	183	107	114	221	73	79	152	
		Bulgara/USA													1		1	
		Bulgaria/South African R														1		1
		Total for Bulgaria	81	55	136	85	81	166	88	95	183	107	114	221	74	79	154	
		%from the total number of students	67%	66%	67%	67%	66%	67%	73%	73%	73%	72%	84%	78%	57%	64%	60%	
	EU MSs	Germany				1		1										
		Romania	5	3	8	9	7	16	4	5	9	6		6	5	2	7	
		Total for the EU MSs	5	3	8	10	7	17	4	5	9	6		6	5	2	7	
		%from the total number of students	4%	4%	4%	8%	6%	7%	3%	4%	4%	4%	0%	2%	4%	2%	3%	
	Third countries	Azerbaijan		1	1	1	1	2	1		1	1		1		1	1	
		Albania	8	5	13	8	4	12	6	8	14	4	4	8	9	10	19	
		Armenia					1	1	1		1					1	1	
		Belarus	2		2	4	2	6	3		3	1	1	2	4	3	7	
		Bosnia and Herzegovina		1	1					1	1							
		Georgia	1	2	3	2	1	3		2	2	2	1	3		4	4	
		Kazakhstan	2		2	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	
		Kirgizstan	1	1	2	1	1	2					1	1		1	1	
		China	2		2				1	1	2							
		Kosovo				2	2	4		5	5	4	3	7	1	3	4	
		Macedonia	5	4	9	1	8	9	8	5	13	6	1	7	6	4	10	
Moldova		6	5	11	7	5	12	1	1	2		1	1	6	3	9		
Moldova/Romania											1		1					
Mongolia		2	1	3	2	1	3	2		2	2	1	3	3		3		
Montenegro									1	1		1	1		1	1		
Nigeria					1	1												
Russia	1		1				3	1	4	9		9	10	4	14			
USA		1	1		2	2		1	1	1	2	3						
Serbia	5	3	8	1	3	4	1	3	4	2	3	5	2		2			
Tajikistan														2	2			
Turkmenistan											1	1	6	4	10			
Ukraine					1	1	1	1	2	1		1	3		3			
Croatia		1	1															
	Total for third countries	35	25	60	31	34	65	29	31	60	35	22	57	51	43	94		
	%from the total number of students	29%	30%	29%	25%	28%	26%	24%	24%	24%	24%	16%	20%	39%	35%	37%		

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Level	State		Reference on the number of "Bachelor" students, divided by countries and gender, 2006-2011															
			2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011			
			Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
5 - Bachelor	Bulgaria	Bulgaria	393	385	778	382	409	791	349	383	732	291	333	624	231	257	488	
		Bulgaria/Israel												1			1	
		Bulgara/USA											2	2	1	2	3	
		Bulgaria/South African R		1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1	
		Total for Bulgaria	393	386	779	382	410	792	349	384	733	291	336	627	233	260	493	
		%from the total number of	69%	72%	70%	67%	70%	69%	63%	68%	65%	51%	61%	56%	42%	50%	46%	
		EU MSs	Germany	1		1	1		1							1		1
			Romania	27	19	46	26	16	42	17	8	25	13	3	16	6	4	10
			Total for the EU MSs	28	19	47	27	16	43	17	8	25	13	3	16	7	4	11
			%from the total number of	5%	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
		Third countries	Azerbaijan	3	3	6	3	4	7	4	4	8	6	3	9	6	5	11
			Albania	28	27	55	31	31	62	32	40	72	43	43	86	59	53	112
			Armenia	1	1	2	1	3	4	3	3	6	4	4	8	4	4	8
			Belarus	12	3	15	13	7	20	12	11	23	16	12	28	18	12	30
			Bosnia and Herzegovina		2	2		1	1		2	2		1	1	1	1	
			Venezuela													1	1	
			Vietnam													1	1	
		Georgia	7	10	17	4	13	17	6	14	20	11	11	22	16	20	36	
		Zimbabwe							1		1	1		1	1	1		
		Kazakhstan	7	5	12	9	7	16	10	5	15	19	9	28	22	11	33	
		Canada						0		1	1		1	1	1	1		
		Kirgizstan	2	4	6	1	4	5		3	3		3	3	6	7	13	
		China	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	2				1	1		
		Colombia											1	1		1		
		Kosovo							5	15	20	5	13	18	2	13	15	
		Macedonia	23	20	43	22	22	44	24	18	42	17	17	34	12	16	28	
		Morocco	1		1						0							
		Moldova	16	14	30	17	13	30	18	17	35	18	22	40	21	27	48	
		Moldova/Bulgaria													1	1		
		Moldova/Romania										4		4	2	2		
		Mongolia	11	4	15	11	3	14	11	1	12	10	5	15	9	7	16	
		Montenegro		2	2		4	4		4	4	1	4	5	2	4	6	
		Nigeria		1	1		1	1										
		Russia	18	2	20	30	9	39	39	15	54	52	14	66	66	15	81	
		USA		4	4	1	6	7	2	9	11	3	12	15	5	9	14	
		USA/Bulgaria													1	1		
		Syria								1	1		1	1		2	2	
		Serbia	15	24	39	13	24	37	8	7	15	9	5	14	9	8	17	
		Tajikistan		1	1		2	2		2	2	1	2	3	2	6	8	
		Turkmenistan		1	1	1	1	2	6	1	7	36	26	62	37	32	69	
		Turkmenistan/Russia													1	1		
		Uzbekistan														2	2	
		Ukraine	4		4	7		7	7		7	8		8	10	10		
		Chroatia		1	1													
		South Korea								1	1		1	1				
		Total for third countries	150	130	280	165	156	321	189	175	364	264	210	474	315	256	571	
		%from the total number of students	26%	24%	25%	29%	27%	28%	34%	31%	32%	46%	38%	42%	57%	49%	53%	

Information about the period /2006 – 2011/ on registered persons in the Labour Bureau: in 2006 two students were registered, in 2008 - 4 students, 2009. - 5 students, 2010 - 9, 2011 - 15 students. They are citizens of Russia, Moldova, Macedonia, Ukraine, China and Japan.

4. TRANS-NATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

4.1 Bilateral/multilateral agreements, including on Partnership and Mobility

Agreements with third countries have been signed in relation with the facilitation of the admission of foreign students: In the period 2006-2011 students from the following countries were admitted for education and training, and language practice: Moldova, Serbia, Russia, Belarus, Egypt, Kazakhstan, China, Vietnam, Ukraine, and the United States, pursuant to bilateral treaties with these countries;

Signed bilateral cooperation agreements with universities in third countries in the field of Education and Science:

1. Kuban State University of Technology- Krasnodar, the Russian federation;
2. Almaty Technological University - Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan;
3. Moscow State University of Technologies and Management – Meleuz, Bashkortostan, Russia;
4. Mogilev State University of Food Technologies - Mogilev, Belarus;
5. Mongolian State University of Science and Technology - Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia;
6. Moscow State University of Food Production – Moscow, Russia;
7. Trakya University – Edirne, Republic of Turkey;
8. Voronezh State Academy of Technology – Voronezh, Russia;
9. Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade – Donetsk, Ukraine
10. Vellore Institute of Technology - Vellore , India;
11. St. Petersburg State University of Refrigeration and Food Engineering - St. Petersburg, Russia;
12. Odessa National Academy of Food Technologies – Odessa , Ukraine;
13. Namik Kemal University - Tekirdag, Republic of Turkey;
14. Université d'Abomey-Calavi – Cotonou, Benin;
15. Hanoi University of Science and Technology – Hanoi, Vietnam;
16. University of Transilvania - Brasov, Romania;
17. State University of Tetovo - Macedonia;
18. Technical University of Moldova - Chisinau, Republic of Moldova;

19. National University for Food Technologies – Kiev, Ukraine;
20. National University of Equatorial Guinea;
21. Scientific and Practical Centers to National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
- Minsk, Belarus;
22. Institut for social sciences and humanities research "Euro-Balkan" - Skopje, Macedonia;
23. University of Tourism and Management in Skopje - Skopje, Macedonia;
24. University of Sherbrooke - Sherbrooke, Canada;
25. Moscow State Linguistic University - Russia;
26. Pushkin State Russian Language Institute - Moscow, Russia;
27. Siberian Federal University – Krasnoyarsk, Russia;
28. Russian New University - Moscow, Russia;
29. Moscow State Institute of Steel and Alloys - Russia;
30. Main Russian language testing centre for third-country nationals with Russia's Ministry
of Education;
31. National Research University - Higher School of Economics, Russia;
32. Saratov State University - Russia;
33. Siberian Academy for Government Service - Russia;
34. Bashkirian State Pedagogical University - Russia;
35. Tiltan School of Design and Visual Communication - Haifa, Israel;
36. Istanbul University - Turkey;
37. Dokuz Eylül University ("September 9th") - Izmir, Turkey;
38. Crimean State Humanitarian Institute – Yalta, Ukraine;
39. American University of Kuwait;
40. Foundation „Alliance Columbia - Bulgaria" - Colombia;
41. Externado University of Colombia - Colombia;
42. Al Mustafa International University - Qom, Iran;
43. Woosong University, SolBridge International School of Business – Korea;
44. Ohio State University - USA;
45. Yerevan State Musical Conservatory - Armenia

The inclusion of the Republic of Turkey to the European countries that participate in the Erasmus Sectoral Programme allowed the students mobility from Turkey to the EU member states, including to Bulgaria.

4.2 Cooperation with other EU organisations (and EU-financed mobility programmes) or international organisations;

Two joint programmes are in operation in which foreign students may carry out their education, including third-country students. The first programme is a master's level, in consortium with the Hanze University of Groningen, the Netherlands, the Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, the University of Vilnius, Lithuania.

The other programme is at the doctoral level, in consortium with the University of Bologna, Italy, the University of Graz, Austria and the University of Primorska, Slovenia.

EU-funded Programmes:

Lifelong Learning Programme. Erasmus Sectoral Programme

In 2012 we celebrate 25 years of the launch of the most successful international mobility programme in Europe – the Erasmus Sectoral Programme. Bulgaria joined this programme in 1999. Over the years the Centre for Human Resources Development administering the programme at the national level has provided an opportunity for educational mobility to more than 11,000 Bulgarian students. The programme contributes to the development of the teaching methods and the enrichment of educational content by supporting teachers' mobility and funding projects within international intensive programmes. More than 3,000 international students choose a Bulgarian University for their Erasmus period. At the same time more than 4,500 Bulgarian teachers participated in teaching mobility, and approximately 3,000 of their colleagues from partner universities took part in the Erasmus mobility in Bulgaria. The launch of the Sectoral Programme in 1999 started a process of opening the Bulgarian higher schools to the opportunities of the European mobility for students and teachers, to the creation of common European educational programmes and networks.

During that period, the Erasmus Programme launched as a Lifelong Learning Sectoral Programme (2007 – 2013), by introducing a number of new activities to the national level administration: students' mobility for practicum purposes; mobility of teaching and non-teaching staff for training and intensive programmes purposes.

Over the past 12 academic years the training opportunities, practice and teaching provided by the Erasmus Sectoral Programme became increasingly popular among Bulgarian students and teachers, and the number of mobility increases annually.

2. Lifelong Learning Programme. Erasmus Intensive Programmes

Three Bulgarian higher schools participate in this activity. These are:

- the Burgas Free University;
- the New Bulgarian University;
- the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The areas in which programmes have been developed are: Social Sciences, Communication and Information Sciences. The funds used by the three Bulgarian higher schools participating in this activity amounted to 61,431 euro.

During the second year following the start of the new programming period, the number of Bulgarian higher schools participating in mobility activities increased to 41.

During the second year of existence of the intensive programmes as a decentralized activity in Bulgaria, four Bulgarian universities took part:

- the New Bulgarian University;
- the University of National and World Economy;
- the Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius";
- the International University College.

The topics within the intensive programmes are in the field of Social Sciences, Business and Law, as well as in the field of Services. The funds provided in this activity are 125,330 euro.

During the academic year 2009/2010 four Bulgarian Universities took part:

- the New Bulgarian University;
- the Academy of Economics "Dimitar Tsenov" – Svishtov;
- the Technical University – Gabrovo;
- the Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius".

Areas that are focused within the implementation of the intensive programmes are: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law, Services and Science, Mathematics and Informatics. The funds provided in this activity are 172,587 euro.

During the academic year 2010/2011 two Bulgarian universities took part:

- the Technical University – Gabrovo;
- the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The intensive programmes developed are in the areas of: Social Sciences, Business and Law, Science, Mathematics and Informatics. The funds provided in this activity are 29,101 euro.

1. Lifelong Learning Programme. Erasmus multilateral partnerships
2. Lifelong Learning Programme. Transversal "Languages" programme
3. Lifelong Learning Programme. Thematic Networks
4. "Leonardo da Vinci" Sectoral Programme
5. "Human Resources Development" Operational Programme
6. Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Romania-Bulgaria 2007-2013
7. "Scientific Researches" Fund of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science

8. Agreement between the Wallonia-Brussels Community / Bulgaria 2009-2011
9. CEEPUS Programme
10. Tempus Programme
11. TU BERGAKADEMIE FREIBERG, Germany
12. Universidad de Oviedo, E.T.S. INGENENIEROS DE MINAS DE OVIEDO,
Spain
13. Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, Spain
14. Politechnika Slaska (Silesian University of Technology), Poland
15. RWTH Aachen University, Germany
16. Hochschule fur Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden, Germany
17. Montanuniversitat Leoben, Austria

For illustration, below are statistics provided by the largest state university in Bulgaria – the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Reference for Erasmus Mundus (project Bazileus) and Tempus at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for 2008/2009 academic year						
faculty	Accepted TCN students	Accepted TCN students	Accepted TCN students	Total	Professors' mobility under Bazileus project	Professors accepted under Tempus and Bazileus project
	Bachelors	Masters	PhD			
Faculty of History	0	2	0	2	1	3
Faculty of Philosophy	0	2	0	2	0	2
Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology	0	1	0	1	0	3
Faculty of Slavic Studies	0	0	0	0	0	2
Faculty of Legal Studies	0	1	0	1	0	2
Faculty of Education	0	0	0	0	0	2
Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education	0	0	0	0	0	2
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication	0	1	0	1	0	2
Faculty of Theology	0	0	0	0	0	1
Economics faculty	0	0	0	0	0	3
Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics	0	6	0	6	0	5

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Faculty of Physics	0	0	0	0	0	1
Faculty of Chemistry	0	0	0	0	0	1
Faculty of Biology	2	0	0	2	0	1
Geology and Geography Faculty	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total:	2	13	0	15	1	31

Reference for Erasmus Mundus (project Bazileus) and Tempus at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for 2008/2009 academic year				
Country	TCN students	Number of professors accomplished mobility	Thematic Days on mobility made	Number of faculty mobility made at SU
Albania	3			5
Kosovo	2			
Macedonia	5			1
Serbia		1	30	25
India	5			
Total:	15	1	30	31

In 2012, increased number of nationals of the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia want to study "Psychology" for a Bachelor degree at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". For that reason, the University considers introducing training in Bachelor degree in English. Master's programme will be available in English in the autumn of 2012. The interest of Turkish students is enhanced because of the possibility to use this diploma for a personal realization in an EU country.

4.3 Other forms of cooperation with third countries

In march 2012, a number of Bulgarian universities – the University of National and World Economy – Sofia, the Language Department at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", the Technical University – Sofia, the University of Forestry – Sofia and the Medical University – Pleven, took part in the international exhibition "Education Fairs" in Turkey - Izmir, Bursa and Istanbul, to attract TCN students.

5. IMPACTS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE MEMBER STATE

In connection with some negative effects of mobility, at the regular meeting of the EU Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council held in May 2012, Bulgaria has offered to be prepared an analysis of mobility flows and to take measures to prevent the negative effects of it,

including the brain drain and the distortion of the labour market. Data from recent EU studies suggest that Bulgaria is leader in brain drain both to the U.S. and Western Europe. Due to the strong sensitivity of Bulgaria to the problem it was proposed mobility to become the topic of discussion of the next informal Council meeting in Nicosia during the Cyprus Presidency.

During the negotiations on the “Erasmus for All” Programme, Bulgaria was among the countries that demanded different sectors within the single, integrated programme to preserve their identity and specificity. Bulgaria welcomes the introduction of a separate chapter "Youth" and a separate budget line for youth policies, which provides decent room for activities related to volunteering, active citizenship, mentoring, intergenerational relationship, extracurricular activities, etc.

At the Council meeting, in its Youth format, there were discussions on youth unemployment, especially its record growth in many Member States. The problem is linked to many other phenomena such as early school leaving, lack of appropriate knowledge and skills due to the broken link between qualifications and the labour market, marginalization and low participation of young people in the democratic processes. Bulgaria, as many other countries, believes that one of the keys to tackle the problem are the youth entrepreneurial skills. Smooth transition from education to work can be achieved through internships, training in enterprises, vocational courses.

As a result, it was decided to set up a thematic group composed of experts from the Member States and the European Commission, which will aim to share good practices in promoting creativity and innovation potential of young people by identifying their skills and abilities acquired by formal and informal learning relevant to the labour market.

According to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, in the period 2006 - 2011 the total number of third-country nationals studying in Bulgarian universities, by academic year, is as follows:

2006-2007 – **11 375**

2007-2008 – **12 098**

2008-2009 – **11 240**

2009-2010 – **11 121**

2010-2011 – **11 625**

2011-2012 – **11 213**

In addition to the above data, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science requested information from the state higher schools that are subordinate officers of the Ministry of Education

about the revenue generated by the students who are third-country nationals. Based on a summary of the obtained information, data are as follows:

2006 – 7 571 965.09 €

2007 – 9 383 365.26 €

2008 – 11 701 911 €

2009 – 14 834 320.5 €

2010 – 17 129 090.56 €

2011 – 17 554 807.9 €

Total income for the period (2006-2011) – 78 175 460.14 €

6. CONCLUSIONS

Following the review of the higher education system in Bulgaria, reported in this study, the following conclusions may be pointed out:

- Under current regulations there are no differences in terms of opportunities for admission and education of EU citizens or third-country nationals at the higher education level in Bulgaria.
- The total number of students who are third-country nationals for the academic years listed in the study, remained relatively constant. The generated revenue increased constantly in each subsequent year.
- The Bulgarian higher education institutions have signed a number of agreements with third countries aiming to facilitate the admission of foreign students.
- There is a need to improve and expand the activity on the application of the opportunities for mobility which relate to the students, initially admitted in a particular Member State and applying to continue their education in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- There is a need to stimulate synergies with the EU programmes that facilitate mobility of third-country nationals within the EU, in a manner consistent with the overall framework of the Union in the field of education, training and cultural exchange with third countries.
- On the basis of the published data, it is reported that at present the possibility of abuse on the reason of "receiving higher education" as a way to legitimate the stay of third-country nationals in Bulgaria, as an EU Member State, is not an attractive alternative to the other forms of circumventing the legal requirements for the acquisition of a residence permit and the permanent establishment in the country.