



Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe

Bulgaria

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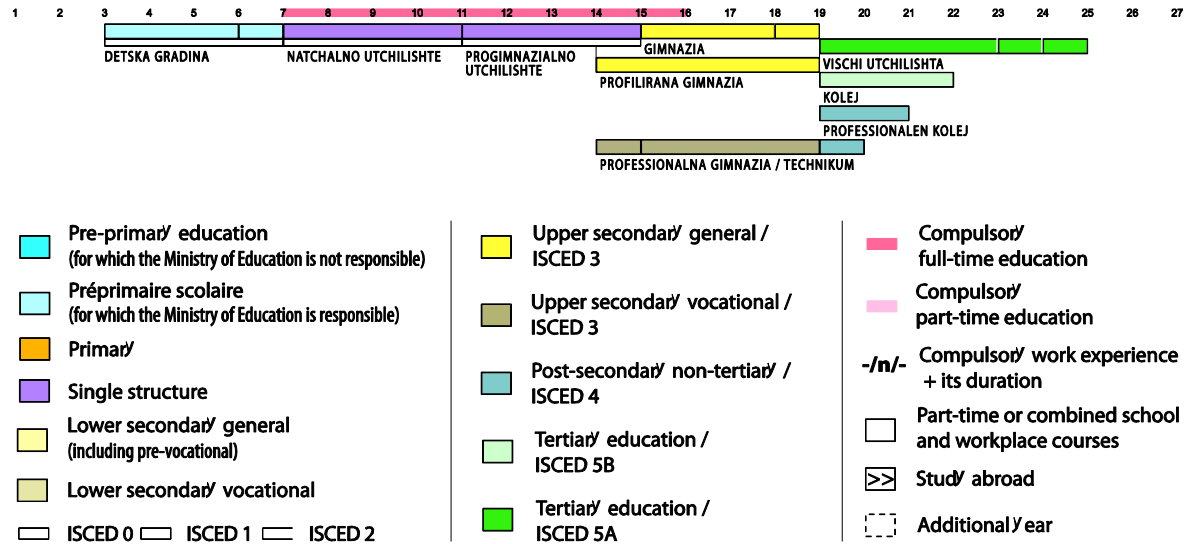
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION	6
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Basis of the education system: principles – legislation	6
1.3 Distribution of responsibilities for the organization and administration of the education and training system	8
1.4 Inspection/supervision/ guidance	10
1.5 Financing	10
1.6 Advisory (consultative) bodies	11
1.7 Private schools	11
2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION	12
2.1 Organisation	12
2.2 Curriculum and assessment	12
2.3 Teachers	13
2.4 Statistics	13
3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION/TRAINING	14
3A. Primary Education	14
3A.1 Organisation of the school	14
3A.2 Curriculum	14
3A.3 Assessment/certification/ guidance	15
3A.4 Teachers	15
3B Compulsory-secondary education	15
3B.1 Organisation of the school	15
3B.2 Curriculum	15
3B.3 Assessment/certification/ guidance	16
3B.4 Teachers	16
Statistics	17
4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION	18
4A General Secondary Education	18
4A.1 Organisation of the school	18
4A.2 Curriculum	18
4A.3 Assessment	18
4A.4 Teachers	19
4A.5 Statistics	19
4B Vocational Secondary Education	19
4B.1 Organisation of the School	19
4B.2 Curriculum	19
4B.3 Assessment/certification/ guidance	20
4B.4 Teachers	20
4B.5 Statistics	20
5. INITIAL/VOCATIONAL TRAINING	22
5.1 Organisation	22
5.2 Establishments	22
5.3 Financing	22
5.4 Curriculum	22
5.5 Assessment	22
5.6 Teachers/Trainers	23
6. HIGHER EDUCATION	24
6.1 Admission requirements	25
6.2 Academic year	26
6.3 Courses	26
6.4 Assessment/qualifications	26
6.5 Teachers	27
6.6 Statistics	28

7. ADULT EDUCATION	30
7.1 Specific legislative framework	30
7.2 Administration.....	30
7.3 Funding	31
7.4 Organisation	32

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2009/10



1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Background

The Republic of Bulgaria is situated in South Eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula on a territory of 110 993 square km with a population of 7 564 710, according to National Statistical Institute data for 2010. Bulgaria is a republic based on parliamentary democracy. The head of the state is the President, who is directly elected by the people for 5 years. State power is divided between the executive, legislature and judiciary. Legislative power lies in the National Assembly elected for 4 years. The domestic and foreign policy of the country enters within the scope of the activities of the Council of Ministers according to the Constitution and the national legislation.

The sector of education in Bulgaria has undergone a serious and widespread reform process aiming at attaining coherence with educational systems of the European countries. This reform was integrated and overall, it was determined by national and international factors such as the accelerated evolution of technologies and the interests of the civil society.

The main concern of the Bulgarian education authorities is to ensure the adaptability of the education system towards new challenges, as well as to guarantee sustainable system development in compliance with the European standards and capable to provide valuable and competitive knowledge and skills.

Within that framework, **quality of education and training** is one of the main objectives, granting equal access for all children and students regardless of their gender, ethnic or religious belonging. The major goal is to promote the creative application of acquired knowledge, independent thinking and development of competences for children and students, which should facilitate their personal and social realisation amid the dynamic changes of social and professional parameters and the growing mobility not only within the European Community, but also on a global scale. Contemporary quality assessment schemes both for secondary and higher schools were applied and are being developed and improved on a constant basis. The institutions themselves show increasing responsibility for the quality of education they

are offering. New technologies are being introduced in the training process.

The **cost-efficiency of the educational processes** is another aspect of the education system development. A lot of activities have been undertaken in order to strike a balance between the public resources allocated for education and the refundability for the society and the individual. The main results achieved are the autonomy of the higher education institutions, as well as the decentralization of the secondary school system. Several steps have been undertaken in order to improve the interaction with the economy and the business circles.

In compliance with the European priorities **lifelong learning is in a process of development**. Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2008-2013 was adopted. Thus conditions for great diversification of educational specialities have been created together with compatibility of educational programs with customers' needs. Variety of forms of education have been offered to those wishing to continue their education. The mechanisms for vocational orientation have been updated.

1.2 Basis of the education system: principles – legislation

The **social mission** of basic education is defined as preparing young people for a full and active life in a democratic society under market economy conditions, in which a person's fulfilment includes one's taking responsibility for the current and future life of the nation and mankind in general.

The Bulgarian educational system provides for the acquisition of the basic foundations and principles of human knowledge; the formation of universal human and national values, virtues and culture; more respect to others, compassion and civil responsibility; the development of the individual and stimulating the artistic talents and gifts; spiritual, physical and social development and healthy way of life; providing possibilities for needs and interest development for lifelong learning leading to self-perfection.

Restrictions and privileges based on race, nationality, gender, ethnical and social origin, religion and social status are inadmissible. Education is secular and compulsory up to

16 years of age pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. It is free of charge at all state and municipal schools.

General education in Bulgarian schools is carried out through the study of different subjects grouped in the following cultural educational fields:

- Bulgarian language and literature;
- Foreign languages;
- Mathematics, computers and information technologies;
- Social sciences, civic education and religion;
- Natural sciences and ecology;
- Arts;
- Way of life and technologies;
- Physical culture and sports.

The cultural educational fields correspond to the formulated goals of the general educational training, they create possibilities for options within the school syllabus and for synergy between the different study subjects.

The completion of the respective level of education guarantees the acquisition of the general educational minimum, defined by the state educational requirements specified for different subjects and classes, as well as of knowledge and skills corresponding to the interests and the individual needs of the pupils.

- Alignment of the national legal framework with the requirements of the European educational area and introducing changes in the main legal documents while considering national specificities and priorities – the National Education Act, the Vocational Education and Training Act, the Level of Schooling Act, the General Education Minimum and the Syllabus, and the Rules governing the implementation of the National Education Act; approving Ordinance No. 3 on the system of evaluation, Ordinance No. 4 on the school documentation, Ordinance on the textbooks and teaching resources; and assuring the system of national education with state educational requirements;
- Establishment of an external assessment standardised system based on tests checking students' acquired knowledge but also previous knowledge and competences;
- Introduction of compulsory training in the preparatory groups of preschool education, which now will be transformed from one-year to two-year training.

As to the system of **vocational education and training**, priorities are also connected with the economic and political changes in Bulgaria. In order to achieve better mobility and adaptability of the trainees for the labor market, a new approach is actually being applied. The main objective of the reform process is to provide possibilities for every member of our society to acquire, develop, upgrade or continue her/his professional education and training meeting her/his personal and market needs. The present day situation in the country, as well as the EU experience presupposed that problems of vocational education and training can't be solved solely by specialists working in the area of education. Branch chambers and trade-unions actively participate in the process of professional competence evaluation, practical training, course content, etc.

The results of the educational reform are mainly related to the local conditions within the given region and the study unit. To this end an expansion of the regions responsibilities in decision-making, notifying the needs for education, as well as the study content and personal management needs to be foreseen.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria plays a principal role in decision-making on the problems related to education. It adopts the legislation, concerning the educational system. Basic and secondary education is established in compliance with the National Education Act (NEA), whose latest amendment was adopted in May 2010 and entered into force for school year 2009/10. The National School and Preschool Education Programme (2006-2015) outlines the major development trends for education in the Republic of Bulgaria. The main emphasis is laid on the necessity for students to be identified as the major value of the whole education system, as well as on the development of competences, creative thinking and skills, application of knowledge in practice, with a focus of foreign language learning and IT training within the comprehensive application of all possible new technologies and pedagogical methods and approaches, not only within formal but also non-formal training and encouragement of independent learning as a basis of lifelong learning (LLL).

The most representative document to describe the current political intentions concerning higher education is the Higher Education Act adopted in 1995 and its successive amendments up to the last ones of 2010. The main directions determined in general are: a balance between the authority and responsibility of the state and the appropriate degree of academic autonomy

for the higher schools; introducing a three level degree system – Bachelor, Master and Doctor degree with their functional place in the labor market in compliance with the Bologna Process; enhancing access to educational programs and facilitated transition from one program and level to another, development of assessment activities at both internal and external levels of evaluation. Relating to this aim the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency was established assuming the responsibility for institutional and programme accreditation.

With regard to the political and economic changes bringing new requirements to higher schools nowadays the system of higher education faces several basic objectives:

- Quality assurance of all programmes in compliance with the labor market and European dimensions of education;
- Innovation in teaching and learning methods including lifelong learning tendencies;
- Raising the scope of academic autonomy by entrusting more responsibility to higher education institutions;
- New schemes for funding the higher schools, resources allocation and student support;
- Research activities under business initiatives and private funding;

Improvement of evaluation procedures transferring a part of evaluation criteria to achievements measurement.

1.3 Distribution of responsibilities for the organization and administration of the education and training system

The basic characteristics of the **administration** of education are its further democratization and decentralization as well as broadening the autonomy given to the education establishments. The administration of school education is organised on four levels: national, regional, municipal and school level. **The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MEYS)** is a specialised body of the Council of Ministers for the administration of education. It determines and implements state policy in the field of education; forecasts and plans the activities pertaining to the development of education by drafting long-term programmes and operational plans; organizes and coordinates the work of the administrative units and education establishments; monitors the activity of all types and levels of schools

(including nursery schools) in the country; approves school documentation and planning of school places; ensures the implementation of innovations, the supply of textbooks, curricula and teaching staff; and carries out international activities in the field of education.

MEYS is engaged in organizing and coordinating activities with other ministries and institutions associated with the administration of schools which train specialists in fields such as mechanical engineering, chemistry, agriculture, transport, mining, economics, etc.

The central administration of the MEYS approves the obligatory school documentation – guidelines, compulsory curricula, programmes, state education requirements, textbooks, handbooks, etc., with the assistance of a large circle of experts from research institutes and higher education institutions, experts from regional and community administrations, head teachers, teachers, etc.

The type of system management undergoes further fundamental changes in compliance with the last amendments to the National Education Act. A new model of administration has been developed, giving individual character to the regional educational structures. The process is mainly related to the redistribution of the administrative functions of the units within the system in compliance with their specificity and readiness. School co-operation and partnership with local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations is also in a process of expansion. One should also mention importance of the School Board Act, promoting the participation of the whole community in the life of a particular school.

Bulgaria has 28 regional education inspectorates, responsible for the overall educational policy, set out by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, within the territory of the respective district.

The municipal bodies for education are a part of the state territorial structure and participate in the implementation of the municipalities' educational policy. They are responsible for the compulsory education of pupils up to the age of 16, pre-school education, extra-mural activities, health care, financing, provision of equipment, premises, school meals, hostels, recreation and sport facilities, transport for children, pupils and teachers, scholarships and special assistance for pupils.

The school is a legal entity. Its pedagogical, organizational, methodological, administrative and managerial autonomy has

been extended considerably in recent years. The school administrative bodies are the Head and the Pedagogical Council. The tradition of setting up a School Board of Trustees creates a link with parents and the public. Members of this Board are the head teachers, teachers, parents, public figures, businessmen, etc. School public bodies may also involve the Parents' Council, the Students' Council, the Class Council, etc. The school has the right to organize its activity by taking into account the age of the pupils, their class and extra-curricular activities as well as the administrative functions of the school.

The Head Teacher is responsible for all activities – he plans, organizes, manages, coordinates, motivates and monitors the work of the teachers and the school in general.

The head teacher manages the school's funds – both budgetary and extra-budgetary.

Experts at the MEYS and Inspectorates for Education (IE), as well as head teachers are employed on the basis of a competition announced by the MEST, and the deputy head teachers, teachers and other members of staff are appointed by the head teacher, who defines also the monthly pay of teachers based on general criteria established in relation to the particularity of every school by the school itself in cooperation with a committee set up by the head teacher.

The regional, community and school administrations ensure the necessary organizational, pedagogical, material, financial, staff and other conditions required for effective education to take place.

Cooperation with companies and other businesses which support the school financially is of particular importance for obtaining the necessary materials and equipment.

Professional associations of teachers (trade-unions, etc.) ensure the protection of their members' interests regarding adequate wages, the regulation of working conditions, the work regime, etc.

The organization and the administration of the higher education system are related to:

The National Assembly

The National Assembly plays a principal role in decision-making on the problems related to the network of higher education institutions. On the strength of its decisions it is empowered to establish, transform and close down education establishments. Furthermore, it has a primary function in the financing of the higher education system. The National Assembly votes annually in the State Budget Act the allocations for each state-funded higher education institution.

The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers exercises the executive power in the Republic of Bulgaria. It sets down the main trends in the national policy in the sphere of higher education and submits proposals to the National Assembly for the establishment, transformation or closing down of educational institutions, and for the amount of allocations for each state-funded higher school. On the basis of proposals from the respective higher education institutions or a proposal submitted by the Minister of Education and Science, the Council of Ministers establishes, transforms or closes down faculties, branch-schools, colleges and institutes within the state-funded higher education institutions, determining along with this the status of these units.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency develops and approves the procedures and respective documentation for the process of accreditation, evaluates the projects for establishment or transformation of higher schools, faculties and specialities, assesses the activities of the higher schools, their faculties and specialities and on this basis gives or denies accreditation. Its information system stores data on the accredited higher schools, professional fields, specialities from the regulated professions and scientific specialties.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA)

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is an independent body for evaluation and accreditation of higher education quality. It harmonises the national system for provision of quality in compliance with the HEA and the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The NEAA's list of criteria combines the principle of equality of the three major areas of activity of higher education institutions: educational and scientific (artistic) activity and management. This creates a suitable environment and conditions for mutual recognition of accreditations through the harmonisation of the criteria, procedures and efficiency of the results of evaluation and accreditation. The NEAA's list of criteria has been drafted in line with the main models of evaluation, and in particular the CIPP (context, input, process and product evaluation) model.

The Higher Attestation Commission

The Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) with the Council of Ministers is an institution conferring the *Doctor's* educational and

academic degree, as well as all other academic degrees and titles. It consists of a Presidium, Scientific Commissions for the various scientific fields and specialties, appointing scientists of academic rank and Doctors of Sciences.

The Presidium of the Higher Attestation Commission determines which scientific councils in which scientific fields are eligible to handle defence of dissertations; it specifies the criteria for conferring of the educational and academic degrees in the various fields of science; it provides methodological guidance to the scientific councils; exercises control and unifies the criteria for conferring of academic degrees; authorizes the defense of dissertations abroad, and approves and evaluates and determines the place of the academic degrees obtained abroad in the system of the nationally acquired degrees. The Presidium of the Higher Attestation Commission also issues the diplomas for all academic degrees, as well as the credentials for academic titles.

The Scientific Commissions are HAC bodies. They are established for the various scientific fields, groups of scientific fields or scientific lines. The Commissions handle the proposals of the scientific councils and decide whether to confer on or strip off an academic title, how to place within the national system or whether to approve the academic degrees obtained abroad, and authorize the appointment of foreign reviewers.

The Rector's Conference

The Rectors' Conference is the body designated to present the common interests of higher schools before the public authorities. It drafts opinions and proposals on issues related to higher education and science; it expresses its position on the draft state budget in its part concerning higher education and science; on the draft Classification of Higher Education Fields and Vocational Areas; it comments on the criteria for award of academic degrees and scientific titles.

National Representation of Student's Councils

The national representation of students' councils advocates the interests of students and PhD students at a national level. Its major task is related to the drafting of opinions and proposals concerning the issues of higher education and science at universities; it expresses its position on the draft state budget in its part concerning education and science. A National Council on Students' Issues has been set up as an advisory body at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.

1.4 Inspection/supervision/guidance

The main characteristics of the educational management are as follows:

- Development and refinement of the management and coordination accomplished by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science and its' structures;
- Increasing the autonomy of schools and the rights of school principals;
- Decentralization and transparency in decision-making;
- Involvement of local stakeholders in the school management – changes in the Rules governing the implementation of the National Education Act that stipulate possibilities for parents and pupils to take active part in the process of decision-making related to organization, activity and image of the school.

Control over the teaching process and its results is carried out by the competent bodies: MEYS, regional IE, the head teachers and deputy heads.

A special department at the MEYS called the Coordination and Control in Secondary Education manages and controls the activity of IE and the schools. 28 Inspectorates for Education are established in the country on a regional level – they are specialized territorial bodies of the MEYS for operative administration of the education structures. They have planning, organizational, coordination and control functions over school activities within their respective region. Staff of the IE comprises experts in the organization of secondary education and experts in the different school disciplines.

The inspecting bodies monitor school legislation, school curricula and syllabuses and state education requirements in terms of performance and efficiency of the teaching methods used, and also organize examinations. They assist the teachers and evaluate their work and the quality of education delivered.

The active role of the Regional Inspectorates of Education in the preliminary preparation, organisation and implementation of the annual national external tests and matriculation exams has to be noted as well.

1.5 Financing

Education is financed by grants from the state budget through the MEYS, which provides the major source of financing, as

well as from local budgets through the community administrations. The grant is determined in a differentiated manner according to the level of education and type of school involved. Capital investments are also determined in order to subsidise research work, to promote teachers' qualification and the wages for staff working in education. Private schools are not financed by the state, although students from first to seventh grade there also obtain free textbooks.

The education funds, including those planned for capital investment, are distributed between the different levels of education (secondary schools, colleges, higher education institutions). Funds can also be awarded for in-service teacher training. As already stated, when enumerating the principles of education, the latter is free-of-charge for all pupils.

According to the principle of the education system decentralization, a new model for school financing was introduced, namely the principle of the 'delegated budgets'. The introduction of delegated budgets means that the subsidies for education coming from the state or municipal budgets are allocated to schools through a formula. The main criteria are the number of students in the school and the size of the school premises. The specific factors in the formula are municipality dependent. The headteachers have the right to vire money between paragraphs within the framework of the budget informing the funding body about the changes. Efficiency savings and funds raised through other sources are not taken by the municipal councils or the MEYS but are rolled over to the following financial year without any bearing on the school's subsidy for the next year.

1.6 Advisory (consultative) bodies

At all levels of school administration, specialized public bodies (School Council, consultative, expert bodies, etc.) exist alongside the state bodies in order to assist the work of the latter and the adoption of administrative decisions. They have a different status – standing or temporary –

with either constant or temporary membership. At schools, such a body is called the Board of School, but other bodies could also be established – methodological councils, subject-oriented commissions, and expert committees. The Board of School could also assist the state bodies in their work concerning different administrative decision matters.

The policy-making procedure concerning higher education is related to the activities of The Rectors' Conference. It has been functioning in Bulgaria since 1992. It maintains the status of a non-profit association. The Conference has regular sittings in which the rectors of all higher education institutions, irrespective whether they are state-funded or private, take part.

The Rectors' Conference as representative of the academic community develops stands and concepts on topical issues. Its decisions are recommendatory, but considerably influence the development of the higher education system itself.

1.7 Private schools

The first private schools in Bulgaria were established in 1992. The order and conditions of establishment are defined and amended by the *National Education Act, Statute and special regulation of MEYS for private schools*. Private schools have a curriculum, whose compulsory part must meet the requirements of the state curriculum. Private schools have the right to supplement this with other curricula e.g. intensive foreign language teaching, music, arts, ecology, management, trade and marketing.

Private schools as part of the education system are managed and controlled by MEYS, including awarding certificates upon completion of secondary education and vocational qualifications.

In 2009/10 there were 6 483 pupils in 455 private general secondary schools.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The main objectives of pre-primary education *предучилищно възпитание* (*predutchilichtno vuzpitanie*) are to ensure the child's harmonious development by using the educational interaction as well as by developing its one individuality as well as to provide for the integration of the educational interactions between the kindergarten and the family. The **basic aim** of the kindergarten is to offer the necessary conditions for the development of each child's abilities and to make them ready for school.

As part of the national education system, pre-primary education is regulated by the National Education Act (1991), the Rules of Procedures on the Implementation of the National Education Act, Regulations, State Educational Requirement for Pre-Primary Education and Training and Programmes.

The system of pre-primary education includes children from the age of 3 to the age of 6/7. Besides the state-funded sector, which is prevalent, the private sector is also developing.

Kindergarten attendance is optional. Kindergartens are open to all children who want to prepare for school against payment of a minimal fee, which is reduced considerably for low-income families.

The system of pre-primary education includes full-day, half-day kindergartens and boarding kindergartens. Special kindergartens have been set up for children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases. Kindergartens or schools can organise half-day, preparatory or seasonal groups for preschool-age children.

As of the 2003/04 school year attendance of pre-school groups is compulsory. Most children attend the day-care kindergarten.

2.1 Organisation

Most kindergartens are separate institutions opened by the municipalities. They have a day-care regime and are located in purpose-built premises. If there are too few children, groups are formed within schools where pre-school groups are also organized. They work on a part-time basis and in shifts. Children in kindergartens are divided into groups according to age – from 3 to 4 years; 4 to 5 years, and from 5 to 6 years. The age

division is not obligatory and can in some circumstances be waived (according to the number of children in a group or the level of development of a given child). The children may be placed into mixed-age groups. There are 12 to 22 children per group. State kindergartens are opened where at least four but no more than eight groups are formed.

2.2 Curriculum and assessment

The volume and content for different activities in groups are defined by the Regulation for Preschool Education adopted in 2000 and updated in 2005.

The selection and structure of the contents are determined by the abilities of the 3- to 6-year-olds. The education content is classified by subject, and for each age group the subject is widened and developed.

The compulsory pre-school education programme covers the following educational fields: Bulgarian language, social science, natural science, mathematics, music, technological and household skills, arts, play culture and recreation, sports.

The main form of organisation of education is the pedagogical situation. It can be regulated in time in terms of duration and weekday and unregulated in terms of duration and weekday. The regulated situation cannot be removed or replaced by another type of activity. The compulsory preparatory group has to have a total of 24/25 organisational forms. Optional situations (play and practice) take place on a daily basis, but it is the teacher who defines them in terms of sequence in the weekly programme and duration.

One basic method of organizing pedagogical interaction is through play. The child's development is studied jointly by teachers and parents in a natural environment and through certain activities (play, occupations, holidays, excursions, etc.). Methodology includes play, the study of the children's creativity and their behaviour in class.

Within the preparatory groups, the basic form of instruction takes place through classes which prepare the children for introduction into the classroom style of education at school. At this stage, the children pass automatically from one age group to the next, regardless of their individual development

and results. To provide a more personalized system, there are set state education standards, as well as a system for assessing the achievements and development of each child within the preparatory group.

The transition to school is straightforward. This is guaranteed by the continuity of the programmes of education and the type of instruction provided both in the kindergarten and in the first year of school.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science defines only the educational activities to be pursued, the content and the criteria, as well as the measures for pupil assessment. As to the methods, study materials, manuals, work techniques, they are subject to the individual choice of the teacher. He/she has the possibility to arrange the educational content as function of his/her own opinion on the activities organization looking for the most effective way.

2.3 Teachers

In school year 2009/10 there were 19 466 teachers (pedagogical staff) working in the pre-primary education system in Bulgaria. They have some form of higher education qualification and perform administrative and pedagogical functions. Every group has two teachers, who are trained to be generalists and not teach just one subject. The main task of all teachers is to organize the education processes and the conditions in the kindergartens and to care for the well-being of all children. They can choose from all the available education programmes, and work full-time, i.e. 6 hours a day.

The system comprises also music teachers who have special music training and can play at least one musical instrument (piano, accordion, etc.). One music teacher is in charge of 12 groups and his/her task is to organize and provide a musical environment for the children's musical and aesthetic/artistic development.

Larger kindergartens with more than 8 groups have psychologists. The psychologists have higher education qualification in the respective area. They can have full-time contracts, as well as temporary ones.

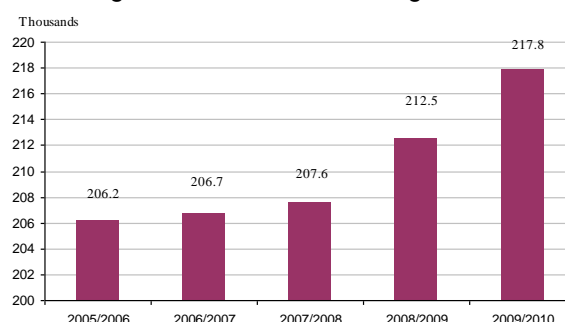
2.4 Statistics

The number of kindergartens in 2009/10 is 2 262 or 29 less than in 2008/09. The number of children in kindergartens for

2009/10 is 217.8 thousand, 11.6 thousand or 5.6 % more than their number in 2005/06 and has increased with 2.5 % in comparison with the previous school year.

The coverage of children in kindergartens estimated by the group net enrolment rate has increased, from 73.8 % in 2008/09 to 74.3 % in 2009/10. Although the reduced number of kindergartens, it is achieved a better coverage of the children in these institutions. This is an important indicator, which determinates the efforts of the municipality administrations to attain a better coverage of the children in pre-primary education.

Figure 2. Children in kindergartens



The average number of children per kindergarten is 96 – in urban areas their average number is larger – 144 and for the rural areas it is 46. The average number of children forming one group is 22, in urban areas – 24 and in rural areas – 17.

The teaching personnel employed in kindergartens are 19.5 thousand from which 1.2 thousand are directors without groups. In comparison with previous school year the total number of teaching personnel has increased by 118 persons or by 0.6 %.

Private kindergartens are an alternative for a very small number of parents. In 2009/10 there are 48 licensed private kindergartens with 1 777 enrolled children; their relative share is only 0.8 % of the total number of children in kindergartens.

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION/TRAINING

According to the Public Education Act (1991 and following amendments), school education is basic and secondary with respect to level of schooling, and general and vocational with respect to content and type of instruction.

General education provides for the acquisition of the general educational minimum and also for specialized training in compliance with the state educational requirements.

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Education Act (1991), school education is compulsory from the age of 6/7 up to the age of 16. It comprises basic education (*osnovno obrazovanie/основно образование*) (from 1 to 8 grade) which is divided into: first stage – primary education (*nachalen etap/начален етап*) (from 1 to 4 grade) and second stage – lower secondary education (*progimnazialen etap / прогимназиален етап*) (from 5 to 8 grade). Basic education could be obtained at state, municipal and private schools.

Basic education is free-of-charge with the exception of private schools. All students from 1 to 7 grade included are entitled to obtain free-of-charge textbooks.

3A. PRIMARY EDUCATION

The basic aim of primary education called also the first stage of basic education (*начален етап на основното образование*) (grades 1 to 4) is to form basic knowledge and abilities, which are the basis for the pupils' further education and development. The trend is for instruction to be closer to the pupils' everyday life, to assist them in their study, to increase their desire to lead active lives, to understand and solve the problems faced and to gradually acquire the qualities required from citizens of a humanistic and democratic society.

Non-attendance for whatever reason of more than one third of the class hours in each discipline requires the pupils to pass an examination in order to make up their marks.

The number of pupils in a class is from 16 to 22. Year classes are formed according to age.

3A.1 Organisation of the school

The work at primary school is organized into either half or full day schemes, depending on whether the school is with single or double shifts. In the full-day scheme, besides general instruction some other activities are also organized: extra/remedial classes, recreation and sports activities and others based on individual interests.

Teaching is organized in a five-day week. General instruction comprises 31 teaching weeks for grade 1 and 32 teaching weeks for grades 2-4. Instruction in optional/extra subjects comprises 4 hours per week for grades 1-4.

The academic year lasts from 15 September to 24 May for grade 1; 15 September to 31 May for grade 4.

3A.2 Curriculum

There is a single curriculum for primary education which is compulsory for all pupils from grade 1 to 4. The curriculum for first-graders introduced gradually since 2002/03 divides teaching time for subjects as follows (in terms of weekly hours):

Bulgarian Language and Literature – 7 hours in grade 1-4; Foreign Language – 2 hours in grade 2, 3 hours in grades 3-4; Mathematics – 4 hours in grades 1 and 4, 3.5 hours in grade 2 and 3; Homeland – 1 hour in grade 1; Environment – 1 hour in grade 2, Man and Society – 1.5 hours in grade 3 and 1 hour in grade 4; Man and Nature – 1 hour in grade 3 and 1.5 hours in grade 4; Music – 2 hours in grades 1 and 2 and 1.5 hours in grades 3 and 4; Arts – 2 hours in grades 1 and 3 and 1.5 hours in grades 2 and 4; Household Skills and Technology – 1 hour in grades 1-4; Physical Education and Sports – 3 hours in grades 1-4.

As part of their compulsory-elective education, pupils can take other subjects as well – mother tongue, music, choreography, information technology.

The curriculum for the first stage of basic education (grades 1-4) includes: compulsory subjects within the school year of: 589 hours for grade 1, 640 hours for grade 2, 736 hours for grade 3 and 4; compulsory-elective subjects of 93 hours for grade 1, 64 hours for grades 2-4; free elective education –

124 hours for grade 1 and 128 hours for grades 2-4.

3A.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

First year pupils do not repeat the year. Those with difficulties participate in additional summer courses.

Assessment in the 1-4 grades included is qualitative and includes the following levels: fair; good; very good and excellent. The knowledge and skills of pupils from years 2 to 4 are evaluated during the school year by oral, written and practical tests and other forms of control. Assessment is carried out by the teacher and periodically by the teacher with the state administrative bodies. Pupils receive term and annual marks and the number of school hours allocated to the subject predetermines the frequency of assessment. For those subjects included in the curriculum with only one hour per week or every two weeks, there is no term mark.

After successful completion of 4 grade, a certificate (удостоверение за завършен IV клас) is issued. The certificate includes the annual score in the subjects studied in 4 grade, as well as the score obtained in the optional subjects. There are no examinations at the end of year 4, but there is nationwide external assessment in certain subjects.

Pursuant to the amendments to the regulatory framework of 2009, pupils of 1-4 grade who have not acquired the syllabus and have received a poor annual mark (2) in one or more subjects will not repeat the grade.

3A.4 Teachers

From grades 1 to 4, the teacher works with one class and teaches all subjects of the syllabus. In case of sufficient number of hours, there can be teacher appointed to teach only a foreign language or only PE and sports to pupils of the first stage of basic education.

The teacher qualification could be attained within the framework of the university level educational programmes for Bachelor and Master. Several higher education institutions offer such programmes with a duration of at least 4 years for Bachelor's degree and at least 5 years – for the Master's one.

The teachers work on a full-time basis under a permanent or temporary employment contract. The teachers for years 1 to 4 have 20 hours' work per week.

The heads and deputy heads have from 72 to 216 hours teaching workload per academic year.

The teachers for grades 1 to 4 work for 32 teaching weeks, i.e. 160 academic days. The qualification of a teacher in Bulgaria could be attained within the framework of the university level educational programmes for Bachelor and Master. Several higher education institutions offer such programmes with duration of at least 4 years for Bachelor's degree and at least 5 years – for the Master's one. In general they are full-time employed under permanent or temporary contract. There are no legal provisions for the duration of their in-service training. The duration is optional and normally it lasts 2-3 weeks per year.

3B COMPULSORY-SECONDARY EDUCATION

3B.1 Organisation of the school

Lower secondary education (*progimnazialen etap/Прогимназиален етап*) (5 to 8 grade) lays the foundations for studying the basics of different sciences and at the end of this education pupils should have acquired such skills.

On average, there are from 18 to 26 pupils per class. The year classes are formed according to age.

3B.2 Curriculum

There is a core curriculum which is compulsory for lower secondary education. For lower secondary education: V-VIII grade, compulsory subjects are: Bulgarian Language and Literature (V- VIII grade), Foreign Language (V- VIII grade), Mathematics (V-VIII grade), IT (V-VIII grade), History and Civilisation (V- VIII grade), Geography and Economics (V-VIII grade), Man and Nature (V-VI grade), Biology and Health Education (VII-VIII grade), Physics and Astronomy (VII-VIII grade) Chemistry and Environmental Protection (VII-VIII grade) Music (V-VIII grade), Fine Arts (V-VIII grade), Household Work and Economy (V-VI grade), Technology (VII-VIII grade) PE and Sports (V-VIII grade).

These courses are taken within 918 hours a year, and apart from them, pupils take a further 102 hours of compulsory elective subjects to expand their knowledge and

skills; while for the purpose of development of their individual talent, they are entitled to 136 hours of free elective subjects, allocated at discretion of the pedagogical council of the school at the proposal of the head teacher, taking into account pupils' interests and needs.

Depending on the specificity of the subject and the age characteristics of the pupils, their education can take place via various pedagogical and methodological approaches such as individual and group work, presentations, boards, debates, in the atmosphere of interaction and mutual cooperation between the teacher and the pupils and between the pupils themselves, using various additional aids and technologies.

The teachers and the school have the right to select textbooks and teaching aids.

The basic sources of financing come from the state and the municipalities. There also exist forms of sponsorship.

The education system offers the possibility for early mathematical (from year 5) and language (after year 7) instruction by entry into profile-oriented schools. Admission of pupils is on the basis of entrance exams.

3B.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

Pupils' knowledge and skills are evaluated by using a six-point scoring system including the marks excellent (6); very good (5); good (4); fair (3) and poor (2). The highest mark is excellent (6). The number of hours for certain subject and its specificity determines the minimum number of continuous written, oral and practical tests for pupils. At the end of 5th, 6th and 7th grade, there are nationwide written assessment tests in different subjects. All eight-graders who study intensively a foreign language sit for an end-year external assessment exam on a national level and certain schools hold oral language exams.

A certificate of basic education (*Svidetelstvo za zavurcheno osnovno obrazovanie / Свидетелство за завършено основно образование*) is issued after the successful completion of year 8. The certificate includes the annual score obtained in the subjects studied in year 8, as well as the scores obtained in the chosen subjects. The overall score for completed basic education is calculated with an accuracy of up to 0.01 as an average score of the marks in: the subjects defined with the curriculum in the respective fields: Bulgarian language and literature, Foreign language, mathematics, computers and Information technologies,

Social sciences and civic education, natural sciences and Ecology, Arts, Sports and technologies.

A pupil passes from basic school to secondary school without having to pass an entrance examination, by using the basic school certificate. The entry into profile-oriented schools after completing their course in year 7 or 8 (language schools, school of mathematics, technical schools, sports schools, arts schools etc.) is on the basis of entrance examinations.

3B.4 Teachers

From 5 to 8 grade, every teacher teaches certain subject depending on his/her university degree. The teacher qualification could be attained within the framework of the university level educational programmes for Bachelor and Master. Several higher education institutions offer such programmes with duration of at least 4 years for Bachelor's degree and at least 5 years – for the Master's one. The lower-secondary teachers are specialists in a given discipline.

Teachers work on a full-time basis under a permanent or temporary employment contract. The number of hours for teachers teaching years 5 to 8 depends on the discipline taught and varies annually from 648 h., 684 h., 720 h. to 792 h., equivalent to 18, 20, 22 and 30 hours per week.

Heads and deputy heads have from 72 to 216 hours teaching workload per school year.

The teachers for years 5 to 8 work 170 school days. During the rest of the days they carry out different school activities (examinations, work with the children, in-service training, etc.). In general they are full-time employed under permanent or temporary contract. There are not legal provisions for the duration of their in-service training. The duration is optional and normally it lasts 2-3 weeks per year.

The introduction of differentiated teacher pay based on criteria common for the whole country, specific for the particularity of every individual school, enabled the personal assessment of the contribution of every teacher and represents an incentive for his/her career development on a five-level scale: junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher, head teacher and methodologist.

Statistics

In the beginning of the school year 2009/10 there are classes in 2 121 general education schools ⁽¹⁾. Out of them 155 are primary schools, 1 383 – basic schools, 13 – lower secondary schools, and 165 upper secondary and 405 – secondary general schools. In comparison with the previous school year because of closure or transformation the total number of general education schools has decreased by 50.

During 2009/10 school year the number of students in all kinds of general education schools is 627.2 thousand, of which 114.7 thousand in rural areas. In comparison with the previous school year the number of students in general education decreased by 17.6 thousand or 2.7 %.

During the previous 2008/09 school year for different reasons 15.5 thousand students have left the general education schools, of which 13.0 thousand are in basic education. The largest relative share of students who have left is that of students leaving because of family reasons – 7.9 thousand or 50.9 % of all leaving students, followed by those who left because had gone abroad – 22.0 % and the share of those who left because of unwillingness to study is also considerable – 20.1 %.

The early teaching of foreign languages is becoming more common for the beginning stages of the primary education. The relative share of children in general education schools who study foreign languages in the primary grades (I – IV) is 84.1 %.

The largest share is towards English, which is learnt by 86.8 % of students who is studying foreign languages.

In 2009, 54.4 thousand students graduated from basic education.

During the same year 35.8 thousand persons have graduated secondary education in the general education schools. At the same time 1.7 thousand finished 12th grade, but did not complete successfully the matriculation exams, which represents 4.6 % of the total number of graduates. The total number of the teaching staff (directors and deputy directors with teaching activity employed in general education schools during the 2009/10 school year is 48.3 thousand or 1.4 thousand less than the previous school year. 90.0 % of the teachers are with tertiary education – an education-qualification degree of 'Bachelor' or 'Master' and 9.5 % – with education-

qualification degree – 'Professional Bachelor' (or the equivalent degree in past).

Women are predominant in the teaching profession (84.5 % of the total number of teachers).

There are 22 pupils on average for one class.

As of 1.10.2009 there are 66 active private general education schools in the country. Out of these there are 3 primary schools, 29 basic, 2 lower secondary, 29 secondary schools and 3 secondary general schools. There are 6 483 students studying in private general education schools. The number of students in the private sector is only 1.0 % from the total number of students.

In schools and classes for students with special educational needs are enrolled 5.0 thousand pupils or 1.6 thousand (24.3 %) less in comparison with previous school year. 1 046 specialist teachers and 508 educators are taking care of their education and upbringing.

⁽¹⁾ Incl. three Bulgarian schools abroad, financed by state.

4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

4A GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

The system of secondary general education (*sredno obshcho obrazovanie* *средно общо образование*) in Bulgaria is regulated by the National Education Act and by different regulatory documents produced by the MEYS. It covers pupils from years 9 to 12.

Secondary schools are run by the state, the municipalities and also by private bodies.

All schools in Bulgaria, including secondary schools, are coeducational.

Secondary education in Bulgaria is **free of charge** with the exception of private schools. Textbooks for secondary schools are purchased by the pupils themselves.

4A.1 Organisation of the school

The training process is organized on a five-day week basis

For all pupils the academic year begins on 15 September and ends on 24 May for year 12 and 30 June for years 9 to 11.

There are day-time and evening secondary schools.

Classes are organized according to the age of the pupils, but they are also grouped according to the subject.

4A.2 Curriculum

At *vocational high schools and specialised schools* with intensive foreign language instruction (after year 7), pupils study the first foreign language respectively for 18 and 10/13 hours a week. Along with the compulsory classes for the acquisition of compulsory competences laid down in the state educational requirements (for IX grade – 972, for X grade – 720, for XI grade – 360 and for XII grade – 186), pupils may choose among a set number of branches for more detailed study of a given subject (Bulgarian Language and Literature, I and II Foreign Language, Mathematics, Computers, Information Technology, History and Civilisation, Geography and Economics, Psychology and Logic, Ethics and Law, Philosophy, World and Personality, Biology

and Health Education, Physics and Astronomy, Chemistry and Environmental Protection, Music, Arts, Physical Education and Sports) and within the compulsory elective subjects, respectively for IX grade – 180, for X grade – 432, for XI grade – 792 and for XII grade – 806, while for free elective subjects, hours are allocated as follows: for IX, X and XI grade – 144 for the school year, and for XII grade – 124, distributed by the school depending on pupils' interests and demand.

The basic teaching methods used are the following: lectures, talks, presentations, debates, work on projects, work with different sources and texts, practical work, pupil research, project work, case-solving and simulation, etc. Textbooks, teaching aids and literature, anthologies, compilations, teaching software, etc. are used. The tendency is to offer pupils and schools the choice of several alternative textbooks and teaching aids which are issued on the basis of competitions organized by the MEYS.

4A.3 Assessment

The knowledge and skills that the pupils acquire during the academic year are assessed by oral, written and practical examination, and depending on the number of hours allocated to the subject, there is a minimum number of continuous assessment marks for the term and the year. The control is performed by the teacher throughout the school year. The marks are recorded for each term and also for the school year. State administrative bodies (municipal, regional and national) practice continuous control.

Tests are one of the obligatory forms of examination and assessment.

Pupils who have successfully completed the last year of secondary school can choose whether or not to sit for a state matriculation exams. If they do not pass the two compulsory matriculation exams (in Bulgarian language and literature and one of their choice; they are entitled to sit for another matriculation exam of their choice in the other subjects), pupils obtain a certificate of secondary education, which however does not entitle them to gain access to a university. Students who have passed the two compulsory matriculation exams receive a diploma of secondary education (*Diploma za sredno obrazovanie*/Диплома за средно образование). The diploma must obligatorily mention the chosen branch of specialization.

Pupils automatically pass to the next grade, if at the end of the school year they have passed all subjects. If they have one poor mark (Poor = 2), they resit the exams under a procedure determined by the head teacher before a committee appointed by him/her. If they do not pass the resit examination, they repeat the year. There is no passing to a higher grade on probation.

There are no special classes for remedial pupils.

The graduates of secondary vocational schools with the respective class of professional qualifications are entitled to continue their education on a higher educational level/university and non-university, without restriction as to the choice of a higher education establishment. The secondary school leaving qualification gives also access to the labour market.

4A.4 Teachers

Within the secondary school, teachers teach separate disciplines and have higher education qualifications, having graduated from a corresponding higher education institution, plus a compulsory pedagogical qualification. They are allowed to teach more than one subject if this corresponds to their university degree.

According to the timetable which teachers must cover, they may either be employed full-time in a permanent post or attain the necessary number of academic hours by also teaching at another school. There are also teachers who work on a part-time basis, teachers who give lectures and receive payment not under an employment contract, but under a specific contract for a particular type of work.

The teaching hours for full-time secondary school teaching depends on the subject taught and could be a minimum of 648, 684, or 720 academic hours annually. The maximum number of hours a year that can be taught by a teacher (if necessary and at the discretion of the head teacher) (the compulsory teaching hours plus possible lecture hours) is obtained by multiplying the minimum by 1.5 (i.e. 972, 1026, 1080).

The introduction of differentiated teacher pay based on criteria common for the whole country, specific for the particularity of every individual school, enabled the personal assessment of the contribution of every teacher and represents an incentive for his/her career development on a five-level scale: junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher, head teacher and methodologist.

4A.5 Statistics

In 2009/10 within the general education system, 165 high schools (9-12 grade) and 413 general schools (1-12 grade) were operating.

The total number of students at high schools in the 2009/10 school year was 148 627, while the total number of teachers for the same level was 14 111.

The number of graduates for 2009/10 from upper secondary general education was 45 171.

4B VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Vocational schools can be either state schools or private schools. Both types are regulated by the state. The state plays a leading role in planning, financing, organizing and monitoring the quality of education. In the transition to a market economy, the role of the social partners becomes apparent. The professional organizations state their requirements as regards staff training, they express their opinion regarding new professions and participate in the drafting of state requirements on the content of training and in improving the conditions for vocational training.

A special system has been developed for employer participation in the assessment of the pupil's professional competence.

4B.1 Organisation of the School

Secondary vocational education is provided in: Vocational secondary schools and Arts Schools covering grades 8/9 to 12. There are also vocational schools (from grade 6 or 7) offering 3-year training programs; and Vocational Colleges offering 2-year training programs after completed secondary education.

4B.2 Curriculum

The state educational requirements for the acquisition of professional qualifications specify the requirements under which the curricula and syllabi for each profession shall be worked out.

The studies are structured into three groups of subjects: **compulsory** (Bulgarian language and literature, a selected foreign language, history, geography, mathematics,

physics, chemistry, biology, philosophy, physical education, theory and practical training); **compulsory-elective** (1 or 2 subjects from comprehensive or vocational instruction, optional, but compulsory for study within the framework of the established hours of study per week and **elective** (subjects that feature/do not feature in the curriculum, which are optional and studied in addition to the compulsory hours). The compulsory-elective and elective instruction totals from 4 to 6 hours per week in the different training courses. The relation between theoretical and practical vocational training depends on the specific characteristics of the occupation being studied.

4B.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

The completion of secondary vocational education is certified with a school leaving certificate meeting the requirements of successful completion of secondary education, certificate for professional qualification, issued upon completion of vocational training and a certificate granting the right to practice a profession, issued for license requiring professions.

4B.4 Teachers

The teachers providing general instruction and theory classes acquire their basic qualifications in higher education institutions with a period of study of 4 to 5 years (8 to 10 semesters). All teachers are employed by the head under an employment contract in permanent posts with 18 to 22 teaching hours per week.

Teacher qualification can be furthered at the three Teacher Training Institutes, as well as in the free faculties of the technical, economic, agricultural, pedagogical and other higher education institutions. The corresponding higher education institutions and the Teacher Training Institutes are responsible for drafting the school curricula and syllabuses for in-service teacher training.

In-service teacher training aims to provide pedagogical qualification (for teachers who are engineers, economists, agronomists, etc.) or class-qualification (levels I or II).

4B.5 Statistics

Vocational education and training during the school year 2009/10 is carried out in 21 art schools, 422 vocational gymnasiums, 5 vocational schools and 39 vocational

colleges with enrollment after secondary education. The total number of the students in vocational education and training during the current school year is 164.8 thousand, and compared with the 2005/06 school year it has decreased by 36.1 thousand or 18.0 % and compared with the previous year – decreased by 3.9 thousand or 2.3 %.

Boys are predominant in vocational education and training and are 60.5 % of the total number of students.

The highest relative share is for students studying specialties in the field of 'Engineering and engineering trades' – 33.8 % from the students in programmes for attainment of a third level professional qualification and 31.1 % from those of a second level of professional qualification. The students are more interested also in the economic specialties in the field of 'Business and administration' – 17.7 % from the students in programmes for attainment of a third level professional qualification and 18.1 % from those of a second level of professional qualification.

During the present school year the total number of teachers working in VET schools is 14.6 thousand, of which 91.7 % are high educated with education-qualification degree 'Bachelor' or 'Master'.

In 2009, 33.4 thousand persons have graduated with attainment of diploma for secondary education in art schools, vocational gymnasiums and vocational schools. Without successful completion of matriculation exams have been 5.4 thousand or 13.8 % of total number of the graduates.

In 2009, second and third level of professional qualification has been acquired respectively by 16.8 and 8.3 thousand persons.

582 students have acquired first level of professional qualification in vocational schools and classes with enrollment after VI, VII and VII grade.

In vocational colleges with enrollment after completed secondary education,

1 651 people have acquired fourth level of professional qualification.

During the 2009/10 school year 5 378 students are enrolled in 63 private VET schools.

In the number of students for 2009/10 is also included 12.9 thousand persons aged 16 or more, who are enrolled in programmes for vocational training against payment in Vocational Training Centers, vocational gymnasiums and vocational colleges. According to the level of professional qualification, their distribution is the following:

first level – 4.6 thousand, second level –
4.6 thousand and third and forth –
3.6 thousand.

In comparison with the previous year the

number of enrolled students has decreased
with 3.1 thousand persons or 19.5 %.

5. INITIAL/VOCATIONAL TRAINING

5.1 Organisation

Important changes within the system of secondary vocational education have been introduced with the Vocational Education and Training Act.

Vocational schools can be either state schools or private schools. Both types are regulated by the state. The state plays a leading role in planning, financing, organizing and monitoring the quality of education. In the transition to a market economy, the role of the social partners becomes apparent. The professional organizations state their requirements as regards staff training, they express their opinion regarding new professions and participate in the drafting of state requirements on the content of training and in improving the conditions for vocational training. A special system has been developed for employer participation in the assessment of the pupil's professional competence.

The new Vocational Education and Training Act rules both the initial vocational training, which is part of the streamline education and continuing vocational training, provided for people age over 16.

Following the last developments in the legislation concerning the system of initial/vocational training, the apprenticeship system is under the responsibility of the employers and is regulated by the Labour Code.

The theoretical and practical part of the apprenticeship is the responsibility of the employers.

The training is provided in the company's training centres or in the schools of the formal vocational training under the request of employers.

5.2 Establishments

According to the new Law education/training establishments are: state and municipal training centres, company training centres vocational schools (*професионални училища/professionalni utchilishta*), and vocational colleges (*професионални колежи/professionalni koleji*).

Vocational schools (*Професионални училища*) will organize training as follows: 3 years after grade 6 (13 years), 2 years after grade 7 (14 years) and up to 4 year-courses after grade 8 (15 years). Students end the schools with different levels of vocational qualification at the level of basic education don't earn another educational level but only different vocational skills). Vocational colleges (*Професионални колежи*) will organize vocational training with duration up to 2 years after completion of secondary education.

5.3 Financing

The vocational training funding at state and municipal schools is provided from subsidies from the state budget.

Vocational training related to the implementation of activities referred to in the Employment Promotion Act, is funded by the state budget.

Vocational colleges and training centres collect fees for the training of individuals and legal entities.

5.4 Curriculum

The content of studies in the company training is structured according the company and branch training requirements.

The content of studies in the vocational training institutions and centres is structured according to the state requirements for training of a certain vocation.

5.5 Assessment

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act the vocational secondary schools, and vocational training centres may issue a document for professional qualification, which refer to the state requirements.

The company certifies the qualification, which is organised in the system of in-service training.

5.6 Teachers/Trainers

The teachers on theory in the vocational schools acquire their basic qualification at higher institutes with duration of studies equal to 4-5 years.

The trainers on practice training acquire their basic qualification at professional colleges within the system of higher education with duration of studies equal to 3 years (6 semesters). The principal under a contract of labour on permanent posts employs all teachers with 18 to 24 academic hours per week.

Teacher qualification may be promoted at the three Institutes for Teachers Training as well as at the free faculties of the technical, economic, agricultural, pedagogical and other higher education institutions.

The promotion of teacher qualification aims the acquisition of pedagogical qualification (for teachers who are engineers, economists, agronomists, etc.) or the acquisition of class-qualification (level II or I). 2 255 teachers are acknowledged to be first or second class qualified and of these 374 of them have a first class qualification and 1 881 have a second class qualification.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the major responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MEYS) is related to the regulatory framework concerning the higher education system, by establishing conditions for its development in line with European trends and the Bologna Process, for the purpose of preserving its main achievements – accessibility, quality and academic nature. The Higher Education Act grants academic autonomy to higher education institutions and serves as a reference point for all aspects of higher education. The MEYS and universities make particular efforts to develop the following priority areas:

Mobility – the state encourages all opportunities for mobility in the country and abroad granted to students at Bulgarian higher schools, including through their participation in mobility schemes based on international and bilateral agreements. The exchange of teachers, students and PhD students with other foreign higher education institutions and organisations is one of the criteria of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA), which grants institutional accreditation.

Social dimension – strengthening of social dimensions and social cohesion. The adopted Student and PhD Student Loans Act (promulgated, State Gazette, issue 69/05.08.2008) is meant to facilitate the studies of students and PhD students at the higher schools of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Data collection – The MEYS has set up an information system, which contains:

- (a) a register of higher schools recorded wherein shall be data concerning their primary units, affiliates and the professional areas and specialties opened by them;
- (b) a register of the full- and part-time faculty of higher schools;
- (c) a register of all existing students and doctoral candidates and drop-outs by educational degrees and professional areas;
- (d) a register of the alumni.
- (e) a register of the banks which grant loans under the Granting Loans to Student and Doctoral Candidate Loans Act.

Employability – adoption of a Lifelong Learning Strategy; improvement of the practices of impartial recognition of higher education for the purpose of enhancing employability.

The European Higher Education Area in the global context – development of a draft National Qualification Framework in the context of the Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning; accession of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency as a full member of the ENQA; participation as a founding member in the General Assembly of the European Quality Assurance Register as well as in the operational activity of the Register.

The amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) naturally arise from the Bologna Process in Bulgarian conditions and concern: the funding model of higher education, enabling the financial autonomy of higher education institutions; introduction of modern forms of higher education management guaranteeing publicity and transparency; development of concrete criteria for accreditation and a quality control system in education. The amendments to the HEA introduced changes also in higher schools. An explicit ban was introduced on organisation of the teaching process outside the main units of the higher education institutions. Some of the changes were meant to strengthen the external control over the work of higher schools in relation to the enforcement of the HEA and the transparent spending of public funds.

The number of newly admitted students sharply increased which enabled the stronger participation in programmes for higher education degree acquisition as a component of the knowledge-based society. To enhance the higher schools accountability and responsibility in public funding spending, the HEA sets out that state subsidy has to be based on the actual number of admitted students and not on the number of vacant places declared prior to the admission. Furthermore, it provides for the introduction of financial sanctions for those higher schools which do not comply with the capacity defined by the NEAA. The other amendments to the law are related to the enhanced transparency of higher education management through the establishment of councils of trustees, including external persons such as representatives of employers, sector organisations, etc.

The MEYS works hard on the promotion of the cooperation between the business, social partners and higher education institutions. This is meant to ensure the suitable link between the requirements on the labour market and the quality of the workforce

potential for the purpose of providing long-term stable employment for the young. The increase in the number of the Career Development Centres opened over the past years at higher schools have set a good example for the establishment of stable partnership between universities and business. Such centres are operational at more than 35 (out of 51) higher schools.

Higher schools can be classified according to their type as well as ownership. In terms of type they are: universities specialised higher schools and independent colleges; ownership divides them into: state-owned and private. The total number of higher schools in Bulgaria is 51, including 37 public and 14 private.

Universities offer educational programmes in a wide range of majors in at least three of four areas of knowledge (humanities, natural sciences, social and technical sciences), granting Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees.

Specialised higher schools provide education mainly in one of the major areas of knowledge, which is indicated in the institution's name. Even specialized higher schools are entitled to have the title university, which is conditional upon the compliance of Master and Doctoral programmes with the provisions of the law.

Independent colleges are entities providing more vocational orientated higher education. They offer 3-year programmes of training which completion entitles graduates to the qualification of "Professional Bachelor ..." in the particular vocational area /ISCED'97 – 5B level.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is independent from the government and is responsible for quality assurance in Bulgarian higher education. There are established procedures, monitoring and control activities. The NEAA has defined structured criteria and evaluation and accreditation procedures, and they are available to the general public. The curricular and institutional accreditation usually complies with the requirements and good practices set out in the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance. The NEAA has introduced a system of regular involvement of students in external quality evaluation procedures. The international relations with partner agencies enable the NEAA to be part of the European community of quality assurance in higher education.

Ordinance No 21 of the Minister of Education and Science introduced the credit transfer and accumulation system, compatible with the ECTS, containing requirements and procedures for the credit transfer and accumulation system for separate degrees as

well as the comparison of the six-grade evaluation system with the letter-based evaluation scale of the ECTS. Since academic 2004/05, all higher schools apply this system. An amendment to the Higher Education Act (promulgated in State Gazette, issue 48 of 2004) and the adopted Ordinance on State Requirements for Content of Main Documents Issued by Higher Schools (promulgated in State Gazette, issue 75 of 2004) regulate the right of higher schools to issue a Diploma Supplement to graduates with a Bachelor or Master degree, acquired pursuant to the Higher Education Act. It is issued in Bulgarian and one of the most widespread European languages – in most cases, this is English;

The Diploma Supplements issued in Bulgaria meet the requirements for format, content and attributes of the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.

6.1 Admission requirements

Over the past years, has emerged a trend of transition from an elite to mass system of quality higher education. Higher schools prove to simplify their admission models in order to attract more students (they are offered preliminary admission exams; dates for exams are fixed; more rounds of rankings are introduced; entrance tests are adopted besides the traditional written exam).

The majority of higher schools which have a college within their structure offer college graduates the opportunity to continue their education at a Master level.

An Academic Council decision can entitle the higher school to admit without competition applicants who have passed the matriculation exams in accordance with the Educational Level, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act.

Higher schools provide facilitated admission conditions and procedure for people affected by social exclusion and disadvantaged groups. They include applicants who have passed the admission examinations and are: disabled and of lower occupational capacity; war disabled people; double orphans; mothers of three and more children.

Students, PhD students and postgraduates who are citizens of EU member states, EEA countries or the Swiss Confederation can be admitted at Bulgarian higher education institutions and pay tuition fees under the conditions and procedure set up for Bulgarian nationals. This is an important step for the expansion of the European dimensions of higher education and the opportunities for equal access of young people willing to complete their higher education in Bulgaria.

People of dual citizenship, including Bulgarian nationality, pay half of the amount of the set up fee, when they apply and are admitted under the procedure set by the Council of Ministers. Students and PhD students admitted under intergovernmental agreements which regulate the issue on a reciprocal basis do not pay fees.

Foreign students, PhD students and postgraduates who are citizens of non-EU countries and are admitted to study at higher education institutions pay tuition fees fixed for foreign students, PhD students and postgraduates.

Double orphans, disabled people and persons of lower occupational capacity, war disabled people, children brought up at orphanages until they come of age, students at military schools and PhD students during their last two years of PhD studies are exempt from fees at state-owned higher education institutions. They are entitled to further exemptions regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the higher education institution.

The Student and PhD Student Loans Act was passed in 2008 (promulgated in State Gazette, issue 69/05.08.2008). It is meant to support the studies of students and PhD students at higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria. The maximum amount of loans to cover tuition fees is formed on the basis of payable fees for a period equal to the remaining period of studies of the borrower, in line with the curriculum for the respective major and the degree or the scientific title. The Student Loans Act was amended on 1 January 2010 to regulate the conditions and procedure for loans to students and PhD students with state subsidies. This is meant to improve the conditions for access to higher education.

Students or PhD students who are Bulgarian citizens or nationals of another EU member state, EEA country or the Swiss Confederation, and who as of the moment of filing the loan application meet all of the following criteria: they are under 35 years of age and are regular students in a Bachelor (Bachelor or Professional Bachelor in...) or Master degree programme or a PhD programme at a law-compliant public or private higher school or a scientific organisation as referred to in Article 47(1) of the Higher Education Act – are entitled to apply for loans. Loans are extended for whole or part of the studies period in line with the curriculum and cover: (1) the fees for the studies; (2) the subsistence allowance. The state provides financial support to students and PhD students by providing guarantees to the lending banks. The amount of state guarantees approved by the Council of Ministers is indicated in the State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria for the

respective year.

A National Council of Student and PhD Student Loans has been set up at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.

6.2 Academic year

The academic year is divided in two semesters and lasts about 9 months (from October to June). Each higher school is free to set the term dates.

6.3 Courses

Bulgaria is one of the few countries which had an established three-cycle system and introduced degrees upon the signing of the Bologna Declaration. The system functions well as there is a clear-cut division and distinction of curricula and syllabus of every single degree. There are constant efforts for the update and coordination of the contemporary requirements and the quantity and quality allocation of new knowledge, skills and competences, typical of every separate cycle. They have to be of academic importance and to be in line with market demand. The purpose is to achieve quality balance in the distribution of learning burden among the separate degrees. The regulatory framework in Bulgaria provides good opportunities and clear principles enabling the flexible transition within the higher education system. The autonomous higher schools are entitled to develop their own curricula and syllabus and to apply them in practice. There is also flexibility in relation to teaching methods. Various universities have significant experience in the use of flexible pedagogical approaches and methods of teaching, specific for every professional field and specialty.

Scientific organizations such as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture and other offer educational programmes for accruing Doctoral degree in specialities they have been accredited for.

6.4 Assessment/qualifications

The methods for assessment and marking the knowledge and skills of students are defined in the curricula and syllabuses. The student's knowledge is mainly evaluated by written examinations as specified in the curricula. Assessment is based on a six-grade system with 6 being the highest grade point. The mark 1 is not used. A grade point of at least 3 must be achieved to pass an

examination.

Pursuant to the Higher Education Act (1995) and the Regulation on State Requirements for Acquisition of Higher Education Level and Bachelor's and Master's Degree, the Bulgarian higher education system organises – after completion of secondary education – studies consisting of the following degrees:

1. Bachelor's degree, obtained if in compliance of the curriculum the following requirements are met:

- At least 180 credits for a period of studies of not less than three years – “Professional Bachelor in ...” (ISCED'97 – 5B level);

The major characteristics include: fundamental theoretical knowledge in the respective professional area; specialized, technological and practical knowledge, skills and competences in the specialty; ICT skills and competences; other additional skills and competences; continuing education – access to at least 2-year courses for the acquisition of a Master's degree in a major of the same professional area.

- At least 240 credits for a period of studies of at least 4 years – Bachelor's (ISCED – 5A level);

The major characteristics include: main multi-field knowledge, skills and competences, related to the nature of the professional area of the specialty; a wide range of job opportunities and direct access to the labour market; continuing education – access to Master degree courses of a minimum duration of 1 year.

2. Master degree (ISCED'97 – 5A level) obtained if the following requirements are met:

- At least 300 credits in compliance with the curriculum for a period of studies of not less than 5 years;
- At least 120 credits after the acquired Professional Bachelor in... degree;
- At least 60 credits after the acquired Bachelor degree;

Major characteristics: extended fundamental studies coupled with specialized studies in the respective major; (based on the professional field), specialised studies and extended knowledge, skills and competences acquired at Bachelor level; complementary multi-field and interdisciplinary training of

Bachelor's or Master's degree holders in a different field; extended theoretical studies of scientific orientation and specialised studies in the major and its professional field; familiarity with the fundamentals of scientific and research work, applied science and/or creative (artistic) work.

Doctoral studies are the last third cycle of the national higher education qualification framework. It complies with the requirements of the framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The topics of doctoral programmes correspond to the specialties in the classification of specialties of researchers (State Gazette No 81 of 1995).

A **diploma of a completed degree of higher education** (*Диплома за завършена степен на висшето образование*) is issued by the higher schools and are recognized by the State when the training of the student meets the requisite State Requirements. A diploma of a completed degree is granted after successful fulfilment of the curriculum.

Graduates with Bachelor's degree may continue their education Master degree or to practice their profession. Graduates with Master degree may continue their education at Doctoral degree or to practice their profession.

Diplomas of higher education issued by the higher schools prior to the entry into force of the new Higher Education Act grant to their holders the rights of graduates with a Master degree. Holders of a *Diploma za kandidat na naukite* enjoy the rights of a *Doctor*.

Under the Academic Staff Development Act there is also an **academic title of the Doctor of Sciences**. This degree is conferred on scholars engaging independently in pure research, after defense of a dissertation containing particularly important theoretical generalizations and a notable scientific contribution to the respective field of knowledge.

The higher education institutions and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences may also grant the honorary title **Doctor honoris causa** to Bulgarian and foreign citizens credited for their contribution to the advancement of science and higher education.

6.5 Teachers

The **academic staff** occupies the following positions: professors, associated professors and assistant professors. Members of the academic staff could be employed on

permanent or part-time basis. There are no special legal regulations concerning their in-service training.

6.6 Statistics

The total number of the students in Bulgaria enrolled in the four education-qualification degrees ('Professional bachelor', 'Bachelor', 'Master' and 'Doctor') in the academic year 2009/10 is 287.1 thousand and compared with the previous year – increased by 12.9 thousand.

'Professional bachelor' education-qualification degree

During the 2009/10 academic year for acquiring of the degree 'Professional bachelor' there are 28.9 thousand students totally, of which Bulgarian citizens are 28.7 thousand, or 99.1 %. From the total number of the students 20.1 thousand or 69.5 % students are enrolled in private colleges.

The number of the students in colleges has increased with 4.4 % in comparison with the previous 2008/09 academic year.

In the structure of the students by narrow fields of education, the highest relative share is that of students in the field of Business and Administration – 42.2 % followed by the field of Social and Behavioural Science – 19.2 % and Personal Services – 12.5 %.

In 2009 the degree 'Professional bachelor' has been acquired by 6.8 thousand students of whom 98.5 % are Bulgarian citizens. Among graduated students the highest number is that of the graduates in the narrow fields of Business and Administration – 3.0 thousand or 44.4 % of the total, followed by graduates in the field of Personal Services – 1.2 thousand or 17.9 % and Social and Behavioural science – 0.9 thousand or 12.8 % of the total number of graduates.

The number of teaching staff in the colleges is 1 385 persons, of whom 608 or 43.9 % are on a full time employment.

'Bachelor' and 'Master' education-qualification degrees

During the 2009/10 academic year the number of the students, in the two education-qualification degrees 'Bachelor' and 'Master' is 254.3 thousand students. Of them 244.5 thousand or 96.2 % are Bulgarian citizens. The students – Bulgarian citizens, has increased by 38.1 thousand in comparison with 2005/06 academic year or 18.4 % and by 11.1 thousand or 4.8 % in comparison with the previous academic year.

During the 2009/10 academic year the

number of foreign students in universities and specialized higher schools is 9.8 thousand or with 6.7 % more than the previous academic year. The highest share of foreign students studying in Bulgaria comes from Turkey – 44.1 % of the totals, followed by students from the former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia – 16.9 % and Greece – 9.7 %.

In the structure of the students by narrow fields of education, the highest relative share is that of students in the field of Business and Administration – 23.0 %, followed by the field of Engineering and Engineering Trades – 14.1 %. The share of students is the lowest in the fields of Veterinary and Life sciences – 0.6 %, and Mathematics and Statistics – 0.3 %.

In private universities are enrolled 42.9 thousand students or 16.9 % of the total number of the students. A constant increase of the students in the private universities is being observed since 2005/06. In comparison with the previous academic year their number has increased with 9.8 %, and in comparison with the 2005/06 academic year the increase is 26.7 %.

The number of newly enrolled students – Bulgarian citizens for 2009/10 academic year is 49 635 (49 763 for previous academic year).

The students, who continuing their education in Master programmes after an educational-qualification degree graduation (Professional Bachelor or Bachelor) is 23.7 thousand. Of them 2.3 thousand, or 9.6 %, have been enrolled in post-professional bachelors' programmes.

In 2009, 50.4 thousand students have graduated with the degrees of 'Bachelor' and 'Master', of which 48.9 thousand are Bulgarian citizens. The relative share of students who have graduated is highest in the fields of Business and Administration – 32.6 %, Social and Behavioural Sciences – 14.1 %, Engineering and Engineering Trades – 12.6 %.

11.3 % of the total number of graduates in 'Bachelor' and 'Master' qualification degrees have graduated in private universities.

The teaching staff in the universities and specialized higher schools is 21.3 thousand during 2009/10 academic year. Regularly employed are 13.3 thousand or 62.3 % of the total.

'Doctor' qualification and scientific degree

As of 31.12.2009, 3 850 Ph.D. students are enrolled in Bulgaria, as 50.5 % of them are women. In comparison with the previous year 2008/09 their number has decreased with 99 persons or 2.5 %. In such a way, the trend of decrease is extended (started from

2005/06) after its increase throughout the past years. The foreign Ph.D. students in Bulgaria are 225 or 5.8 % of the total number of the students.

In the structure of Ph.D. male students by narrow fields of education, the highest relative share is that of those in the field of Engineering and Engineering Trades – 23.9 %, followed by the one in the field of Health – 12.7 %, Humanities – 9.0 % and the Social and Behavioural Science – 8.9 %. In the structure of the female students by narrow fields of education, the highest relative share is in the field of Social and Behavioural Science – 13.9 %, followed by those in the field of Humanities – 12.1 % and Health – 12.0 %.

During the 2009 the number of newly enrolled Ph.D. students is 1 193 from which 576 or 48.3 % are women. The number of the new entrants has increased by 29.1 % compared with the previous academic year.

In 2009 a 'Doctor' degree has been acquired by 636 persons from which 327 females.

7. ADULT EDUCATION

7.1 Specific legislative framework

The Council of Ministers drafted and adopted the following strategic documents in compliance with the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning:

- *National Lifelong Learning Strategy (NLLS)* for the 2008-2013 period, which defines the concept framework for lifelong learning and the measures taken to ensure the necessary regulatory conditions for its implementation. It recognizes the specificity of the educational system and the acting strategic documents on a national level and is implemented through annual action plans.
- *National Continuing Vocational Training Strategy (2005-2010)*.
- *Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2008-2015)*.

To implement the government's strategic priority for "improvement of the access to lifelong learning" Action Plan 2010-2011 was drafted to put into practice the national lifelong learning strategy. It outlines the following measures:

- introduction of two-year compulsory pre-primary education;
- development of a system of study and forecasts of the demands for workforce with certain qualification – development of a public-private partnership model in the field of vocational education and training;
- development of a system of validation of the outcome of non-formal training and informal learning.

The National Continuing Vocational Training Strategy for 2005-2010, adopted under a Council of Ministers decision of 2004 is implemented through annual action plans. The plans include particular actions and measures for the acquisition, extension and improvement of vocational qualification for the purpose of strengthening employability as well as promotion of the professional career and individual development of people over 16.

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (1991) sets out the major principles of free development of education (Article 23) and the right of every Bulgarian citizen to education (Article 53), which are further developed in a

number of laws and by-laws.

The draft School Education Act lays down the requirements for acquisition of key competences targeting personal and professional development as well as the opportunities for provision of adult education at school and validation of the results of informal learning and non-formal training.

The Vocational Education and Training Act provides the legal basis of initial and continuing vocational training for the purpose of guaranteeing its quality in line with the demand on the labour market; it defines the functions of the vocational education and training system in the preparation of citizens for their realization in the economy and society, by ensuring the conditions for acquisition and constant improvement of their professional qualification;

The Employment Promotion Act regulates the introduction of active measures on the labour market meant to boost the employment rate and enhance the qualification of the workforce; it introduces incentives for employers in the training of employed people to maintain and enhance their qualification and of unemployed people in the context of lifelong learning; it regulates training types organised and funded by the Employment Agency as well as the conditions for their implementation.

According to VETA and Employment Promotion Act, CVT training can be provided by all institutions of the formal education sector, private and public training centres, agencies, municipalities, social partner organisation and enterprises.

The Human Resources Development Operational Programme (2007-2013), co-funded by the ESF and the state budget, offers opportunities for adult training – literacy courses, acquisition of key competences and professional qualification.

Increasing the employment rate through offering more flexible job opportunities; encouraging entrepreneurship; providing social and economic integration for groups in unequal position on the labor market (poorly educated, Roma population, long-term unemployed, etc.)

7.2 Administration

There are several institutions that share the responsibilities for decision-making and planning

The Council of Ministers is responsible for setting the state education policy.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MEYS) as specialised body of the

Council of Ministers is responsible for the management of the education system. In this context the MEYS has the power to propose the education policy and law. Furthermore the MEYS exercises control over the activities of all types of schools, including the approval and implementation of curricula. After a governmental change in 2009, the VET- and Education Departments in the MEYS have been merged into one Department, with two Units.

Branch ministries are co-responsible for education and training in different sectors (including updating the list of vocations and standard development).

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is a state body at the Council of Ministers in charge of licensing activities in the vocational education and training system as well as coordination of institutions involved in vocational guidance, training and education. Under the law, the NAVET coordinates, regulates and develops policies of quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) in Bulgaria and licenses vocational education and training activities.

The NAVET develops and endorses licensing criteria and procedures and the relevant documentation; it issues and revokes vocational training and vocational guidance licenses; it develops and submits to the Minister of Education, Youth and Science a list of professions in vocational education and training, state educational requirements for acquisition of qualifications in different professions; it develops and endorses single requirements for the conditions, organisation and content of vocational training in different professions, whose exercise requires a licence granted by vocational training centres (VTC); it coordinates the drafting of strategies for development and improvement of vocational education and training; it assists for the international recognition of vocational education and training documents; it establishes and keeps a register of VTC and Information and Vocational Guidance Centres.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLOSP) is responsible for training of employed and unemployed. The MLOSP develops the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) for consultation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, the Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health and social partners, and for approval of the Council of Ministers. The NEAP is one of financial instrument for implementation of training initiatives. Currently, the training of employed and unemployed people is funded under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

The Employment Agency (EA) is the Executive Agency at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy involved in the implementation of state policy of employment promotion. The EA is responsible only for active labour market measures (including training), together with its 9 regional – and local labour offices.

Tri-partite Advisory Councils and Committees: The work of the MLSP is complemented by a variety of Councils and Committees, some of them with a particular mandate for training.

The National Council for Employment Promotion, established in 2002, gives its opinion on the implementation of the employment policy and National employment plan.

The National Council for Vocational Qualification of the Workforce at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy coordinates the development of national policy and strategies for training for the acquisition of vocational qualification of unemployed and employed people; it establishes conditions for interaction between representative organisations of employers and workers and employees at a national level in relation to lifelong learning; it coordinates the demand for training for acquisition of vocational qualification of the unemployed.

The Employment Committees, on a regional level, also support the state policy on employment and training for acquiring professional qualification. They develop the regional employment plans, including training, for inclusion in the NEAP, and approved by MLOSP.

The European Funds, International Programmes and Projects Directorate General at the MLSP perform the functions of a managing authority of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme and is in charge of its management and implementation.

7.3 Funding

In the system of higher education there is tuition fees which vary from institution to institution.

The state funds the administrative and financial management of the state and municipal vocational schools, vocational training centers and vocational information and a career guidance centers.

The state allocates targeted funds from the state budget for the implementation of active policy on the labour market, i.e. for the training of employed and unemployed people

(motivation training, vocational training, key competences, literacy courses). Adult training is funded also under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

Vocational colleges and vocational training centres collect tuition fees from legal and physical entities.

7.4 Organisation

The target groups are represented by:

Unemployed, groups in unequal position on the labor market (young people, women, people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, people from the minorities, unemployed above 50 years of age, etc.), ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, employed or unemployed people who need to acquire new skills, adequate to the economic changes;

High school and university students, teachers employed in the system of vocational education and training;

Unemployed people who are willing to start their own businesses. Young entrepreneurs. Representatives of the groups in unequal position on the labour market who have the capacity to start their own businesses. Micro and small enterprises up to 2 years after their establishment;

People employed in companies which need modernization in terms of work organization and which need help in adapting to the structural changes in the economy; employers on national, sector and branch levels;

Women with low qualifications and low educational status; women from the minority groups; employed women who need additional skills to keep their jobs and to be given an opportunity to make a career, mothers of children up to 7 years of age, mothers of children with disabilities.

The main types of institutions involved in the adult education are as follows:

- public and municipal general incl. evening schools;
- vocational schools;
- vocational colleges;
- vocational training centres;
- vocational information and career guidance centres;
- higher education institutions.

The vocational schools offer evening and corresponding courses for adults in the field of management, hotel and catering, automobile building, construction, mechanics, agriculture, transport, etc.

The starting qualification for enrolment in the different types of institutions depends on the requirements stated in the legislation for their management.

Within the scope of Vocational Education and Training Act the courses in four qualification levels are offered. The entrance requirements depend on the level of education. The programmes offered are mainly with vocational orientation without providing the acquisition of education qualification at higher level. In general these programmes are designed for holders of basic or secondary education. The vocational qualifications awarded could be with different levels of skills and competence.

Continuing vocational training (CVT) in Bulgaria is defined as training to be delivered to persons over 16 years, which are no longer in the formal education system. It addresses employed and unemployed.

CVT – Active Employment Measure

The Bulgarian case seems to be that CVT mainly takes place under active employment measures of the MLSP, and is mainly targeted at unemployed.

"Labour market training" includes training as a qualification component under a certain programme or measure and the qualification courses contracted by the Labour Offices.

CVT provided by schools (trends and numbers)

School based CVT takes place in vocational training schools, vocational gymnasium, vocational colleges and art schools, vocational classes for acquisition of vocational qualification in basic and secondary schools, and specialised schools (for people with special education needs). Training is delivered for employed and unemployed, with some schools providing training courses for the local labour offices. There are no figures available on how many people are trained and in which sectors and how many schools deliver training for the labour offices. Provision of CVT by schools would allow for income generation, but the money needs to be paid back to the Ministry.

The school based CVT leads to the acquisition of vocational qualification for a vocation included in the List of Vocations or to the acquisition of qualification for part of vocation (for one or more modules – short training courses). In this context the training delivered to adults follows the curricula and methodology applied for schoolchildren. The surveys show that neither the content nor the methodology is appropriate to deliver adult training and that reform would be required. The introduction of a framework programme F that has been newly introduced in the VET

Act, aims at tailor-made CVT by VET schools, but has not been defined and implementation has not started yet.

Funding for school based CVT is primarily ensured by the active measures funds and by enterprises, assigning certain staff training in schools.

CVT provided by public and private training centres

The training centres organise training for acquisition of vocational qualification, acquisition of qualification for part of vocation, updating of existing vocational qualification, and motivational training, training for key competencies (ICT, foreign languages, etc.). They mainly organise short-term courses for unemployed financed by the Local Employment office.