

Achieving the Lisbon Goal: **The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems**

Country Report: Bulgaria

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This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: *Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET*, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.



Theme 1: Progress of the National VET Systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon

1. Strategies and Barriers for Improving the Status, Flexibility and Attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET)

Raise the status of IVET

The Bulgarian Government has attached priority to development of VET as a part of general strategy for LLL, which has been emphasised in many policy documents.

The transformation of the VET system to better meet the needs of market oriented economy and individual needs is progressing step by step. In the beginning of 2004 the Ministry of Education and Science launched public discussion on a draft strategy for development of the system of Bulgarian Secondary Education including the IVET within the next five years. For the time being it is still under discussion and there are no clear indicators if it will be adopted.

The major achievements in the IVET system so far can be defined as follows:

- In 2003 the new list of vocations was approved, which is the basic document for planning and management of the IVET system;
- In 2003 framework programmes for acquisition of vocational qualification were approved;
- The process of elaboration of new State Education Requirements (standards) for the VET programmes has started;
- National qualification examinations for the theoretical part of VET programmes were introduced for students who will be receiving second level of vocational qualification;
- All VET schools were transformed following the new requirements of the VET Law introduced in 1999.

Further information on the achievements listed is presented in the chapters to follow.

Improve the attractiveness of IVET

From the school year 2000/01 the secondary education system was extended with one year. The extension has increased the duration of the entire pre-university education from 11 to 12 years (comprising primary education: grades 1-4; basic education: grades 5-8; upper secondary education: grades 9-12). The extension applies to the new entrants in upper secondary education.

The number of students enrolled in IVET programmes as percentage of all students in secondary education is slightly decreasing over the years but for the school year 2003/04 it remains on the same level as the preceding year – 1998/99 – 57.8%, 2001/02 – 56.3%, 2002/03 55.7%, 2003/04 – 55.8%.

The types of programmes provided in VET schools and percentage of enrolled students could be summarized as follows:

- Art schools provide course lasting four years and leading to the third level of vocational qualification and the secondary education diploma. Art schools remain with constant attractiveness for students – 1.8% of all VET students from 1999/2000 onwards.
- Vocational Gymnasia, which provide five or six year programmes leading to third level of vocational qualification and secondary education diploma attract an increasing number of more students over the years – from 66.8% in 1999/2000 to 75.0% in 2003/2004.
- Vocational Gymnasia or four year Vocational school, providing four year programmes and leading to second level of vocational qualification and secondary education diploma have seen their attractiveness decline from 26.3% in 1999/2000 to 20.7% of total enrolments in 2003/2004.
- Vocational Schools after 6th and 7th grade, (enrolling students after sixth of seventh year of education) providing three year training and leading to basic education diploma and first level of vocational qualification have a minor role, where the number of enrolled students have decreased from 1.2% to 0.9%.
- Finally the vocational schools after 8th grade lasting two years and providing access to basic education diploma and first level of vocational qualification have quite limited enrolments of only 0.2% in 1999/2000 and 0.4% in 2003/2004.
- Post secondary vocational colleges providing only fourth level of vocational qualification through programmes of two year duration have been attracting less students over the years from 3.5% in 1999/2000 to 1.3% in 2003/2004.

As evident there are opportunities for acquisition of the different VET programmes in different types of schools. An interesting feature of the Bulgarian VET system is the possibility for provision of VET programmes with different duration in different types of schools. For example the vocation gymnasia can provide a five or six years VET programme leading to acquisition of third level of vocational qualification but it can also provide programmes of duration four years which lead to acquisition of second level of vocational qualification.

The data shows that there are certain vocational programmes which attract more students – technical sciences, business administration and personal services.

Although we observe high interest in programmes such as technical sciences we should not underestimate the fact that often the schools are not always prepared to diversify the offer of vocational programmes to match the changing interests of students, due to the lack of appropriate teachers and facilities.

Increase the flexibility of IVET

Conditions to ensure flexibility of the system have recently been created. As described in the previous chapter providing students with the opportunity to obtain different levels of vocational qualification in upper secondary education, as well as a number of possibilities for continuing training (recognition of vocational competences acquired through previous training being under development) , is a new, currently implemented policy of MES.

When the Bulgarian VET Law was introduced in 1999 it also introduced Framework programmes for VET. At the end of 2003 six framework programmes have been approved, applicable both to initial VET and to CVT. The programmes provide the framework of the training specifying the conditions for access to first, second, third or fourth level of qualification, for acquisition of part of skills for vocational qualification or updating and upgrading of already existing qualification. The programmes can be applied either for students in IVET schools or for persons over 16 years of age undertaking CVT.

As explained in the previous chapter the existing types of vocational schools and vocational gymnasias provide VET programmes with length lasting between 2 and 6 years, respectively leading to vocational qualification from first (low skilled) to third level of qualification. It is important to see that graduates of the IVET schools receive also diploma for secondary education, excluding those in vocational training programmes at ISCED 3C level. However if the student performs poorly the system ensures possibility that s/he receives only certificate for secondary education and in addition a certain level of vocational qualification. The difference between the certificate and diploma for secondary education is that the diploma allows continuation in higher education e.g. university, while the certificate is issued to prove that the student has attended the classes during the secondary education course. The idea of the certificate is to support the students' transition in the labour market, because before introducing the certificate those who performed poorly and failed at final exams although having attended vocational gymnasias had to leave the system with basic education diploma.

The secondary education diploma verifies the knowledge on the general subjects. In all IVET schools at the end of the course of education and training the students are expected to pass theoretical and practical exams in the vocation for acquisition of vocational qualification.

The system also allows a student to sit the exams for obtaining the vocational qualification after the finalization of the normal course of studies when s/he decides to so.

Another important step was the transformation and renaming of the VET schools, which was completed in 2003/04. Given the evolution of the legislation since 1991 and more specifically the VET Law adopted in 1999 the schools within the formal VET system were classified into two basic types – the first one are the so called four year Vocational schools and Vocational Gymnasias (4 to 6 years) which provide secondary education and vocational qualification. The second type are vocational schools (in certain cases classes) usually providing two or three years VET programmes upon completion of grades 6,7 and 8 which lead to vocational qualification but without acquisition of secondary education diploma e.g. students graduate with basic education (see above chapter 2).

As far as the modular approach is concerned the Phare project “BG 9506, Vocational Education and Training; Education; Research, Science and Technology”, which started in 1996 had the main objective of improving quality in national VET system. For this purpose 18 standards were elaborated on a pilot basis and modular approach was introduced in the VET system. A total of 33 pilot schools from 18 towns were involved in the project for approval of the modular curriculum approach for vocational training in 18 vocations. After the finalization of the project, for the period 1999-2004 a total of 31 VET schools introduced the modular approach. In this way for current 2003/2004 school year in Bulgaria 64 VET schools (288 classes and 7000 students) are implementing modular approach. The number of trained teachers on modular approach for 2004 is 594 (compared to 217 in 1999).

The main barriers to achieving these objectives

In the period till 1989 a lot of vocational schools were established, which at present do not have the equipment to provide qualitative vocational training. In the course of the transition period, due to demographic reasons the number of students has decreased. The only solution for modernization of the equipment seems to be the Phare programme. However even in the selected schools benefiting from the Phare programmes support there are some problems concerning the renewal of equipment such as delays in concluding contracts and etc.

Another important issue is the optimization of vocational schools network. Although the Ministry of Education reports that it has been finalized it is difficult to benchmark the progress since there was not any official document describing the end target of the network optimization. However statistical data indicates some progress since the total number of VET schools in last 6 years has decreased from 553 in 1998/99 to 496 in 2003/04.

There are also certain difficulties in implementing the state plan for students' enrolment in the different programmes and study fields. The plan is drafted in accordance with the National plan for economic development and having in mind the priority branches for each region. The regional administration and principals of some schools financed by the state or the municipalities, express disagreement towards the optimization of the school network. Their arguments are that students should have possibility to study in their localities. The municipalities even finance classes with minimal number of students. Often courses on popular professions are financed even though there are registered unemployed in this profession.

There is low motivation of VET schools to be engaged in delivery of CVT courses. The reason is linked to financial requirements related to centralized management of schools' budget and return of all incomes to MES. In this way schools could not use at least part of what would be generated as an income from CVT courses for improvement of facilities in necessary equipment.

2. Reducing the number of early school leavers

Important indicator of the implementation of the right to education and of the improvement of the access to education is the enrolment rate in primary and secondary education. The participation in education of children aged 5 to 14 (98.0% in 2002 and 98.2% in 2003) in the country is close to the EU average (99.2% in 2000). More substantial is the difference in participation rates between Bulgaria and EU countries as regards the 15–19 age group. While the net rate for Bulgaria is 70.5% (2002) and 74.2% in 2003, it is 81.3% average for EU (“Education at a Glance OECD Indicators” OECD 2003). Regarding the completion rate for upper secondary education (20-24 years) in 2003 it was 75.6 % in Bulgaria compared to the EU average of 76.8% (2010: 85%).

According to Eurostat data the rate of early school leavers follows an increasing trend (from 20.3% in 2001, and 21.0% in 2002 to 22.4% in 2003). Having in mind that the EU 25 average is currently at 15.9% and the EU 2010 target of 10%, priority measures should be taken to tackle this problem.

The drop outs from the system are reported to account for 3.0% in 2002/2003 (1998/1999 3.1%, 1999/2000 – 2.6%, 2000/2001 – 2.9%, 2001 – 2002 – 2.7%). There is no data for drop outs by ethnic groups, however estimations of Ministry of Education and science suggest that most of the drop outs in basic education are children from Roma origin. Since the education in Bulgaria is obligatory until 16 years of age those who drop out of the system and are aged below 16 have to be enrolled again in the next school year.

For students from the rural areas the drop out rate is even higher 2000/01:4.7%, 2001/2002: 4.2%, 2002/03: 4.5%.

Drop out rate from VET system during the last three years is 2000/01:3.1%, 2001/2002: 3.1%, 2002/03: 3.5%.

The steps undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to address the drop out issue are legislative initiatives (Social Assistance Act) which include measures of the Government for encouraging parents to send their children to school, etc. The approach and measures adopted to avoid and overcome the negative aftermaths aim at eliminating or reducing the impact of the main reasons for the current situation, such as families’ poor social and financial condition; insufficient motivation or absence of motivation of the pupils on one hand and the family and public environment on the other hand to acquire education and qualification in view of future participation in the social and economic life; poor cooperation between the educational system and the public authorities and communities; shortcomings and deficiencies in the organization and the contents of the education (inappropriate forms and methods of education, structure and volume of the curricula), poor Bulgarian language command, etc; the imperfections of the territorial education infrastructure, in particular the remoteness of schools, transport issues, etc.

In this same direction, the Ministry of Education has undertaken the following steps:

- Through the Regional Inspectorates of Education, MES makes biannual surveys into the number of drop-outs and the reasons for their early school leaving. The predominant reasons invoked by vocational secondary schools point to those already cited in the previous paragraph.

- A Consultative Council on education of children from minority groups has been established as a permanent inter-departmental public expert body with equal participation of relevant specialists from NGOs.
- A Strategy for integration of children and students from minority groups has been elaborated. The main aim of the strategy is creation of conditions and possibilities for equal access to education by reducing the existing educational segregation of Roma origin children
- In the 2003-2004 school year in some schools an assistant – teacher position is introduced in the first grade with the purpose for more successful adaptation for the minority groups’ children in their school life.
- A draft Law introducing a Fund for “Educational Integration of children and students from minority groups” has been prepared by MES. This Fund will be raising resources from State budget and donors organizations to support education of children from minority groups.
- MES jointly with the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic matters under Council of Ministers is implementing Phare project 2001 related to educational integration of children from minority groups – training of teacher assistants, teachers qualification training for work in multiethnic environment.

3. Increasing VET at tertiary level and post-secondary level

Formally the Bulgarian system of higher education does not make any distinction between vocational and academic oriented programmes.

After the changes in the Higher Education Act in 1995 the tertiary education in Bulgaria leads to Bachelor’s degree (4-year programmes), Masters degree (5-year programmes) and Doctorates (minimum three year programmes at ISCED 6).

The Bulgarian Tertiary Colleges (ISCED 5B), which might be either belonging to an university or be a separate establishment provide three year professionally oriented programmes leading to “specialist” degree. In the previous system these colleges were called semi-higher institutes.

The technological and vocational qualification at tertiary level refers to the fields of education such as Business and Administration, Engineering, Manufacturing and processing, Agriculture and forestry and etc. The participation in the above fields of university education remains relatively stable since school year 1998/99 with a tendency of attracting more students into programmes of technological nature (for example Business and Administration 22.5% in 98/99 and 23.0% in 2002/03, Engineering 14.6% in 98/99 and 16.9% in 2002/03, Manufacturing and processing 1.4% in 98/99 and 2.0 in 2002/03).

An even stronger tendency for undertaking a technologically oriented programme can be observed among tertiary colleges. To illustrate this tendency we may point out that participation in Engineering has risen from 16.6 in 98/99 to 26.5% ,

manufacturing and processing from 0.9 in 1998/1999 to 2.5 in 2002/2003, while participation in fields such as education and health goes down.

The biggest part of the students in higher education system is those enrolled in bachelor, master and doctorate programmes representing 92-93% of all students in higher education. The participation rate of the population aged 19-23 years in tertiary colleges (ISCED 5b programmes) is very low: 2.7% in 1998/99, 2.2% in 2000/01, 2.4% in 2002/03 and 2.6% in 2003/04, compared to the participation of the same age group in university programmes which was 23.4% in 98/99, 23.0% in 00/01, 23.9% in 02/03 and 24.1% in 2003/04.

Some of the universities provide short term courses within their centers for life long learning. However quantitative information is not available.

Post Secondary Vocational Colleges provide ISCED 4C vocational training programmes of duration of two years. Students enter into the programmes after completion of secondary education. The training in post secondary programmes leads to highest level of vocational qualification – in the Bulgarian case this is level 4 and correspond to managerial responsibilities job profile.

The system allows also acquisition of post secondary programmes in the secondary vocational gymnasia. This happens when the gymnasia is willing to provide the programme and provided that its request for authorization for doing this is approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

4. Incentives for updating knowledge & skills

The government and the European Commission have agreed on the development of a Strategy for adult learning (particularly including methodology for vocational training of adults with the support of the Phare Programme 2003). In addition a national strategy for continuing vocational training is being developed which is expected to feed into the above mentioned adult learning strategy under Phare 2003. The Ministry of Education and Science is progressing with its elaboration and to this end has set up a working group with representatives of the relevant authorities (such as the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Institute of Education).

Additional policy documents have been adopted by the Bulgarian Government that testify its commitment to stakeholders to the further development of HR as a key parameter for the competitiveness, employability and adaptability of the Bulgarian citizens. The following documents can be mentioned in this context: the Government policy document “The People are the Wealth of Bulgaria”, EU Accession 2007 and annual progress reports, the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy Priorities agreed with the European Commission in 2002. The “New Social Policy Strategy” (2002-2005), which concentrates on 4 priorities, including VET and contains an action plan that describes measures on national and regional level.

Since 2001 the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) has been developed on yearly basis defining concrete active labour market measures and budget for implementation.

The measures and programmes included in the National Employment Action Plan and the National (Economic) Development Plan are funded either according to the provisions in the Employment Promotion Act (EPA), or from pre-structural EU funds. EPA provides for training to obtain initial and further qualifications, retraining and motivation training.

The EPA has set up a financial incentive scheme for employers to maintain or enhance the vocational qualification of their employees. The amount of the funding is determined on yearly basis by the NEAP. The employers who receive state funds for training are obliged to keep the trained employee at least six months after the training is finished. In 2003 the number of employed persons who participated in state funded training was 16064 as compared to 554 in the previous year.

The above scheme is not yet fully exploited given its rather recent creation and the still low awareness among the employers of this opportunity.

The Employment agency (EA) organizes training for acquisition of vocational qualification taking into account the labour market needs, employers' requirements and the yearly NEAP. The following types of training are eligible: training for employees at micro and small enterprises, who are employed at least three months before the training starting date, employees who need further qualification because of changed working environment due to technological development or production changes.

According to CVTS2 conducted in 1999, an average of 28% of enterprises (4173) provided some form of CVT representing 13% (151 450 persons) of employees in all enterprises. According to the national data on the number of all trained employees in enterprises in 2002, a total of 6515 enterprises were providing training for 176 030 participants or 5.9% from all employed.

There were 6 hours in CVT courses per 1000 working hours (only enterprises with CVT courses) in 1999 in Bulgaria while the EU and accession countries average was 8 hours.

Still improving access to CVT and raising the skill level of the workforce should be considered as a major priority. The scope of addressing this challenge could include better targeting of training to disadvantaged groups accompanied by adequate supportive measures; increasing motivation of individuals through promotion of better links between career development and training; supporting the employers in understanding the value of CVT s through appropriate awareness promotion activities (e.g. identification and dissemination of good practice and etc); developing flexible and more accessible forms of CVT provision (e.g. e-learning, second chance schools); encouraging new practises of sharing financial responsibilities between the State, enterprises and individuals; ensuring an effective and non- bureaucratic implementation of the recent financial incentives created by the Employment Promotion Act.

Contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion

The unemployment rate has substantially decreased in 2003. The data of the National Statistical Institute indicate that on average the unemployment rate for 2003 is 13.7% (around 500.000 unemployed) as compared to 18.1% in 2002. However the number of long tern unemployed remains a challenge (in the in

2003 the share of the long-term unemployed in the overall unemployed (15-64) group accounted for 65.2%, compared to 65.7% in 2002). The data indicates that the youth unemployment remains high (up to 29) – 28.1% (2002: 29.3%).

The Public Employment Service is only dealing with active labour market measures. While most of the active labour market measures include training components, the Government has put particular emphasis on the subsidised employment scheme - "From Social Care to Employment" to integrate long-term unemployed into the labour market. The net impact of this programme will be evaluated end 2004.

Regarding training courses for unemployed in 2003, around 30.000 people completed training courses, which is 66% higher than in 2002, but less than the goal for 2003 in the NEAP (72 648 people,). In addition, there is a difference in figures between those who have started and those who have completed courses. Further efforts will be needed to enhance the take up of such measures.

Unemployed people approved by the Employment Agency (EA) units to launch economic or agricultural activities could be provided with additional funds in the form of a credit for qualification under business type and/or its management.

5. Meeting the challenges of an ageing population

According to the Employment Promotion Act, employers are encouraged to create jobs for unemployed women over the age of 50 and men over 55. For every employed person the employer receives the amount of the official minimum remuneration and the relevant social insurance.

Under the "Back to work " project one of the priority target groups to be included in the motivation and vocational training courses are unemployed women over 50 years of age. Under the "Social services in return for new work places" project unemployed people over 50 are given the possibility to provide social services to people with a disadvantage.

6. Effectiveness and efficiency of VET

The system of the Bulgarian vocational education and training remains heavily centralized. The IVET is financed by the state with few exceptions when the funding is ensured by the municipalities. Although the funding for VET has been increased it is still considered low compared to the modernization needs.

Since a systemic analysis of the labour market requirements has not been carried out so far (although it is in the agenda of the relevant authorities already) usually the curricula offered in the IVET schools have remained unchanged limiting the responsiveness of the VET system to the changing requirements of the labour market.

In general the VET teachers do not receive adequate training for updating knowledge and skills in their teaching field .

As mentioned earlier the process of the optimization of the school network continues, with some results achieved so far. However there are no indicators on the end target of the process.

There is a need to encourage the co-operation between the schools and enterprises. No steps have been undertaken to address the issue of the low number of practical arrangements for VET students in enterprises. The organization of work placements would require an incentive scheme.

A research called "Evaluation of the net impact of the active labour market measures programmes active at the labour market in Bulgaria", 2001, indicates that training is essential for starting and remaining at a given job position. This type of analysis can reinforce the cause to expand training under active labour market measures.

Main trends in terms of investment in VET

According to the Eurostat data, public expenditure on education accounted for 4.4% of the GDP in 2000 and 3.6% in 2001, but still lower than in many EU countries (average 5% in 2000 according to Eurostat). The national data indicates that for 2002 the public expenditure for education accounts for 3.8% of the GDP. As regards the amount of private investment in education national data indicates 1.0% in 2001 and 1.0% in 2002. According to national data there is an increase in the public expenditure for VET from 2001 to 2002 by 14.8%, while for the same period the private expenditure for VET goes down by 9.0%.

The enterprise expenditure on continuing vocational training amounted to 1.0% as percentage of total labour costs in 1999, while the respective EU average stood at 2.3%.

According to data of the Employment Agency, in 2003 7,4 million BGN was spent on labour market training out of a total of 138,4 million BGN spent on active labour market measures (source Short country Report 2003,HRDC). A comparison with 2002 when 2.5 million BGL were geared to training activities (out of 81.2 million BGL budget for all active labour market measures) shows that while there is a substantial increase of overall budget for all active labour market programmes (0.27% of GDP in 2002 compared to 0.88% of GDP in 2003), the share earmarked for labour market training within this overall budget remains low

Theme 2: Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes

7. Improvements in learning processes and contents

Within the school system the major innovations concern the development competence based training and the introduction of the modular approach. In 2003 an overview of the experience gained so far showed that this approach is particularly effective for the vocational training of adults.

Implementation of the modular approach on subjects such as entrepreneurship, ICT, foreign language on vocational terminology and business simulation is very well accepted by students, teachers and employers. For this reason, the curriculum currently under elaboration integrates the same subjects also for vocational programmes, which are not based on the modular approach.

8. Improving the integration of different learning sites; integration of formal and informal learning

The IVET practical training is largely school based taking place in facilities (workshops) belonging to the school. Practical training for VET students outside the school facilities exists but there is not sufficient information how many schools conclude related contracts with companies and how long the students stay in enterprises. According to the ETF Monograph on VET and Public employment services in Bulgaria one of the major reasons for the limited and occasional opportunities of practical training within firms is that the structure of the VET programmes does not foresee obligatory training in enterprises. Another important factor is the level of development of the existing companies, which prevents employers from offering their production facilities and premises for placements.

According to the Ministry of Education for some programmes in the fields of tourism, building, banking, etc.) cooperation between schools and companies is reported to be improving. Students of vocational gymnasia in these fields do their practical training in these companies and very often, afterwards, get a position there. However there is no available data to illustrate the process.

EPA encourages the employers to carry out training at the work place and to open up new places for probation and/or apprenticeship. Unemployed people can also be hired for training and working at a given work place during the time of absence of an employed person. Crafts training as well as training with a master at the work place is also carried out under employment and training programmes.

9. Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision

The first series of compulsory State Matriculation Examinations on Bulgarian language and a second subject related to the profile of the school for secondary education (including VET) have been postponed to 2006, although the first intention of the Government was to introduce the exams in 2003. Still only the students who have lower than the average grade in Bulgarian literature during the course of upper secondary education, including those in IVET schools, have to sit a final exam.

For students enrolled in VET schools State Qualification Examinations will be held for first time at the end of school year 2003/04 following national examination programmes for level 2 vocational qualifications. While each vocational school sets the dates for the practical exams according to its specific conditions, the theoretical examination will be at national level. It is also the first time when in the examination commissions the employers and trade unions of the respective branch will be represented. After 2006 VET graduates will have to sit State Matriculation Examinations giving access to secondary education diploma and the State Qualification Examinations leading to certificate for one of the four levels of vocational qualification.

Evaluation of the quality of the vocational schools is undertaken by the Regional Inspectorates on education. However, there are no unified evaluation criteria.

Criteria used may include student enrolment, the number of students who have dropped out, human resources and facilities provided, etc.

In 1999 the VET Law introduced licensing procedures for CVT providers delivering training which leads to state recognized vocational qualification. The licensing is one of the tasks of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) and aims at raising the quality of training. License is awarded to a training centre and information about the centre is made available at the web site of NAVET. The criteria applied by NAVET for awarding a license include: compliance of the training centre with legal acts (including VET act), compliance of facilities with sanitary and safety norms, goals and tasks of the centre, evidence of the demand of the offered courses (from the labour offices, employers, municipalities etc.); management system, requirements for trainees, quality assurance mechanisms; resources (teachers, classrooms, labs, equipment), system of tracking trainees after graduation, etc. The steps and length of the procedures are agreed with social partners and ministries, and accepted at the NAVET's Executive Council. The length of the procedure is determined by the components – verification and evaluation of the conditions for providing quality training as stated in the application of a training centre. Based on the information provided by NAVET the licensing procedure forms an open and dynamic system, and its components are developing in the process of monitoring and control. The effectiveness of the licensing procedures is monitored by NAVET's annual surveys among licensed centers for vocational training.

Licensing of private training providers for provision of CVT is progressing well. In 2003 a total of 95 centers were licensed and their total number so far is 176. If we take into consideration the branch offices belonging to some centers the total number would be 300.

However sometimes among the small scale providers there are concerns that the procedures are too bureaucratic and expensive. Also the licensing procedure is new to enable in-depth analyses which would allow better understanding on the quality of the courses that are actually provided by training centres.

10. Professional development and status of teachers and trainers

It is envisaged to develop a state education requirement (standard) for the teaching eligibility and qualification.

In-service training is delivered in three higher education institutions in Bulgaria in “departments for information and teacher qualification”. However these departments deal with general pedagogic and education subjects. According to the ETF Monograph on VET and Public Employment Services the department for teacher qualification within the structure of Sofia University has carried out training for about 5% of all VET teachers. The training is predominantly short term and covers subjects such as use of new technologies in teaching, methodology for modular training, instruments of assessing students

achievements and etc. We observe that there is no tailor made VET teacher training system in place.

What can be listed as examples of good practices are project based initiatives such as training of trainer modules in a number of employment programmes. Under the “Employment for teachers in training disabled children” programme, specialised courses are being organised and carried out for unemployed teachers who would teach children with various types of disability.. The programme “Computer training for young people” also envisages courses for training of trainers. The programme ”Crafts education under the dual system, pilot project” includes training of the masters related to the training of unemployed young people over 16 with secondary education. Under the “Project for the integration of young people leaving social institutions”, according to a Memorandum for agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and Switzerland various courses have been planned for supervisors from these institutions, social workers from the “Social assistance” directorates and teachers.

The professional status of the teachers and trainers needs to be changed as the latter turn out to be among the university degree specialists who get the lowest salaries.

Carrier progression is not perceived to be accompanied by adequate financial rewards In this respect, it should be mentioned that the amount of the additional remuneration generally corresponding to the progression across the 5 qualification levels is insufficient to motivate teachers to participate in in-service training. In 2003 a starting salary for a teacher is 2544 BGN a year; teachers with a level of qualification and 15 years’ experience receive, on an average, 3468 BGN; teachers with the highest level of qualification and 15 years’ experience will receive 3852 BGN a year. The rise in teacher remuneration is still not perceived as an adequate stimulus, although the rise in percentage terms is very high over the last five years. Moreover, despite the large growth in teacher salaries in the past few years, they are still lower than the average for the country – a fact which has negative effects on education quality.

Data from Ministry of Education finally confirms that there is no difference in teachers’ salaries in the systems of general and vocational secondary education

Theme 3: Building European Competences for a European Labour Market

11. Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy

The employment rate for Bulgaria accounts for 52.5% (EU 25 – 62.9%) while the 2010 target is 70.0%.

Female employment rate accounts for 49.0% (EU 25 – 55.0%) while the 2010 EU target is 60.0%. Employment rate of older workers is 30.0% (EU 25 – 40.2%) while the 2010 EU target is 50.0%.

In relation to the objective for developing skills for the knowledge society the mean performance of Bulgarian students on the PISA reading literacy scale, 2000, was 430, against the EU average of 500. (source OECD, PISA database 2000).

The participation rate in education (ISCED 1-6) in 2000/01 was 44.2% compared to 57.5% EU average.

Regarding the early school leavers in 2003 it was 22.4% compared to the EU 25 average of 15.9% (2010 target: 10%).

Completion of upper secondary education in the age group 20-24 years represented 75.6% while the EU target 2010 is that at least 85% of 22 year olds in EU should have completed upper secondary education.

In 2001 the graduates in maths, science and technology accounted for 19.2% out of all graduates in ISCED 5A, 5B and 6.

The level of participation of the adult working age population (aged 25-64) in Lifelong Learning is very low (1.4%) in BG compared to the EU average (9.0%) and the 2010 target of 12,5%.).

12. Involving stakeholders

Through tripartite bodies at a national, regional and local level, the social partners take part in the consultations on the development and implementation of the policy on VET and employment. A number of projects are being carried out in the labour market with the participation of the social partners (nationally represented organisations of employers and workers).

Among the most important bodies operating at the national and regional levels, we note

- The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is a specialised body of the Council of Ministers, established under the Vocational Education and Training Act, for licensing activities in the field of vocational education and training, as well as a coordinating body for the institutions involved in consulting, education and training. The NAVET has a Governing Board comprising different stakeholders such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, and social partners.
- The National Council for Tripartite Partnership which comprises permanent committees on issues related to labour legislation, social insurance relations, incomes, the standard of living, training and etc.
- The National Employment Promotion Council (subordinate to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy) is a partnership based advisory body dealing with the development of the employment policy and NEAP.
- The National Council for Vocational Training, established in 2003, is a permanent advisory body with a task to coordinate the development of a national policy and strategies for vocational training and certification of employed and unemployed in an LLL perspective.

- The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities in employment for men and women, and for disadvantaged groups, has been established in subordination to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. This body makes proposals and recommendations for the development and implementation of the section of NEAP concerning the enhancement of the equality policy.

On regional level:

- Tripartite Cooperation Councils under the regional offices of the Employment Agency control and monitor the implementation of programmes and measures and advise on funding priorities.
- Permanent and Interim Employment Committees under the District Council for Regional Development determine, organize and control the implementation of the government policy on employment and vocational training.

13. Transparency, recognition & mobility

Establishment of credit frameworks

For the time being there is no system of transferable credits in VET Discussion on the issue could be launched with external support because the credit transfer does not seem to be among the priorities at the moment.

To establish or reform a qualifications framework

The list of professions (comprising 200 vocations) to be used as the basis for vocational education and training programmes has been worked out in line with the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED-97) and the International Standard Classification for Occupations (ISCO-89) The list will become effective from the school year 2004/2005. The list will be open for adequate changes and updating.

Implementation of Europass

The national resource centre for career guidance at the Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) is investigating different possibilities for the implementation of the single European transparency framework - Europass. When the decision of the European Parliament and the EU Council concerning the creation of Europass comes into force on 1st of January 2005, the Labour and Social Policy Ministry and the Ministry of Education and Science will have to take a stand on the participation of Bulgaria in the Europass implementation.