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The Information Database on Education Systems in Europe

The Education System in Bulgaria

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1. Political, Social and Economic Background and Trends

The Bulgarian Government has defined the general economic priorities that are to lead to sustained and real growth. These priorities are both a factor, which, if absent, would impede many of the suggested measures, and an effect as all program targets are designed to create prosperity.

Sustained **economic growth** as high as 5-7% on average per year in 2002-2006 is the Bulgarian Government's key objective. Most of the targets and economic levers are geared up to reach this particular economic goal. Moreover, it is an indispensable condition to ensure a new quality of life and to raise the standard of living.

Actually, the Government is planning measures to reach its goals related to the social sphere, to education, culture, health and environment.

The major strategic priorities in the social sphere are: generation of conditions for rapid economic growth aimed at job creation and higher income; a more flexible labour market; decrease in unemployment by 150,000 in 2002-2006; development of a new income policy concept; a substantial rise in child allowances; guaranteed social security nets for the socially underprivileged groups; promotion of social dialog. Children's rights, gender equality, care for minorities and disabled people as well as consumer protection will be pursued in parallel.

Education is a critical factor for the Bulgarians' cultural advancement and human resource development. The main goals in this field are as follows: modernizing the curricula and syllabi to make them relevant to the labor market needs; paving the way to the broader use of information technologies at school and providing Internet access; ensuring equal opportunities for quality education irrespective of gender, ethnic background or religion; spotting individual children's talents and relevant career guidance. Legislation will be adjusted to the best practices in the European countries.

1.1. Historical Overview

Bulgaria was established in 681. The country had many social and cultural ups and downs during its 1300-year history. From the beginning of the 11th century until the second half of the 12th century Bulgaria is under the rule of Byzantium. In 1187 it won its independence and one of the most successful and fruitful periods in the middle-age history of Bulgaria followed. In 1396 Bulgaria was conquered by the Turks and remained under Turkish rule for nearly 5 centuries. After the 1878 Russian-Turkish War Bulgaria was liberated, although according to the provisions of the Berlin Treaty it had the status of an autonomous principality dependent on the Turkish sultan. In 1908, the Bulgarian prince Ferdinand declared the independence of Bulgaria and it became a self-dependent nationally sovereign country of equal rights on the international arena.

The totalitarian rule, established in the country after World War II, went on until 1989.

After the fall-down of the totalitarian rule, there were significant changes in the country, which led to the establishment of democratic principles of government and political plurality. According to the new constitution of the country, The Republic of Bulgaria is now a law-governed country, which guarantees all individual's life, dignity and right and creates conditions leading to the free development of both the individual and the civil society.

The association negotiations between Bulgaria and the European community started in 1992. The treaty was signed in 1993 and it came into force as of 1995. Bulgaria submitted an application for membership in the European Union in December 1995.

At present, Bulgaria is a NATO member. Successful negotiations led to its accession to the European Union in 2007.

The latest Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria was adopted in 1991 (promulgated in Official Gazette No. 56 of 13.07.1991) by the Seventh Great National Assembly. Since then it has been the basis for development of a new democratic, law-governed and social state.

The Constitution is based on the observance of universal human values: freedom, peace, humanism, equality, justice and tolerance. According to it, all citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria are free and enjoy equal rights. The rights of the person, his dignity and security are the supreme principle of the Constitution and it guarantees all citizens' equal standing before law. It guarantees the life, dignity and rights of the person and establishes conditions for free development of both the person and the civil society. According to its provisions, no limitations in rights or privileges, based on race, nationality, ethnical belonging, gender, origin, religion, education, convictions, political affiliation, personal and public position or property status are allowed.

In order to guarantee the impossibility for recovery of the totalitarian regime under whatever form, the constitution explicitly states that the political life in the Republic of Bulgaria is based on the principle of political pluralism and no political party or ideology could be stated or confirmed as a state one.

1.2. Main Executive and Legislative Bodies

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the National Assembly, which consists of 240 members, elected for a period of four years, is the state legislative body. It is a permanently operating body. Its sittings are open to the public, however, some of them might be closed as an exception.

The Council of Ministers, which heads and implements the domestic and foreign policy of the country, is the executive power body. It ensures public order and national security and exercises overall supervision over the state administration and the Armed Forces. The Prime Minister heads, coordinates and bears responsibility for the overall policy of the government.

According to the constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the president is the head of the state. He is elected directly by the electorate for a period of 5 years. Any natural-born Bulgarian citizen (Bulgarian citizen by birth) over 40 years of age who is qualified to be elected to the National Assembly and who has resided in the country for the five years preceding the election is eligible for President. In his activities, the president is supported by a vice president, who is elected at the same time and in the same ticket with him. The President and the Vice President are eligible for only one re-election to the same office.

The president of the republic has the right to:

- schedule the elections for a National Assembly and for the bodies of local self-government and sets the date for national referendums pursuant to a resolution of the National Assembly;
- address the nation and the National Assembly;
- conclude international treaties in the circumstances established by the law;
- promulgate laws;
- determine the borders of the administrative territorial units and their centres following a motion of the Council of Ministers;
- appoint and dismiss the heads of the Republic of Bulgaria's diplomatic and permanent missions at international organizations following a motion of the Council of Ministers, and

receive the credentials and the letters of recall of the foreign diplomatic representatives in the country;

- grant and restore, relieve from and withdraw Bulgarian citizenship;
- grant asylum;
- exercise the right to pardon;
- inform the National Assembly about basic issues within his prerogatives.

The president is entitled to assigning the Prime Minister-designate the task to form a government as well as to offering the National Assembly to elect the Prime Minister-designate. Should no agreement on the formation of a government be reached, the President has the right to appoint a caretaker government, to dissolve the National Assembly and to schedule new elections.

The President is the Supreme Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. He appoints and dismisses the higher command of the Armed Forces and bestows all higher military ranks following a motion of the Council of Ministers. His powers include also proclaiming general or partial mobilization following a motion of the Council of Ministers as well as proclaiming a state of war whenever the National Assembly is not in session.

According to the constitution, the President has no right to introduce a bill, but he has the right to a qualified veto.

The Members of the National Assembly act on the basis of the Constitution and the laws and in accordance with their conscience and convictions. They represent not only their constituencies but also the entire nation. No Member shall be held to a binding mandate.

A newly elected National Assembly is convened for its first session by the President of the Republic or by one-fifth of the Members of the National Assembly.

The laws and resolutions passed by the National Assembly are binding on all state bodies, all organizations and all citizens. Bills can be introduced by any Member of the National Assembly.

To pass a motion of no confidence in the Council of Ministers it is necessary that at least one-fifth of the Members propose it to the National Assembly. Such a motion is enacted in the case of being supported by more than half of the votes of all National Assembly Members. Should the National Assembly vote no confidence in the Prime Minister or the Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister hands in his government's resignation.

The National Assembly shall:

- pass, amend, and rescind laws;
- pass the state budget bill and the budget report;
- establish taxes and their size;
- schedule the elections for a President of the Republic;
- resolve on the holding of a national referendum;
- elect and dismiss the Prime Minister and, following his motion, the members of the Council of Ministers; effect changes in the government following a motion of the Prime Minister;
- create, transform and close down ministries following a motion of the Prime Minister;
- elect and dismiss the Governors of the Bulgarian National Bank;
- approve state-loan agreements;
- resolve on the declaration of war and conclusion of peace;
- approve any deployment and use of Bulgarian armed forces outside the country's borders, and the deployment of foreign troops on the territory of the country or their crossing that territory;
- introduce martial law or a state of emergency on all or part of the country's territory following a motion of the President or the Council of Ministers,;
- grant amnesty.

The National Assembly ratifies or denounces all international treaties by a special law.

Sessions of the National Assembly are public. The National Assembly may, by exception, resolve to hold some sessions behind closed doors. The National Assembly and the parliamentary committees are free to order ministers to attend their sessions and respond to questions. All officials and citizens invited to appear before the parliamentary committees are obliged to do so and to provide them with the required information and documents.

The Constitutional Court consists of 12 magistrates, one-third of whom are elected by the National Assembly, one-third are appointed by the President, and one-third is elected by a joint meeting of the magistrates of the Supreme Court of Cassation and the Supreme Administrative Court. The magistrates of the Constitutional Court are elected or appointed for a period of nine years and are not eligible for re-election or re-appointment. The make-up of the Constitutional Court is renewed every three years from each quota, in a rotation order established by a law. The magistrates of the Constitutional Court are lawyers of high professional and moral integrity having at least fifteen years of professional experience. A magistrate of the Constitutional Court enjoys the same immunity as any Member of the National Assembly.

The Constitutional Court:

- rules on the compatibility between the Constitution and the international treaties concluded by the Republic of Bulgaria prior to their ratification, and on the compatibility of domestic laws with the universally recognized norms of international law and the international treaty under which Bulgaria is a party;
- provides binding interpretations of the Constitution;
- rules on challenges to the constitutionality of laws and other acts passed by the National Assembly as well as the President's acts;
- rules on competence suits between the National Assembly, the President and the Council of Ministers, and between the bodies of local self-government and the central executive bodies;
- rules on challenges to the constitutionality of political parties and associations;
- rules on challenges to the legality of the election of President and Vice President;
- rules on challenges to the legality of an election of a Member of the National Assembly;
- rules on impeachment by the National Assembly against the President or the Vice President.

No authority of the Constitutional Court is vested or suspended by a law.

The Constitutional Court acts on an initiative of no less than one-fifth of all Members of the National Assembly, the President, the Council of Ministers, the Supreme Court of Cassation, the Supreme Administrative Court or the Chief Prosecutor. A challenge to competence between the bodies of local self-government and the central executive branch of government may be filed by a municipal council. Citizens and their associations, unions and organisations have no right to approach the Constitutional Court.

A ruling of the Constitutional Court requires a majority of more than half of the votes of all magistrates. Any act found to be unconstitutional ceases to apply as of the date on which the ruling comes into force.

According to Art. 2, para 1 of the Constitution, the Republic of Bulgaria is an integral state with local self-government. No autonomous territorial formations can exist.

The territory of the Republic of Bulgaria is divided into municipalities and regions. A municipality is the basic administrative territorial unit at the level of which self-government is practiced. The borders of a municipality are established following a referendum to the population.

The body of local self-government within a municipality is its municipal council elected directly by the populace for a term of four years by a procedure established by a special law.

The body of executive power within a municipality is its mayor. He is elected by the populace or by the municipal council (depending on the number of inhabitants of the particular settlement) for a term of

four years by a procedure established by a law. In his activity, a mayor is guided by the law, the acts of the municipal council and the sense of the populace.

A municipality is a legal entity with an independent budget. It is entitled to its own property. A municipality's financial sources are established by a law, and the state supports the normal activity of municipalities through budget appropriations as well as other means.

1.3. Religions

The traditional religion in Bulgaria is Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which reflects its cultural and historical role and importance for the Bulgarian state, as well as its importance for social life.

According to Art. 13 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, any religion can be freely practiced. All religious institutions are separate from the state. Religious institutions and communities, as well as religious beliefs cannot be used to political ends.

According to Art. 37, the freedom of conscience, the freedom of thought and the choice of confession and of religious or atheistic views are inviolable. The state assists the maintenance of tolerance and respect among the believers of different religions, as well as among believers and non-believers.

In 1997, the Department of Ecclesiastic Matters with the Council of Ministers registered an alternative Holy Synod headed by Patriarch Pymen, a fact determined as a schism by the Holy Bulgarian Orthodox Church. At the end of 2002, the Parliament adopted a new Religious Denominations Act, which is expected to put an end to the so-called schism. According to this law, the registration of new religious denominations should be done by the court, and not by the state administration. About 30 religious denominations have been registered so far.

According to the last census of the population, carried out in 2001, and which viewed the religious denomination as "a person's or a person's parents' or ancestors' historically determined belonging to a certain group with specific religious views", Eastern Orthodox Christians are the predominant majority in Bulgaria – 6,552,751 people, or 82.6 percent from the country's population. 966,978 people or 12.2 percent were Muslims. Catholics ranked third with 43,811 people, or 0.6 percent. In contrast to Catholics, whose number had decreased in the past eight years, the number of persons who determined themselves as Protestants, had increased and it could be claimed that at the beginning of the 21st century protestants were almost as much as Catholics, i.e. about 0.5 percent. The communities of Judaic and Armenian Gregorian are very small and they constantly decrease.

In Bulgaria there are also very small communities of people, belonging to other religions, such as Dunov's followers (the White Brotherhood) – 1,243 people; Buddhists – 1,042 people, Krishna followers – 533 people; Baha's followers – 105, Lutherans – 23, etc.

In 1998-99, Religion was introduced as an elective subject at Bulgarian schools for the first time after the democratic changes, and since 2003 – 2004 it has become a compulsory elective subject. A possibility for religion training according to confession is provided and it is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science.

1.4. Official and Minority Languages

According to the Constitution, the official language in the Republic of Bulgaria is Bulgarian.

The study and use of the Bulgarian language is every Bulgarian citizen's right and obligation.

Citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian have the right to study and use their own language alongside the compulsory study of the Bulgarian language. The situations, in which only the official language should be used, are established by the law.

In view of the constitutional provisions, preparatory courses are organised for children who do not know Bulgarian well (mainly from Turkish and Roma origin). For the pupils, whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, an opportunity to study their mother tongue outside the state schools was provided, until Bulgaria signed the Frame Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. This means that since 1992, Armenian, Turkish, Roma, Hebrew and Greek had been taught at municipal schools. Mother tongues were studied as an extra subject from the 3rd until the 8th grade. Since 1994, they have been studied from the 1st grade on, four hours a week. After signing the convention, the National Education Act was amended to guarantee studying mother tongues at municipal schools (the state and the private ones were not included). Later, mother tongue study was included in the compulsory elective preparation, which enhanced the status of minority languages. For further details see [10.7.](#)

During recent years, university subjects such as Turkish and Armenian philology, as well as teaching specialities with Turkish were opened. At the beginning of 1990s, the preparation of teachers of Roma as well as teaching Roma children in their mother tongue as a whole has progressed.

Out of 7,928,901 total population of the country (according to the 2001 census), 6,655,210 people determine themselves as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group, 746,664 to the Turkish one, 370,908 to the Roma (Gypsy) group, 10,832 to the Armenian group, 1,363 to the Jewish, and the remaining part – to other, relatively small ethnic groups.

1.5. Demographic Situation

The population of the Republic of Bulgaria was 7,718,750 people by the end of 2005. The population had decreased by 42,299 or by 0.5 percent within one year, due to the greater number of deaths compared to that of births.

Women are still more than men – 51.5 percent in the total number of population. In 2004, the men-women ratio was 1,000 to 1,060; while in 1990 the number of women in that ratio was 1,030 and in 2001 – 1,054. The number of women in the higher age groups is bigger. However, in the lower age groups – up to 40 years of age, the number of men is bigger.

By the end of 2005 the working population had become almost 4,814,000 people. It had increased by 32,000 people, compared to the previous year.

The population above this age was 1,762,000 people in 2005. The decrease is due not only to natural attrition (death rate), but to the change of the retirement age and the transfer of this population part to the active population.

On the other hand, there was a stable tendency of decrease in the number of people below working age.

The aging of the population leads to the increase in the mean age of population, which from 37.5 years in 1990 rose to 38.9 years in 1995 and reached 40.6 years in 2002. The mean age of the population in Bulgaria in 2005 was 41.2 years. The mean age in villages was higher than that in cities – 45.2 years in villages and 39.5 years in cities.

In 2005 5,416,564 people or 70.2 percent of the country's population lived in cities, while 2,302,186, or 29.8 percent, lived in villages.

In Bulgaria in 2005 113,374 people, or 14.6‰, died. Death rate had increased by 1.8 percentage points, compared to 1990, and by 0.7 percentage points, compared to 1995. In the last 20 years, the death rate reached its highest value in 1997 – 14.7 per cent. The death rate has decreased since then

and it has maintained one and the same level in recent years. The death rate is higher among men, compared to women, and in the villages compared to cities.

Since the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, the population has been constantly decreasing. The natural growth ratio dropped from minus 0.4‰ in 1990 to minus 5.0‰ in 1995 and reached minus 5.1‰ in 2000. In 2005, the ratio value was minus 5.4‰. The difference between the values of the natural growth ratio in cities and villages is very big. In villages it is minus 12.4‰, while in the cities it is minus 2.4‰.

In the past 15 years, the average length of life increased from 70.91 year for the 1992 – 1994 period to 71.70 years for the 1998 – 2000 period. For the 2003 – 2005 period it is already 72.55 years. Women's life span is by nearly seven years higher (76.3 years) than that of men (69.0 years). It is 72.9 years among urban population, and 71.6 years among rural population.

In conclusion, it could be said that the tendency of worsening the demographic situation has been stopped in the recent years, but the present level of natural reproduction is very restricted. This level will influence the future development of the number and structure of population.

In 2005, 71,640 children were born in Bulgaria, out of whom 71,075 or 99.2 percent were born alive. In comparison with the previous year the number of the children born alive increased by 1,189 children. In 2002, the number of born children was at one of its lowest points. It had been only in 1997 and 1998 that fewer children were born – 64,000 and 65,000, respectively. In comparison to 1990, when 105,180 children were born, the live born had decreased by 36.8 percent, and in comparison to 1995 (71,967) – by 7.6 percent.

The tendency of decrease in the birth rate started in 1950, when it was 25.2 live born per 1,000 people from population. In the following decades, it had been constantly decreasing to reach 12.1 percent in 1990, 9.0 percent in 2000 and 8.5 percent in 2002.

In 2005, the birth rate was 9.2‰. 52,280 children were born in cities, while 18,795 were born in villages, or the crude birth rate was 9.6‰ in cities and 8.1‰ in villages.

Around 168 thousand migrations took place in 2005 within the country and 150 thousand persons took part in them.

The greatest movement is along the “city-to-city” direction – 44% of all migrants have changed their residence from one city to another city in 2005, compared to 41% in 2003. “Village-to-city” and “city-to-village” migrations have a much smaller relative share. The migrations from villages to cities were 18% for 2003, and 22% for 2005. The migrations from cities to villages were 31% for 2003, and 24% in 2005. As a result, the urban population decreased at the expense of rural population. The migration flow from village to village was smallest – 10 percent in 2005.

1.6. Economic Situation

The transition period from centralized planned economy to market economy turned out to be extremely difficult. At the beginning of the transition period, Bulgarian economy was characterized by a misbalance and ambiguity, which together with the delay of the political and economic reforms, predetermined the unsteady progress of the country. However, for a period of six years inflation maintained a level of 2-3 percent annually, starting in 1997, when it had reached 506%. No deficit has been accounted since 1998. With the achievement of economic stability after the introduction of currency board in the country, the issue of economic growth stimulation has come to the fore.

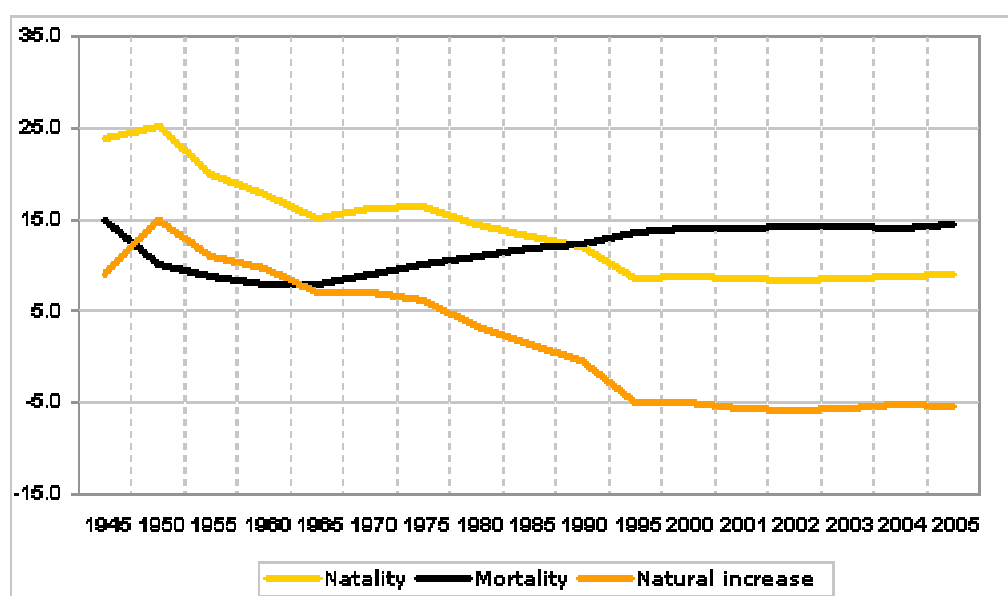
Recently, the different economy sectors shares in the country's GDP (about 56 percent belonging to services, 24 percent – to industry and 10 percent – to agriculture) have outlined a typically market profile of the Bulgarian economy. The number of private companies has increased significantly; the

banking sector was fully privatised after the 1996/97 crisis and is now stable; the positions of the country as a reliable counterpart have been strengthened and foreign investments have started to be attracted.

According to the evaluation of a number of experts, the competitiveness of human resources is one of the most positive features of the Bulgarian economy. Investments in education and qualifications of human resources would only facilitate the transition period and would allow the country to take a prestigious place among other European countries.

1.7. Statistics

NATALITY, MORTALITY AND NATURAL INCREASE **Per 1 000 population**



Source: National Statistical Institute

Main Demographic Indicators In 2005

Indicators	2001			2004			2005		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Population density per sq. km.	71.1	.	.	69.9	.	.	69.5	.	.
Natural increase - ‰	-5.6	-2.6	-12.3	-5.2	-2.6	-11.1	-5.4	-2.4	-12.7
Sex ratio (women per 1000 men)	1 054	1 066	1 028	1 060	1 075	1 026	1 062	1 077	1 028
Residence structure - %	100.0	69.4	30.6	100.0	70.0	30.0	100.0	70.2	29.8
Age dependency ratio - %	46.8	39.8	65.8	44.9	37.9	64.3	44.5	37.5	64.0
Crude birth rate - ‰	8.6	8.9	8.1	9.0	9.3	8.3	9.2	9.6	8.1
Crude death rate - ‰	14.2	11.5	20.4	14.2	11.9	19.4	14.6	12.0	20.8
Male	15.6	12.8	21.8	15.7	13.3	21.1	16.2	13.5	22.4
Female	12.9	10.2	19.0	12.7	10.6	17.7	13.2	10.7	19.2

Indicators	2001			2004			2005		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Infant mortality - ‰	14.4	12.9	18.2	11.6	10.2	15.3	10.4	8.9	14.6
Life expectancy (years)	*71.8	72.1	70.8	**72.4	72.8	71.4	***72.6	72.9	71.6
Male	68.5	.	.	69.1	69.5	67.9	69.0	69.3	68.1
Female	75.2	.	.	76.2	76.5	75.8	76.3	76.6	75.7

*) Data are for the period 1999 - 2001

**) Data are for the period 2002 - 2004

***) Data are for the period 2003 - 2005

Source: National Statistical Institute

Population by sex and years as of 31.12.2005

Years	Total	Males	Females
1990	8 669 269	4 269 998	4 399 271
1995	8 384 715	4 103 368	4 281 347
2000	8 149 468	3 967 423	4 182 045
2001	7 891 095	3 841 163	4 049 932
2002	7 845 841	3 816 162	4 029 679
2003	7 801 273	3 790 840	4 010 433
2004	7 761 049	3 767 610	3 993 439
2005	7 718 750	3 743 327	3 975 423

Source: National Statistical Institute

Population under, at and over working age

Years	Total	Working – age status		
		Under working age %	At working age %	Over working age %
1990	100.0	21.6	55.5	22.9
1995	100.0	19.1	56.6	24.3
2000	100.0	16.8	58.3	24.9
2001	100.0	16.3	59.2	24.5
2002	100.0	15.9	60.1	24.0
2003	100.0	15.5	60.8	23.7
2004	100.0	15.1	61.6	23.3
2005	100.0	14.8	62.4	22.8

Source: National Statistics Institute

Crude birth rate and natural increase of the population

Years	Crude birth rate ‰	Natural increase ‰	Total fertility rate ³
1990	12.1	-0.4	1.81
1995	8.6	-5.0	1.23
2000	9.0	-5.1	1.27
2001	8.6	-5.6	1.24
2002	8.5	-5.8	1.21
2003	8.6	-5.7	1.23
2004	9.0	-5.2	1.29
2005	9.2	-5.4	1.31

Source: National Statistical Institute

2. General Organisation of the Education System and Administration of Education

The general administration of the education system is carried out by the Council of Ministers. The management bodies of the public education system are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Minister of Education and Science, the Regional Inspectorates of Education and the heads of kindergartens, schools and servicing units. The management of education is carried out at three levels – national, regional and school.

2.1. Historical Overview

The Bulgarian educational system has its deep roots and rich history. The Bulgarian people have established and preserved long-standing and intransient educational traditions throughout the 13-century existence of their state; they accepted and developed further the alphabet created by the brothers Cyril and Methodius as early as the 9th century, which was a predecessor of the Cyrillic script. In the 10th century Bulgaria reached the “golden age of Bulgarian literature and culture”, when Kliment Ohridski established the first Bulgarian school. The Bulgarian people preserved their love of learning and education through the years of the Ottoman rule. Cell schools of mainly religious character were established in the 18th – 19th century. They were popular under the names of cell, monastery or church schools because most often the study process took place in monks’ cells. Later, schools established by patriotic Bulgarians, mainly craftsmen or educated people, where pupils were taught how to read, write and count, were called public and secular cell schools. Some of those schools developed into handicraft schools, where pupils went through a long training process – the stages of apprentice, journeyman and master. Passing from one stage to the next one was achieved by taking a difficult examination, conducted by craftsman recognized by their guild, publicly acknowledged and respected.

Public schools were established on a larger scale at the end of the 18th century, and especially in the 30-s and 40-s of the 19th century. Known as “new Bulgarian” schools, they were described in detail in the records of the schools in Samokov, Koprivshtitza, etc. Those schools were established and maintained by educated patriotic Bulgarians associated in school boards of trustees. The board of trustees was a public body for organizing and managing the established schools and assumed all the functions related to their establishment and management. They recruited children to attend school, rented or constructed the school building, most often at the center of the settlement or in one of its beautiful parts surrounded by a large green yard; they also hired a teacher or teachers, selected the method of teaching, which most often was the so-called “mutual-aid method”; they approved the internal regulations concerning discipline and other requirements to be met by teachers and pupils. At the end of the school year, to exercise control over the pupils’ training, the board of trustees organized a public examination, which was conducted in the presence of both parents and public figures. Such schools functioned and developed as early as the Ottoman rule years and were maintained by the patriotic population. In those schools, there were conditions for progressive for that time education as a great part of the teachers had graduated from schools in the then developed European countries. The Bulgarian National Revival developed as a movement for enlightenment, for incorporation of the Bulgarian people into the European and Christian civilization. After the Liberation, the Bulgarian education reached the level of the West European education within a historically short period of time.

The state educational system was established after 1878, which was also the time when the first school laws were passed. The first law on education, the "Provisional By-laws of Public Schools", was passed in August 1878. This law established three levels of public schools: a) primary; b) secondary or two-class; and c) main or four-class. It specified the subjects to be studied, the course of study by level, management and financing. The latter were mainly the responsibility of municipalities, which, in their turn, elected the school Board of Trustees among their members. The functions of the Board of trustees were as follows: to provide means for establishment and improvement of school facilities, to support poor pupils who are successful at school. District School Boards were established and district inspectors were appointed, having the functions to support and control the work of teachers. The School Boards reported on their work at the meetings of the city and district voters. A distinctive characteristic of this first law was the compulsory primary education for both male and female pupils. In February 1881 the Primary School Act in Eastern Roumelia was adopted, followed by the Public and Private Schools Act (1885), Public Education Act (1892), Act on Girls' Secondary Education (1897), and Basic and Secondary Education Act (1982).

These first laws recognized the democratic principles applied to the establishment and management of schools. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the educational system underwent rapid development. A relatively progressive legislation was enacted. The Public Education Act of 1909, adopted at the time of Minister Nikola Mushanov, specified the main principles on which the educational system was based, i.e. compulsory and free of charge basic education, school training accessible to all children, specification of the objectives, content, organization and management of the different types and levels of schools, central, district and school management, issues concerning the teaching staff and school Boards of Trustees, Supreme and District School Boards, supervisory and penal institutions. This Act also included university education, private schools, cultural and philanthropic organizations – national museums, libraries, community centers, the National Theatre, etc.

The Public Education Act (1921), adopted under the government of the Bulgarian Agricultural Union with the Minister Stoyan Omarchevski, also played a significant role in the development of education. This Act was based on the principles laid down in the Act of 1909, but developed them further in accordance with the conditions existing at that time, introducing compulsory basic education, free education and more intensive development of secondary general education and vocational education. The Act preserved the public participation in the management of schools through the work of the Boards of Trustees.

The period encompassing the 30s and the 40s of the 20th century was characterized by both stabilization of the educational system and its expansion into the sphere of general and vocational education.

The education in the period 1944-1989 was highly centralized and subordinate to the communist ideology. Within that period, the following positive elements should be pointed out: popularization of secondary education – general and vocational, establishment and expansion of a great number of secondary schools, preservation of a number of democratic trends in the management of education, participation of the parents and the community in school activities. Negative effects on the educational system were produced by the strict regulation and its centralized administration, by the frequent, ill-founded and self-serving changes in its structure and governing bodies and the educational system itself, its surface-deep democratic character, etc.

In 1948, a new public education act was adopted, establishing new educational content and textbooks in the spirit of the socialist ideology. Certain spelling changes in the Bulgarian language were introduced.

The functioning and management of education in the period of 1944 – 1989 was carried out on the basis of documents issued by the ruling Communist Party – decrees, orders, Theses for Development of Education (1980), etc. The only law adopted in that period was the Closer Link between School and Life Act (1959), which emphasized polytechnic education and the need to bind instruction with the production processes.

During the period of 1990 – 2006, a number of democratic changes have been brought about both in society as a whole and the educational system in particular. A new Public Education Act was adopted (1991), which is still in force in the educational system, and Bulgarian legislation underwent serious changes. The principle of competition for electing school management has been introduced, democratic principles of functioning and administration of schools have been applied, serious attempts have been made to harmonize Bulgarian educational legislation with the standards of other European countries, while the positive democratic tendencies and achievements of the educational system so far have been preserved to a great extent.

Bulgarian people have always recognized education, both historically and traditionally, as a specific public value and have exerted efforts to provide their children with good quality education. The historical development of the educational system has been characterized by its progressive nature, its stability, high number of children included in the educational process, good education and upbringing of the pupils. All of the above can serve as a lever for social development.

2.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

The Ministry of Education and Science makes efforts to modernize the legal basis and the entire legislation of the educational system and to set it in compliance with European standards.

Since the autumn of 2005 there were discussions on the National Program for Development of Education (2006 – 2015). Initially, there were two versions containing the basic ideas and trends of the future development of the Bulgarian education system. After considerable debate in 2006 the National Assembly adopted a National Program for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006 – 2015). This program includes analysis of the present state of school education as well as a description of some of the most important problems it faces accompanied by suggestions of how to overcome them, and more precisely:

- 1 Orientation of the system towards memorization and reproduction, rather than thought provocation, independence and skills development;
- 2 Lack of a system of external evaluation on a national level and an inefficient system of internal evaluation of the quality in education;
- 3 A large number of children who either remain outside the system of education or drop out of it;
- 4 Low social status and insufficient authority of teachers;
- 5 Unoptimised school network as well as a large number of small and merged classes;
- 6 Overly centralized system management;
- 7 Financial system which does not stimulate development;

8 Problems with the legal regulations.

Among the priority aims for Bulgarian education are granting equal access to education and improvement of education quality. These aims correspond to both the aims of the European Union and United Nations Acts on Education.

Below are enumerated some of the most significant measures for optimizing school education (to avoid repetition, here they are just mentioned while in the respective chapters and sections they will be discussed in greater detail):

1. Orientation of school education towards provocation of thought and independence, formation of practical skills and personality development

This trend is related to changes in the study content, study plans and syllabuses, measures concerning course books and supplementary teaching materials (development of new requirements for course books content, improvement of the system of evaluation and approval of course books, free course books and supplementary teaching materials (from the 1st to the 4th grade), mass introduction of information and communication technologies at school, enhancement of the guidance aspect of work at school, development of outside-the-classroom and extra-curricular activity.

2. Development of effective internal evaluation through tests on a wide scale and through the introduction of a national system of external evaluation.

The envisaged changes in the system of control and evaluation of quality are planned to go in two directions: development of the system of internal evaluation and development of the system of external evaluation.

3. Decrease of the number of pupils of compulsory schooling age who are not integrated in the education system or who drop out of it.

The policy of decreasing the number of those pupils who are not part of the school system or drop out of it comprises a wide spectrum of measures which are aimed at neutralising the influence of some negative factors, leading to dropping out of school. In view of the effective application of these measures a system of data collection, evaluation, control and analysis of the children of compulsory school age as well their movement within grades, stages and levels has been established. It will be put into effect in the school year of 2007/2008.

One of the major envisaged changes concerns the structure of education as stated below:

- completion of basic education after the 7th grade;
- division of the upper secondary level into two stages:
 - o First upper secondary stage (8th – 10th grade): the end of this stage will mark the completion of compulsory education.
 - o Second upper secondary stage (11th – 12th grade): pupils will acquire knowledge and skills which will be further developed and specialized. Pupils will also have the

opportunity to prepare for their future higher education. At the end of this stage they will sit national matriculation exams in order to complete their secondary education.

- the 8th grade – a year of intensive foreign language and computer and/or vocational training for all pupils.

Some of the other envisaged measures for the restriction of dropping out of school are related to granting free access to study content, free transport and forms of day-board education, free snacks for primary children (1st – 4th grade), stricter binding of granting social relief with kids' attending school as well as measures for the socialisation of children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian and integration of children who have special educational needs.

4. Enhancing teachers' authority and social status

There is a plan for the development and implementation of a system of career development on horizontal and vertical levels, developing a system of differentiated payment for teachers, related to pupils' results as well as a system of awarding teachers.

5. Optimization of school network

Other envisaged measures regard classes of lower number of pupils and merged classes. These can be found in many regions of the country – in scarcely populated villages and those suffering depopulation, in mountainous or difficult-to-access regions, etc. The aim is for the process to go on gradually, without distressing teachers and pupils and with the parallel realization of measures aimed at compensating the negative effects of such optimisation of the network. Despite all the above, there is a risk of increasing the number of children who do not attend school, especially in the regions which are difficult to access during the winter. According to the plan, the school network should be more closely related to the labour market and the social and economic characteristics of the region, which in itself is a positive tendency.

The school network is kept up to date according to the procedure and terms established by the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act. The changes in the school network include opening up, transforming and closing schools down.

The current objective criteria for changing the school network are:

- the minimum and maximum number of pupils within one class (according to the stages and degrees of education) and the admissible exceptions regulated by Ordinance#7/2000 for determining the number of pupils in classes and groups at schools and kindergartens and servicing units;
- the hours of compulsory teaching work, established by Ordinance #5/14.05.2002 with a view to staff provision for implementing the school curricula;
- the standards for supporting state activities financed by the municipal budgets and the standards for the number of staff involved in the state education activities financed by the municipal budgets.

The optimisation of the school network is entirely related to the main principles of modernization of Bulgarian education:

- **equal access to the education system** with a view to an adequate integration of all disadvantaged groups;

- **quality of education** resulting from the quality of the legislation, the models of management and financing, the teaching staff and the school equipment;
- **active partnership** between all players involved in education policy – state institutions, teachers, parents, employers, trade unions, non-government organizations;
- **competition** between schools based on offering attractive quality education, irrespective of the form of ownership of the school;
- **openness**, i.e. making the education system flexible and opening it up to the development of the economy and the labour market of the EU.

6. Decentralizing the system's management

The process of decentralizing the management of school education should follow several major trends:

- Appointment and dismissal of head teachers.
The main role in the process of appointment and dismissal of head teachers will be played by the local community – representatives of parents, teachers and the local authorities. This new procedure is a radical change in the model for appointing school heads (this will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 8).
- Opening and closing down of schools
With regard to municipal schools, the local authorities will have greater rights within the preserved opportunities for control on part of the Ministry of Education.
- Determining the number and types of vocational and special schools
The local authorities will gradually assume the right to determine the number and type of vocational and special schools.

The National Strategy for the Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education envisages changes in **the status of the head teacher** such as introducing mandates of head teachers' posts with no restriction as to the number of mandates, enhancing the organizing, managing and financial competencies of head teachers by providing training at the National Head Teacher Training Institute, and developing models for giving head teachers testimonial.

The necessary changes in the status of the head teacher have been prompted by the introduction of the principle of decentralization of the management of the system and the creation of guarantees that head teachers have the necessary managerial knowledge and skills and that the mechanisms of exercising civil control on the activities of the heads of schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) have been provided.

7. Introduction of a financing system which stimulates development

– introduction of a system of delegated budgets in all schools, a common standard for financing the education of a child/pupil, approval of programme financing of the system, introduction of a system of differentiated payment for teachers, extension of the 'money follows the pupil' principle over private schools as well. (For more detail see 2.8.)

8. Improvement of the legal regulations

The Ministry of Education and Science has already started analysing the legal regulations so as to identify its shortcomings and contradictions and to prepare suggestions for its refinement.

The improvement of the legal regulations is related to several main tasks:

- ruling the system by rules, not by people;
- refinement of the legal regulations;
- refusal to issue acts of unclear legal content (letters, instructions, etc.)
- changes in the existing normative acts and creation of new ones.

There are a number of changes concerning certain normative acts planned. (For more detail see **2.3.**)

2.3. Fundamental Principles and Basic Legislation

The main body of legislation now in force has been enacted since 1990.

The Public Education Act (1991) is of great significance. It recognizes the democratic principles and traditions of the historical development of the educational system, underlying the Constitution of our country as well as the modern trends characteristic of the developed European countries. Among these general principles, a prominent place is taken by the guaranteed right to education and equality of all citizens irrespective of race, nationality, gender, ethnic or social origin, education and social status. Education is free of charge, compulsory up to 16 years of age, secular. State educational requirements have been set, which should be met by the education and training of pupils, the types of education and schools, the organization of their functioning, the enrollment and graduation from classes and educational levels – examinations, diplomas, etc. Special chapters in the Public Education Act (PEA) deal with the administration and provision of resources for the educational system as well as the Boards of Trustees at schools. The administrative structure and the functions of governing bodies at a national, local and school level have been defined. PEA has been applied for 15 years now and it guarantees the functioning of the educational system.

Bulgarian educational legislation also includes the following important laws: Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act (1999), which specifies the responsibilities, the compulsory, compulsory elective and free elective subjects, instruction of pupils in 8 cultural and educational spheres, the issues concerning the general educational minimum and the curriculum; the Vocational Education and Training Act (1999), and the Higher Education act (1995). The Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA) fully regulates the issues concerning vocational training of pupils in the educational systems – its objectives, principles, stages, organization, and management. This law meets, to a great extent, the European standards and trends.

Many of the issues concerning the functioning and management of the educational system have been regulated by the Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA, which specifies the legal requirements and provides solutions to a number of educational cases. The Regulations are being used to regulate the structure and organization of the activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIEs) and the Boards of Trustees. A number of Ordinances are included in the educational by-laws, which regulate specific activities and issues concerning the educational system: ordinances for admission of pupils to obshtobrazovatelni (general) schools and profesionalni (vocational) schools on completion of the seventh and the eighth grade, Ordinance # 3/2003 on assessment in education, Ordinance # 4 on legal regulations, etc. Other activities are regulated by Decrees of the Council of Ministers, Instructions of the Ministry of Education and Science, Orders of the Minister of Education and Science. The activities of teachers and management are carried out in accordance with job descriptions duly approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

In the period of 2004 – 2006 there have been some changes in the legislative regulations concerning education (in the Public Education Act, the Regulations on its implementation and some by-laws). Here are the most significant ones, which will be dealt with in more detail in the respective chapters and sections of the Dossier:

- Legal regulations on the integrated schooling and education of children with special educational needs – until the introduction of this alteration of the legal regulations, schooling of such children was allowed only at special schools, while at the moment it is possible to integrate them in mainstream schools. In this respect, it is a fact that there are functioning teams for complex pedagogical evaluation along with real conditions and requirements as to the granting of a supportive environment for the integrated education of pupils with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases. Resource centres are also being established.
- Since 2004 children who do not speak Bulgarian well in the year before their starting school in the first grade, apart from the compulsory subjects, have been granted training in Bulgarian language according to a specialized methodology. (For more detail see 3.).
- In order to expand the scope of school boards' activity and to improve parents' and local authorities' engagement in school work, the functions of school boards have been defined in greater detail.
- The latest changes in the Public Education Act have once again postponed the execution of state matriculation exams for finishing secondary education for the year of 2009.
- Changes in the conditions for enrolling in sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta (SOU) (general secondary schools) and profilirani paralelki (specialised classes) with intensive foreign language instruction after the 7th and the 8th grade. (For more detail see 5.)
- Opening of surgeries for out-of-hospital medical help in schools provided and controlled by the municipalities.
- Expanding the measures for detecting and educating gifted children.
- Changes in the system of approving textbooks and supplementary materials.
- Changes in the documents and procedures for opening and reorganization of schools – introduction of a new requirement for providing suitable architecture for pupils with specific educational needs and/or chronic diseases.
- Certain changes have been introduced in the documents for completed grade, education degree and professional qualification.

The measures envisaged in the Program are based on the introduction of a number of changes in and additions to the legal acts. Among the most important changes are the following:

- Public Education Act;
- Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act;
- Vocational Education and Training Act;
- Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA;
- Regulations on the Structure and Activity of the Regional Inspectorates of Education;
- Ordinance # 2 from 18.05.2000 on the Study Content;
- Ordinance # 6 from 28.05.2001 on Distribution of school time for acquiring the general educational minimum by grades, stages and levels;
- Ordinance on course books and supplementary materials;
- Ordinance # 5 from 15.05.2003 on evaluation and approval of course books and supplementary materials;
- Ordinance # 2 from 24.04.1997 on the organisation and execution of recreation and tourism for children and pupils;
- Ordinance # 3 from 15.04.2003 on the system of assessment;
- Ordinance # 1 from 11.04.2003 on the programs for study and examination at the state matriculation exams;

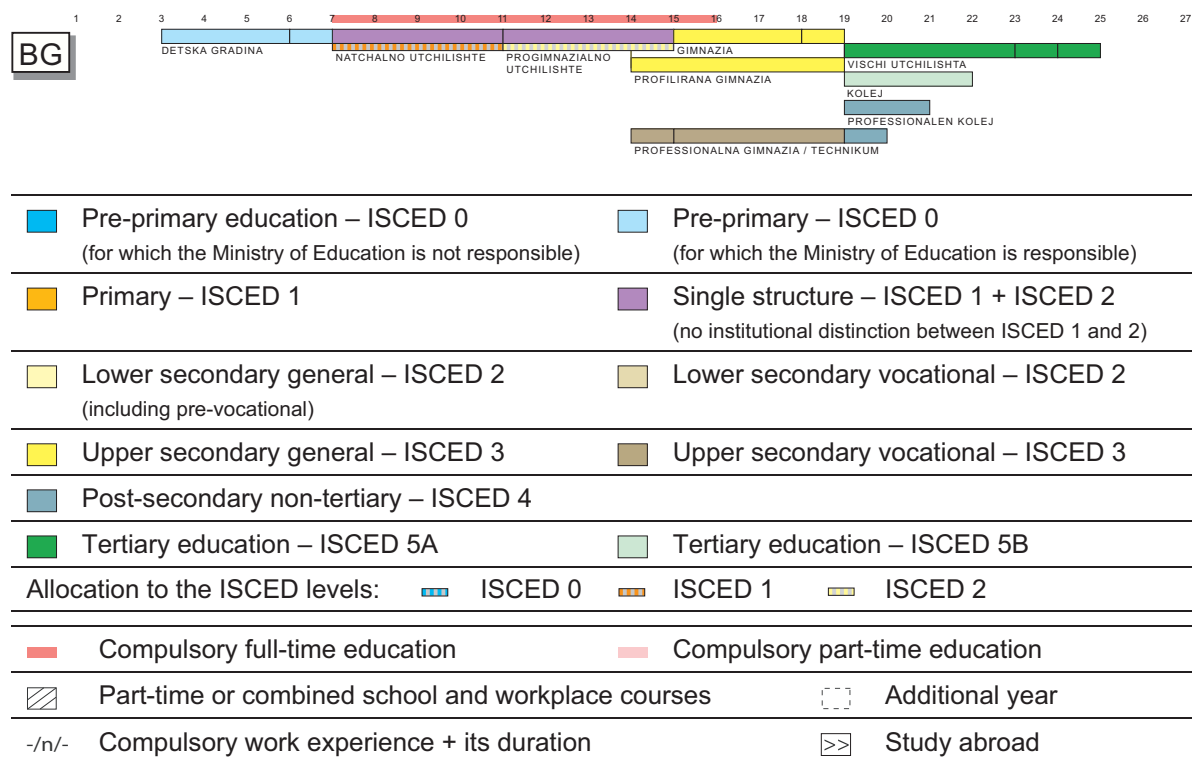
- Ordinance # 3 from 17.05.2004 on the organization and administration of state matriculation exams;
- Ordinance # 11 from 28.03.2005 on admitting pupils to state and municipal schools;
- Ordinance # 2 from 18.04.2003 on admitting pupils to sredni uchilishta po izkustvata (upper secondary arts schools);
- Ordinance # 3 from 26.03.2004 on admitting pupils to primary and lower secondary levels of education at art schools;
- Ordinance # 4 from 8.04.2002 on admitting pupils to sports schools;
- Ordinance # 6 from 19.08.2002 on the education of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases
- Ordinance # 7 from 29.12.2000 on determining the number of pupils and children in the classes and groups at schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units);
- Ordinance # 5 from 14.05.2002 on the compulsory teaching hours and the regulations concerning the number of personnel in the system of public education;
- Ordinance on the state educational requirements for one-year allowance of children and pupils at state and municipal kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units);
- Ordinance # 5 from 29.12.1996 on the conditions for improving teachers' qualification within the system of public education and the regulations on the acquisition of professional qualification degrees;
- Ordinance # 4 on the documents in the public education system

The execution of some of these measures will lead to adopting new legislative regulations on out-of-class and extra-curricular activity, regulations on the criteria and order for evaluating teachers' work, new regulations on the order and method of determining a secondary education's staff salary, regulations on the conditions and order for awarding teachers, regulations on the set-up and activity of the National Head Teacher Training Institute, regulation on school heads' qualification and right to occupy their position, regulations on the criteria and order for school heads' testimonials.

The big number of significant changes makes it necessary to accept and develop a new Public Education Act in order to regulate clearly and completely all basic relationships which develop in the system of school education.

2.4. General Structure and Defining Moments in Educational Guidance

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2005/06



Source: Eurydice.

The structure of the educational system in the Republic of Bulgaria is composed of the following levels: preschool education, school education (basic and upper secondary) and higher education. Preschool education comprises children from 3 to 6/7 years of age. Kindergarten attendance is not compulsory. The main goal of preschool education in Bulgaria is to provide an opportunity for each child to develop to a full extent his/her potential and to prepare for school education by being introduced to the respective material environment, by receiving guidance on fundamental human values and forming habits and skills for adapting to studying and to attending school.

Kindergartens are preparatory institutions in the public education system, where children from the age of three up to their enrolment in first grade in primary school are brought up, trained and educated. The upbringing and the education of the children is organized and carried out in accordance with the state education requirement for preschool education and preparation and prepares children to start school.

The children in the preparatory groups who do not speak Bulgarian well are provided with additional instruction in Bulgarian according to a specialized language acquisition methodology, so that they reach a level of proficiency comparable to that of the rest of the children.

Since the school year 2003/2004 the preparation of children for school a year before they enroll in first grade of primary school has become compulsory and is performed in preparatory groups at kindergartens or preparatory classes at school, parents and guardians being exempt from paying fees.

Basic (Single structure) education in Bulgaria (1st through 8th grade) includes the primary school stage (1st grade through 4th grade) and the lower secondary stage (5th grade through 8th grade). Upper secondary education may be divided into upper secondary general (with non-specialized and specialized (profilirani) schools) and vocational. Upper secondary general education is provided at non-specialized schools (3 or 4 years of study) and at profilirani (specialized) schools (4 or 5 years of study). Pupils may enter profilirani (specialized) schools and profesionalni gimnazii (vocational upper secondary schools) on completing the 7th or the 8th grade and taking entrance examinations, which correspond to the specialization of the respective school (Bulgarian language and Literature, Mathematics, Humanities, etc.) or be admitted on the basis of submitted documents according to the requirements of Ordinance # 11 .

School education provides the education and upbringing of pupils in accordance with social needs and their individual abilities and expectations for successful realization in civil society.

According to the degree given, school education is divided into basic (awarded after the completion of the basic level of education) and secondary (awarded after completion of the upper secondary level of education). According to the education content it is general and vocational. On the basis of this principle schools are divided into obshtobrazovatelni (general) and profesionalni (vocational).

General education provides acquisition of the general education minimum and, where possible, specialized training, according to the state education requirements. Basic education is carried out at two stages: primary – 1st to 4th grade including; and lower secondary stage – 5th to 8th grade including. Upper secondary education encompasses grades 9th to 13th at the general and vocational schools.

Colleges are included in the system of higher education and allow the acquisition of non-university (undergraduate) education. College graduates acquire the qualification and educational degree of “Specialist in”, which allows them to practice the profession acquired. They may continue their education at a higher institution on the basis of the qualifications acquired at secondary schools.

The university type of higher education is provided at the universities and the specialized higher schools – academies, institutes. It includes the followings stages:

- First stage – a course of study of at least 4 years, leading to a Bachelor’s degree upon graduation;
- Second stage – a course of study of at least 5 years, or 1 year following a Bachelor’s degree, leading a Master’s degree upon graduation;
- Third stage – a three-year course of study upon obtaining a master’s degree, leading to a Doctor’s degree.

The system of higher education includes universities, academies, institutes and colleges, which may be state or private.

Non-school establishments perform various functions but have a common objective, i.e. to assist in implementing the national educational policy and the educational process by providing conditions for and resolving substantial issues as to educational activities. Pursuant to the PEA (Art. 33a), non-

school establishments include the various obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) in the educational system. They are grouped as follows:

- Research and informational: Information Centres, Centres for Educational Services, etc.;
- Non-school pedagogical establishments: hostels, boarding houses, libraries, Centres for Work with Children, United Children's Centre, etc.;
- For the management of international programs: the Human Resources Development Centre, the Centre for Providing Software Resources on the Financial Management of Secondary Education, etc.;
- For organized recreation and sports: Central Sports Schools, camps, qualification and recreation centers;
- Socially oriented: homes for upbringing and educating children deprived of parental care;
- For day-to-day management and provision of financial resources for the public education system.

The total number of non-school institutions related to the educational system was 332 in 2002/2003.

Schools are educational institutions in the public education system, which provide the completion of a grade, acquisition of an educational degree and/or professional qualifications.

Various types of school organization function in the Bulgarian educational system, i.e., by educational level, by type of instruction they provide, by type of funding.

According to the type of instruction and the educational level, schools are:

- Nachalni - Primary: grade 1 through grade 4;
- Progimnazialni - Lower secondary: grade 5 through grade 8;
- Osnovni - Basic: grade 1 through grade 8;
- Gimnazii - Upper secondary schools, also called high schools: grade 9 through grade 12;
- Profilirani gimnazii - Specialized upper secondary schools/Specialized high schools;
- Sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta - Secondary general schools, grade 1 through grade 12;
- Profesionalni gimnazii - Vocational upper secondary schools - grade 8 or 9 through grade 12 or grade 13;
- Profesionalni uchilishta - Vocational schools: from grade 7 or grade 9 with a three-year training course; from grade 9 with a four-year training course; and profesionalni kolezhi (vocational colleges) with a course of study of up to two years;
- Sports schools;
- Arts schools;
- Spetsialni uchilishta - Special schools.

Basic education (grade 1 through grade 8) includes primary school (grade 1 through grade 4) and lower secondary school (class 5 to class 8). This type of education may be obtained in state-owned, municipal and private schools. Within the framework of the same educational level, additional professional qualifications may also be acquired through vocational and technical programs after finishing grades 6, 7 and 8. On successful completion of grade 4, a Certificate of Completed Primary Education is issued and on successful completion of class 8 – a Certificate of Completed Basic Education.

Vocational upper secondary education may also be received at profesionalni uchilishta (vocational schools) on completion of grade 8 and a 4-year course of study or on completion of grade 7 and a 5-year course of study. It may also be obtained at profesionalni tehniicheski uchilishta (vocational technical schools) with a 3-year educational program.

Educational programs for vocational technical schools are offered on completion of basic education, with a 2-year course of study. The professional qualification acquired gives the pupil access to the labour market.

Upper secondary general education is provided by:

- Sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta (Secondary general schools) - which cover both basic and upper secondary school levels (grade 1 through grade 12).
- Profilirani uchilishta (Specialized schools) with intensive teaching of foreign languages (foreign-language schools) - pupils enter such a school on completion of the 7th grade through competing at exams. These schools comprise grades 8 through grade 12 (13).
- Profilirani (specialized) upper secondary schools - pupils enter the school on completion of the 8th grade (natural sciences and/or mathematical schools; specialized in the humanities; sports, art schools, etc.). They cover grade 9 through grade 12 (13).
- Special education - there is a network of schools – boarding schools, funded entirely by the government, for children with physical and mental disabilities. The priorities in this sphere are still to be met: adoption of legislation for providing financial support, development of alternative forms of education, establishment of a system of general schooling for admission of children from other schools and socialization of children with special needs, introduction of programs for integrated forms of education, individual instruction, etc.

According to the way of funding, schools are state, municipal and private.

State schools, which are of national importance and are funded by the national budget, are:

- Schools where only pupils with special educational needs are educated, i.e. children with hearing, visual and mental disabilities, speech impediments, chronic diseases, physical injuries, or asocial behavior;
- Schools where all specializations or vocations studied meet the educational interests and needs of more than one district in Bulgaria;
- Bulgarian schools abroad;
- Schools where detainees are educated.

Municipal schools are of local importance and are funded by the municipal budget. Pupils from other municipalities are also entitled to study in such schools.

Private schools are not funded by the state or municipal budget and pupils pay fees for their education.

2.5. Compulsory Education

School education in the Republic of Bulgaria is compulsory by the age of 16. It begins at the age of seven, when children are enrolled as first-grade pupils. Children at the age of six can also be enrolled as first-grade pupils, if their physical and mental development, according to their parents' or guardians' judgment, allows it. Since the 2003/2004 school year, children's training in preparatory groups with kindergartens or preparatory classes to schools has become compulsory as their parents or guardians are exempt from payment of fees.

There is no compulsory vocational education in the Bulgarian educational system. Under the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (article 53) and the Public Education Act (article 7, paragraph 1) school education up to the age of 16 is compulsory. This implies that until that age pupils have to study in any of the types of schools, chosen by themselves or their parents. This may be a general (*obshtobrazovatelno*) or a vocational (*profesionalno*) school. If they have been enrolled in a *profesionalna gimnaziya* (vocational upper secondary school) after completing *osnovno uchilishte* (basic school), they have the right to continue their studies in the chosen school even after completing compulsory education at the age of 16.

The compulsory education up to the age of 16 may be completed at a private school, which has been established pursuant to the Public Education Act and is authorized to issue valid certificates for completed grade or acquired vocational training, certificates for completed basic education and professional qualification, as well as diplomas for completed secondary education. Pupils have the right to complete their education in a state, municipal or private school chosen by them. By the age of 16 they are obliged to study in any of the various types of schools, private inclusive.

Pupils may complete their compulsory education choosing themselves the school and type of education, according to their personal preferences and capacities (Public Education Act, article 91, paragraph 1).

The forms of instruction are: daytime, evening, part-time, individual, independent, correspondence and distance.

Schools generally organize daytime and/or evening forms of instruction, but may also organize part-time, individual, independent, correspondence and distance forms of instruction.

In the daytime, evening and part-time forms of instruction pupils are organized in classes or groups, while the other forms of instruction are organized for each individual pupil.

The evening form is an attendance-based form of instruction provided at school day hours convenient for the pupils. The instruction is organized and carried out in compliance with the school curriculum.

The part-time form includes classes, independent work and exams on subjects according to the school curriculum.

The individual form of instruction includes classes, as well as exams and continuous assessment on the subjects studied, if this is envisaged in the individual curriculum approved by the head teacher of the school. This form of instruction is organized for:

- pupils who due to health problems are unable to attend school for more than 30 successive school days.
- gifted pupils, as well as pupils who for family reasons wish to complete one or more grades in a different period of time.

In the first case, the school organizes individual instruction at home, on the basis of a medical document issued by a medical consultative commission, providing from 8 to 12 school hours per week. The knowledge and skills of these pupils are tested on the basis of continuous assessment. The knowledge and skills of pupils in the second case are tested by exams. The terms and procedure for organizing the exams are defined by the head teacher of the school.

The independent form is a non-attendance form of instruction in which pupils study independently and sit for exams on subjects according to the school curriculum. The independent form is organized for:

- pupils at compulsory schooling age who due to health problems are unable to study in the daytime form, as well as for gifted children at compulsory schooling age;
- persons over the age of 16.

Pupils studying in the daytime, evening, part-time, individual and independent forms of instruction can change the form of instruction at the beginning of the school year. The change of the form of instruction is also allowed during the school year, when pupils switch:

- from daytime, evening or part-time to individual or independent form of instruction;
- from daytime to evening form of instruction.

The head teacher issues an order to change the form of instruction.

The correspondence form is a non-attendance form of instruction in which pupils are given assignments and their progress is assessed through mailing correspondence between the school and the pupils.

The distance form is a non-attendance form of instruction in which instruction is provided by means of modern information and communication technology.

The correspondence and distance forms of instruction are organized by terms procedure established with an ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science.

The completion of a grade or a degree of education as well as the acquisition of a professional qualification in the different forms of instruction are certified with the same types of documents in accordance with the state education requirement on the documents in the public education system, which give graduated pupils the same rights.

Pupils are not allowed to be absent from school without valid reasons. The absence of a pupil from classes for a valid reason has to be verified by a sickness certificate, certificate issued from a sports club he/she is a member of, or a letter of notification written by the parent or the guardian.

The absence of a pupil from classes without a valid excuse counts as an 'unexcused absence' from school. Provided a pupil is 15 minutes late without a valid excuse for three school hours, this is considered as an 'unexcused absence' for one school hour. In case of a pupil's nonattendance, the class teacher duly notifies in writing the pupil's parent or guardian. A "transfer to another school till the end of the school year" penalty may be imposed on a pupil if he/she has more than 15 'unexcused absences', with the exception of pupils in their final upper secondary school grade in both day and evening form of instruction.

If pupils fail to perform their obligations, established by the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act and the school activities regulations, they are penalized by:

- reprimand;
- warning for transfer to another school;
- transfer to another school until the end of the school year;
- moving from daytime to independent form of instruction – for pupils aged 16 and above.

Penalties are imposed with orders by the head teacher on suggestion of the class teacher or of the pedagogical council.

It is municipalities that exert control over compulsory school education up to 16 years of age. The school Boards of Trustees assist the school and the municipal authorities in carrying out compulsory school education.

In case of school nonattendance, administrative measures are taken – parents, guardians and trustees who do not ensure school attendance of their children for the time they are subject to compulsory education, are fined with a sum of BGN 20 to BGN 100, and if this violation is repeated – from BGN 50 to BGN 250. Violations committed are verified by certificates drawn up by the respective municipal authorities. Penal orders are issued by the mayor.

With a view to facilitating school attendance of pupils up to the age of 16, coming from settlements where a relevant school is unavailable, either free of charge transportation is provided or boarding-school training in the nearest settlement on the territory of the respective municipality is organized.

2.6. General Administration

The present section presents the organization of the state education administration at all levels.

2.6.1. General Administration at National Level

At national level, the management of education is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science, which is a body of the Council of Ministers responsible for development and implementation of the state policy in education.

The Ministry of Education and Science participates in the development of the state policy by preparing:

- national strategies, priorities and programs for development of the public education system
- the state education requirements for the public education system
- programs for qualification of the staff within the public education system
- programs for international cooperation in the field of education and coordinating their implementation.

The Ministry of Education and Science carries out the state educational policy by:

- Providing the necessary conditions for the functioning and development of the public education system;
- coordinating the relationship between the institutions in the public education system, the government institutions, the nongovernmental organizations and the social partners;
- exercising control over the activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education, kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units).

The Minister of Education and Science is a central one-man body of the executive power, who manages and represents the Ministry. The Minister manages, coordinates and controls the implementation of the state policy and European integration in the field of education and science. A specialized administration of the Ministry of Education and Science assists the Minister in exercising his/her powers. It includes the following departments that are responsible for the main sectors in the system of education:

The Department of General Education Policy assists the Minister in implementing the state policy in the field of pre-primary, basic and upper secondary general education; organises and participates in the development, introduction, evaluation and update of the State Education Requirements for the study content and syllabi, as well as in developing the curricula and syllabi; it is responsible for developing the system of kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) – opening up, transforming, closing down, etc.

The Department of Vocational Education and Continuing Training Policy participates in implementing the state policy in the field of vocational education, training and orientation; sets the strategic objectives and priorities in the national system of vocational education with a view to adjusting it to the European standards of professional qualification; organises the preparation of educational documentation in harmony with the State Education Requirements; offers for approval qualification programmes, etc.

The Department of Educational Environment and Educational Integration – organises and assists in the implementation of the state policy of developing the forms of educational integration of children

and pupils with special educational needs and children and pupils deprived of parental care; develops strategies and programmes for implementing the European requirements in this field; cooperates in developing the system of kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) and assists them in arranging and improving the educational environment.

The Department of Coordination and Control of Secondary Education participates in implementing the state policy of coordination and control in the public education system; assists the Minister in implementing the coordination and control of the activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education; participates in the development and implementation of models for inspecting schools; coordinates and assists the activities on performing internal and external assessment in the system of school education; controls the activities on implementing the policy related to Bulgaria's European inclusion and the absorption of structural funds, etc.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology in Education – develops strategies, programmes and mechanisms for introducing ICT in schools and higher education institutions; coordinates and is responsible for the implementation of the Ministry's policy regarding the introduction of ICT at school; coordinates and is responsible for the activities for creating and updating electronic study content, ect.

The Department of Qualification and Career Development organises and is responsible for the activities on implementing the state policy on teacher training and teachers' career development; participates in developing and updating the legislation; develops analyses, strategies and programmes for training and career development; coordinates the relationship with other government institutions, schools and higher education institutions, as well as with NGOs working in this field, etc.

The Department of Textbooks, Supplementary Materials and Educational Documentation organises and is responsible for all activities related to the evaluation and approval of textbooks and supplementary materials, for providing and distributing the textbooks and supplementary materials which are free for pupils, etc.

The Department of Higher Education Policy assists the Minister in implementing the state policy in the field of higher education; prepares motions and drafts of public acts for opening up, transforming or closing down faculties, institutes, branches and colleges within the state higher education institutions; organises the development of state requirements for acquiring higher education, educational and qualification degrees according to professional tracks and specialities; organizes the development of the state educational requirements on the content of the basic documents issued by higher schools and maintains a national register of the documents for higher education and qualification.

The Department of Students, PhD Candidates and Post-doctoral students participates in implementing the state policy in drafting legislation in relation to the admission, maintenance, career orientation, procedures for competitions etc. for the education of students, PhD candidates and post-doctoral students.

The Department of Scientific Research develops and offers for approval academic programmes in compliance with national priorities and the priorities related to Bulgaria's membership in the EU, as well as programmes and projects of regional importance; analyses and prepares motions for the status

of research potential, the existing material basis and infrastructure; disseminates information, results and new initiatives of European and trans-European institutions, prepares materials and organises specialised activities for disseminating information about international research programmes and monitors and analyses the results of the participation of Bulgarian teams of academics in these programmes; organises the performance of the Ministry's functions in the field of research activity and of the implementation of the results from research.

The Department of Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes coordinates, administers and is in charge of the activities on absorbing the resources from the structural funds of the European Union for the purposes of education and science.

The Legal Department assists in drafting bills and by-laws regulating the system of education and science; monitors and analyses their implementation.

The Department of Finance motivates the need for drafting, amending and complementing legislation, develops and participates in the development of legislation concerning the planning and management of financial resources in the public education system, higher education and science; coordinates and controls the funding and implementation of national programmes and projects in the field of education and science; participates in implementing the income policy in the system of education and science.

The Department of Government Property and Investment Policy assists the Minister of Education and Science in implementing the policy in acquiring, managing and disposing of government-owned real estate and movable property.

The Department of European Inclusion and International Cooperation is in charge of implementing and abiding by the commitments that Bulgaria has made in relation to education in the process of European inclusion; the department is responsible for drafting international agreements on a state and on an institutional level, programmes and reports, and for preparing for the inclusion of the country in governmental and nongovernmental multilateral agreements for educational and scientific exchange; coordinates the operational relations with international government and nongovernment organizations – the UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union etc.

Under the Higher Education Act, higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria is managed by the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA).

The National Assembly opens, transforms and closes down higher schools. The amendments to the Higher Education Act adopted in 1999 linked this with the results of the accreditation of higher schools. Every year the State Budget Act, adopted by the National Assembly, sets the subsidy for each state higher school.

The Council of Ministers approves the main trends of the national policy in the field of higher education and the uniform state requirements for the content of the main documents, issued by higher schools. It represents the interests of Bulgarian higher education and science before other state and international organizations and signs international treaties and agreements.

The Council of Ministers is the body that opens, transforms and closes down faculties, institutes, departments and colleges of state higher schools based on a request filed by the respective higher school and/or on proposal by the Minister of Education and Science. On proposal by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Council of Ministers approves a classifier of the areas of higher education, vocational tracks, uniform state requirements for acquiring higher education by educational and qualification degrees and uniform state requirements for the regulated professions by majors. Every year, the Council approves the number of students, admitted to higher schools, given that in state higher schools, their number varies for the separate professional areas and educational and qualification degrees. The Council of Ministers also approves the total number of students admitted to private higher schools and that of doctoral candidates and post-doctoral students to higher schools.

The Council of Ministers sets the rate of the application and education fees for state higher schools and approves the terms and procedure for granting scholarships for studies in state higher schools, for using boarding houses and other social and utility benefits by students, doctoral candidates and post-doctoral students in all higher schools.

Along with that the Council of Ministers approves the state requirements for recognizing higher education, acquired in foreign higher schools.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main body exercising supervision over the higher schools and implementing the national policy in the field of higher education. In actual fact, the Council of Ministers exercises most of its law-stipulated powers following proposals, which it receives from the Ministry of Education and Science.

2.6.2. General Administration at a Regional Level

The management of education at a regional level is carried out by the Regional Inspectorates of Education. They are territorial administration units, subordinate to the Minister of Education and Science, for management and control of the public education system, which implement the state educational policy on the territory of the respective districts. The overall activity of all types and levels of schools, kindergartens and *obsluzhvashti zvena* (servicing units) is included in the scope of their management activities so as to:

- provide conditions for the functioning and development of kindergartens, schools and *obsluzhvashti zvena* (servicing units) on the territory of the respective district;
- coordinate the relationship between the institutions within the public education system, the regional government institutions, the nongovernmental organizations and the regional structures of the social partners;
- control the application and fulfillment of the state educational requirements by state-owned, municipal and private kindergartens and schools and by municipal *obsluzhvashti zvena* (servicing units), government *obsluzhvashti zvena* (servicing units) with a social purpose, i.e. homes for upbringing and educating children deprived of parental care.

The Regional Inspectorates of Education are managed and represented by a head, who is a civil servant and is appointed by the Minister of Education and Science by competition. Inspectorate activities are carried out by civil servants and people employed on the grounds of labour relations.

Depending on the distribution of activities, the administration of the Regional Inspectorates is general and specialized and is organized in departments:

The general administration is organized in the Department of Administrative-legal, Financial-economic and Information Services, which ensures technical provision of the activities of the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education and the specialized administration, as well as of activities related to the administrative service of natural and legal persons. The main activities of the Department are: legal, activities related to providing the human resources required, registry, financial-economic, information activities;

The specialized administration is organized in the Department of Inspection and Organizational and Methodological Activities, which assists and provides for the performance of the powers of the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education by monitoring the education process and performing organizational and methodological functions, as follows:

- Coordinates and monitors the implementation and fulfillment of the state education requirements at kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) on the territory of the respective district;
- Monitors and analyses the overall organization of the educational process
- Assists in the development of kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units);
- Coordinates the relationship between the institutions in the public education system, the territorial bodies of the executive power and other organizations;
- Organizes and participates in the implementation of national programs and projects;
- Organizes the development of the state admission plan;
- Coordinates and organizes the administration of the state matriculation examinations;
- Prepares motions for opening, transforming and closing down state-owned kindergartens, state-owned and municipal schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) after carrying out an inspection;
- Responds to submitted applications, complaints, signals and proposals;
- Assists in carrying out various forms of teacher qualification, as well as deputy heads and heads of schools qualification;
- Refers children with special educational needs and chronic diseases to the appropriate educational institutions;
- Organizes and conducts work meetings with heads, deputy heads and teachers;
- Provides organizational and methodological assistance for the activities of heads, deputy heads and teachers;
- Draws up programs and strategies for developing and improving the organizational structures on the district territory
- Organizes regional and national out-of-school activities for pupils;
- Is responsible for holding competitions for the position of “head” of state-owned kindergartens, state-owned and municipal schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units).

Nationwide, the staff of the Regional Education Inspectorates are distributed in 28 districts.

According to the Constitution in force in the Republic of Bulgaria, autonomous territorial formations are not allowed; therefore, there are no differences in implementing Bulgarian legislation in various regions of the country.

2.6.3. General Administration at Local Level

The municipalities are territorial administrative bodies that are not included in the management structure of the educational system, but pursuant to the Public Education Act, they are authorized to perform a number of important functions and assume responsibilities for the education in the respective settlement. They provide and control:

- the compulsory school education of children up to 16 years of age;
- healthcare and safety at kindergartens and schools, to children and pupils by establishing surgeries for non-stationary medical care;
- funding for the maintenance, construction, furniture and repair of schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units);
- funding for meeting the state education requirements for the one-year allowance for children and pupils in state and municipal kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) and for the remuneration of the public education system, as well as for providing funding for all sections of the curricula of municipal kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units);
- appropriate conditions in canteens, boarding houses, recreation and sports facilities and transportation for children, pupils and teachers, as well as free transportation for pupils under 16 years of age if there is no appropriate school in the settlement;
- all the scholarships and special bonuses for pupils.

Mayors of municipalities exercise control on the way municipal kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) spend the financial resources provided.

2.6.4. Educational Institutions, Administration, Management

The public education system includes schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units). Kindergartens and schools can be state-owned, municipal and private. Servicing units can be state-owned or municipal.

State are those kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) which are of national importance and are funded by the national budget through the Ministry of Education and Science or through other Ministries and government departments. The real estate granted to them for use is public state property.

Municipal are those kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) which are financed by the municipal budgets. The real estate granted to them for use is public municipal property.

Private are those kindergartens and schools which are opened or reorganized at the request of Bulgarian natural persons or legal bodies and are not supported by the state or municipal budget. They are opened or reorganized by an order of the Minister of Education and Science, use private real estate or are granted private, state or municipal real estate.

The managing body of a school is its head teacher. The head teacher is assisted by a deputy head in organizing and monitoring the educational, administrative and educational-manufacturing activities of the school in accordance with the legislation in force in the public education system and the respective job description.

The Pedagogical Council is a specialized body for discussing and settling major pedagogical issues at schools. It includes deputy heads, teachers, tutors and other specialists with educational functions. The head of the school is the chairperson of the Pedagogical Council and he/she provides the implementation of the Council's resolutions.

The school Boards of Trustees are public bodies for supporting school activities.

The most important functions of a head teacher as the governing school body are to:

- organize, control and account for the overall school activity;
- meet and implement the state educational requirements;
- provide safe conditions for education, training and work
- represent the institution before authorities, organizations and persons and to conclude contracts with legal bodies and natural persons in accordance with the school scope of activity and within his/her competence;
- draw up a budget and be responsible for the lawful, expedient and economical disposal of budget funds;
- conclude and terminate employment contracts with deputy heads, teachers, tutors, employees and workers under the procedures of the Labour Code;
- announce the vacancies at the Employment Offices and the Regional Inspectorates of Education within 3 days from their becoming vacant;
- award and penalise pupils, teachers and employees according to the Labour Code, the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA;
- organize the admission of children and pupils and their education and upbringing in compliance with the state education requirements;
- sign and seal the documents for transferring pupils, for completed grade, for educational level, and for professional qualification; to keep the school seal with the National Coat of Arms;
- assist the competent authorities in finding out violations;
- control and assume responsibility for the proper upkeep and storing of school documentation;
- provide conditions for healthcare and preventive activities at school;
- draw up the staff job schedule and approve the schedule of positions by name as well as the respective remuneration.

The position of a "head" of school is taken on the basis of competition.

The Pedagogical Council performs a number of important functions:

- adopts a strategy for the development of the school, which is updated each year;
- adopts the Regulations of the school activities;
- adopts the school curriculum;
- selects the forms of instruction;
- discusses and takes decisions on the results of education;

- determines the procedure for admission of pupils to the school in compliance with the legal requirements;
- approves curricula for individual forms of instruction;
- makes suggestions to the head for awarding and penalizing pupils;
- specifies the activities outside the state education requirements and adopts programs for their implementation;
- adopts resolutions for transferring pupils at compulsory schooling age to an independent form of education for children with health problems or gifted children;
- considers the results of the activities of the school library and makes recommendations;
- approves uniforms, school symbols and rituals proposed by the school Board of Trustees.

The Pedagogical Council is called at least bimonthly by the head or extraordinarily – at the written request of at least 1/3 of its members.

At vocational and in some other state and municipal schools, a deputy head in charge of the educational-manufacturing activities is appointed. He/she organizes and monitors the performance of the practical activities of pupils throughout their educational, laboratory and production practice; the drawing up and implementation of the educational-manufacturing plan, the practical examinations and the acquisition of qualifications; the implementation of the required safety measures; the sale of products manufactured as a result of educational-manufacturing activities, etc.

All classes in Bulgarian schools are managed by class teachers. For primary schools (grade 1st to 4th), the class teacher is the teacher of the respective class, and for the subsequent school levels the class teacher may be a teacher of any subject, who is teaching the respective class.

Class teachers plan the class activity and the relationship with the parents of the pupils entrusted to their care and the social environment; they carry out extracurricular activities. Class teachers provide children's regular attendance at school. They take care of maintaining a favorable psychological climate and respectful relationships among pupils in their class, assist in solving class problems, take special care of pupils who lag behind, of pupils with asocial behavior, etc.

Class teachers keep the school documentation related to their class.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the higher education institutions in Bulgaria have been independent legal entities that have academic autonomy, which includes academic freedom, academic self management and immunity on the territory of the higher school. Initially, their right to academic autonomy is regulated by the Academic Autonomy Act from 1990 and later by the Higher Education Act that was passed in 1995. The higher schools may define their internal organization and manage their resources independently.

The academic freedom finds expression in the freedom of teaching, the freedom of carrying out scientific research, the freedom of creative powers and freedom of the provided training.

The academic self-management is expressed in the following:

- all management bodies are elected for a certain mandate;
- the higher school is entitled to regulate its structure and activities in its own regulations in compliance with the Higher Education Act

- independent choice of the members of the research and teaching staff, the conditions for acceptance of students and the training forms for students, doctoral and post-doctoral students;
- independent development and execution of the curricula and research projects;
- choice of the specialities to be taught;
- right to announce competitions and select lecturers under the conditions and order as per the Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act;
- the right to establish own funds and independent regulations on the order of their utilization;
- the right to independent contracts with the state and other users for training and improving the qualification of higher education specialists as well as for the execution of scientific and applied research;
- the right to partnership with other higher schools and other organizations
- the right to build, own or use material base necessary for the educational and research activities and for servicing the social everyday needs of students and lecturers, doctoral candidates and employees;
- the right to organize international cooperation, contracting and membership in international organizations.
- The management bodies of the state higher schools are the General Assembly, the Academic Council and the Rector. Their mandate lasts four years.

The General Assembly is the supreme collective management body, which has the right to approve or amend the Regulations on the activities of the higher school; to specify the number of the Control Committee members, elect its members, the chairperson and the deputy chairperson, to elect the Rector; to define the number of members and choose the members of the Academic Council; to discuss and approve the annual report of the Rector on the higher school status.

The Academic Council is the management body for the educational and science policy of the higher school. It is the body that specifies the educational policy of the higher school, approves the mandate program and controls its execution; annually approves the report on the results from the higher school activities; makes decisions for the establishment, transformation or closing of departments, faculties and servicing units of the higher school; specifies the specialities, forms and levels in which the training is carried out and makes proposals for the number of the accepted students; approves or changes the qualification characteristics and the curricula for training of specialists in the educational degrees or at the colleges of the higher school; defines the science policy of the higher school and resolves main organizational issues and issues referring to the research activities; specifies the structural composition of the general meeting and the organization for the choice of its members; defines the personnel policy of the higher school, approves the job descriptions of the academic team and approves the regulation for its attestation; elects a deputy-rector after the rector's proposal; takes decision for going into partnership with higher schools and science organizations; annually approves the budget of the higher school and controls its performance; awards the honorary title of doctor honoris causa; elects extra professors and extra associate professors; approves regulations for certain educational, scientific, creative or scientific-production activities of the higher school; approves the system for evaluation and maintenance of the training quality and the academic team within the higher school.

The Academic Council consists of 25 to 45 members and includes representatives of the academic staff, working under a basic labour contract with the higher school, students, candidate doctors and employees.

The Rector represents the higher school and is Chairperson of the Academic Council by right. He concludes and terminates labour contracts; resolves definitely all issues related to acceptance, dismissal and transferring students, candidate doctors and post-doctoral students; prepares and proposes to the Academic Council to approve the annual report of the higher school and publishes it; proposes to the Academic Council the candidatures of lecturers having academic rank for the election of one or more deputy rectors; if necessary, the Rector may summon the collective management

bodies of the basic units of the higher school; performs other functions ensuing from the law and from the decisions of the Academic Council or the General Assembly.

In his/her activities, the Rector may be assisted by deputy rectors, who organize and bear responsibility for a specific direction in the activity of the higher school (educational, international or research activity). The work of the Rector might be supported by a Rector Council or by an Extended Rector Council in some higher schools.

The Control Council carries out internal control on the higher school activities. It checks whether the management bodies of the higher school and its main units were elected in conformity with the law within one month and reports to the Academic Council about the results from the check-up; prepares a statement on the draft budget of the higher school and its use and reports to the Academic Council and the General Assembly at least once a year.

The Student Council is the body, which protects the common interests of the students. It consists of the representatives of students and candidate doctors in the General Assembly of the higher school. The Student Council adopts rules for its organization and activities and submits it to the Academic Council of the higher school. The activities of the Student Council are financed by the higher school to the amount of 1 percent of the education cost. The funds are used for protection of the social interests of the students, for carrying out cultural, sports, research, creative and international activities. The Student Council has the right to organize the election of its representatives in the management bodies of the higher school; to propose introduction of subjects to be studied; to propose the invitation of external lecturers; to organize the establishment of students' specialized scientific communities and the publication of their works; to set up and manage its own organizational units, if needed; to establish domestic and international educational, cultural and post-graduate contacts among students; to express opinion and make proposals for the development of sports activity in the higher school; to participate in the management of students' hostels; to participate in the organization of the training process, the distribution of scholarships and benefits to students.

The national body which expresses the common interests of the students and candidate doctors is the Representation of the Student Councils. The Representation of the Student Councils comprises the chairpersons or delegated representatives of the student councils of the higher schools. Its activity is funded through deductions from the budgets of the student councils. The Representation of the Student Councils prepares statements and proposals on the issues of higher education and research at the higher school, concerning its students; gives opinion on the draft state budget in its part for education and culture.

The management of the basic structural levels – faculties, departments, institutes, branches and colleges is similar to the management at an institutional level. The different units have a different level of independence, including financial independence. Their choice of management bodies might be either independent or included in the powers of the Academic Council or the Rector.

The private higher schools might have another structure, way of management and definition of management bodies, under the condition that they do not infringe on academic freedom. The structure and management bodies of private upper secondary schools are different from the ones of the state institutions; however, they are different for the individual private higher schools as well. For the most of them, management bodies include Board of Trustees, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Academic Council and Rector.

2.7. Internal and External Consultation

When decisions are made in schools, various social groups take part in the procedure through their representatives in the governing bodies. Such bodies are: the Pedagogical Council, the Pupils' Council, the School Board of Trustees, etc.

2.7.1. Internal Consultation

The Pedagogical Council is a specialized school body which discusses and settles major pedagogical issues (Public Education Act, Art. 38, par. 1). Its membership and functions are specified by the Regulations on Implementation of the Public Education Act. It includes all teachers, the school management, the pedagogical counselor and other people who work directly with pupils (workshop managers, masters, etc.). The following persons may be invited to participate in the Council's meetings: the Chair person of the Board of Trustees or its members, representatives of public organizations and business circles, psychologists, doctors, etc., depending on the issues considered. The Chairperson of the Pedagogical Council is the head of school by right. The Council meets at least bimonthly.

Issues discussed at the meetings are resolved by an open majority vote. Administrative and management issues are considered at some of the meetings, i.e., approval of the allocation of labour at school – by subjects, classes, teachers, class management, laboratory management, school plans, reports on work done, etc. Various educational issues may be addressed at other meetings.

Resolutions of the Pedagogical Council may be revoked by the Council itself (by a qualified majority) or the Head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education.

Teachers may establish, on their initiative, other bodies as well: subject committees by subject and methodology associations, problem or creative groups by subject, grade or a given problem, most often related to carrying out methodology work, innovation and qualification activities, to discussions of various specific assignments and problems.

Trade unions are also formed at schools depending on the interests and needs of teachers. They protect teachers' labour and professional rights and interests. The chairpersons of those trade unions also participate in taking decisions on teachers' labour relations.

The School Board is not regulated as an obligatory body in the management of schools. It is established by a decision of the school management and the Pedagogical Council and is typical of schools with an upper secondary level of education. It includes the head of school or his/her deputies, teachers or their representatives, representatives of pupils and parents. The School Board discusses general issues about the school's activities, related to its development, the school regulations, discipline, functioning, schooling achievements, school facilities and equipment, funding, environmental protection, sickness rate, and other problems (drug addiction, sects, etc.). Issues addressed in inquiries conducted by pupils, teachers, parents, etc. about the public opinion among parents, pupils, the community, business circles, etc., about the image of the school, the assessment of its work, the strategies for its development, etc may also be considered. The establishment and functions of the School Board are specified by the particular school's Internal Regulations.

The School Board is not a typical body of schools with pupils and children, i.e., primary schools and kindergartens.

In many schools, there is also a functioning body named General Assembly, in which all pupils, teachers, managers and maintenance personnel participate if the school has a small number of pupils (up to 100-200), or representatives of the various groups provided the school is larger. Formation of such a body and its functions are specified in the school's internal regulations (membership, goals, functions, organization of its work, management, etc.).

The establishment of Pupils' Councils is not regulated under the legislation concerning the educational system. Since 1989 no new model of organizing pupils in their own bodies and societies has been taken up to substitute for the pupils' bodies before 1989. In many schools such experience is acquired on their own initiative, with the voluntary participation of pupils – especially at upper secondary level. The Pupils' Councils established in individual classes, as well as school-wide, further and protect the pupils' own interests before the Pedagogical Councils and the General Assembly. Some of them make inquiries about different issues of education or school life, as well as questions related to the school's development, and propose solutions to them. Good schools establish such Councils and they play an active role in management decision-making.

2.7.2. Consultation involving Players in Society at large

Bulgarian education has deep-rooted traditions when it comes to involvement of parents in supporting the activity of the school. Parents have always been committed to the quality of education and the level of schooling of their children. They are important partners of the school in educating and upbringing the children and they establish their own bodies: Parents' Committees and Councils, Boards of Trustees, to manage their activities.

Parents' Committees are established at the level of grades, classes or educational degrees. They are not regulated as governing bodies under the legislation related to education, but they are formed on the initiative of the schools and their scope of activity is specified in the school's Internal Regulations. The Parents' Committees (in some schools they are called Parents' Councils) established at grades consist of 3 to 5 parents. One of them is elected as a chairperson. They engage in the following activities: assist teachers in gathering and keeping pupils who are frequently absent from school or who are likely to leave or drop out of school; help pupils who encounter difficulties in their studies; organize, or assist in organizing, excursions, celebrations and other activities of the class; establish contacts with parents; discuss and resolve issues related to the material support of the work of the class and to organizational and other problems within their competence. They express their interests and the interests of their children; therefore, they may voice dissatisfaction with the work of certain teachers or with some other issues.

Parents' Committees may also be termed deep-rooted, but their activity depends, to a great extent, on the place assigned to them by the school management and the respective class teacher, as well as on the responsibility, enterprise and motivation of the member parents.

In larger schools, Parents' Committees or Parents' Councils are formed **by grade**. They often include the chair persons or representatives of the Parents' Committees or Parents' Councils by class and are engaged in the same activities but at a grade level. In larger schools, Parents' Committees may also be established by educational degree. In the latter case they discuss and provide solutions to issues common to pupils and parents of all the classes belonging to a given level.

The Board of Trustees is a representative body of the parents and the community in the activity of the school. Boards of Trustees are independent voluntary associations for fostering the development and material provision of schools, kindergartens or obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units). At each school, kindergarten or servicing unit, only one Board of Trustees is established, but it may also be established at a group of schools, kindergartens and servicing units in settlements, where such Boards are not established at each school. Boards of Trustees may be set up at the municipalities in order to represent the interests of schools and bring up their problems before the municipal administration.

Boards of Trustees are established as not-profit legal entities to carry out socially useful activities and they organize their activity in compliance with their by-laws and the Articles of Association. They perform the following functions:

- Discuss and make proposals before the respective authorities in order to develop or to solve day-to-day problems of the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit);
- Assist in providing the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit) with additional financial and material resources and monitor their expedient spending;
- Assist in establishing and maintaining the school facilities and equipment of the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit);
- Participate in the selection of course books, made by the Pedagogical Council, which will be used to teach pupils, and if possible, provide their purchase;
- Assist in organizing the work of the school canteen, in providing transportation and solving other social and daily problems of children, pupils, teachers from the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit);
- Assist in drawing up and implementing educational programs aiming to solve the problems of children and pupils;
- Assist the school and municipal bodies in carrying out compulsory school education;
- Assist in carrying out the extracurricular and out-of-school forms of activity, organized recreation, tourism and sports with children and pupils;
- Assist the involvement of parents in organizing children's and pupils' spare time;
- Propose measures to improve the activities of the kindergarten, school or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit);
- Organize the community to assist the kindergarten, school or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit);
- Warn the competent authorities in case of violations committed in the public education system;
- Organize and support training of parents on issues concerning the education and development of their children;
- Support the activities of the school in its counteracting drug addiction and other detrimental influences on children and pupils;
- Support underprivileged children and pupils;
- Assist the Commissions for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency;

The Board of Trustees is constituted on the initiative of the head of the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit), or of parents, teachers or public figures, at a Constituent Meeting. Bodies of the Board of Trustees are the General Assembly and the Council of Trustees, who are elected by the General Assembly. The Council of Trustees elects a chairperson among its members. The head of the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit) provides the Board of Trustees with a room suitable for carrying out their activity free of charge.

Representatives of different social groups – business circles, the local government, popular figures - participate in the Boards of Trustees as their permanent members or are engaged in discussing various problems of interest. Most often, such representatives are people from different business

spheres, psychologists, doctors, lawyers, police officers, etc. depending on the needs of the school and its activities. They are also engaged as consultants when taking decisions on school development and opening profiles and on activities related to a specific sphere.

Relationships between vocational schools and institutions belonging to the respective sphere – ministries, trade chambers, professional guilds, unions, certain specialists, etc. are very closely related. On the other hand, such circles are the future ‘users’ of the alumni of vocational schools as well as their partners. A school may discuss a number of issues with them, such as: the school needs and admission of pupils, content of instruction, innovations, technologies, requirements, and especially the criteria for assessment of the results of instruction, the quality of pupils’ preparation and the effectiveness of the learning process, i.e., the future realization of pupils graduating from those schools.

Schools also maintain good relations with institutions from the scientific and cultural sphere, i.e. research institutes and units, higher schools, theatres, museums, galleries, community centers, libraries, concert agencies, sports clubs, tourist agencies, etc., with which they conclude contracts for joint activities, for inquiries, etc. Many schools work together with nongovernmental organizations, associations, foundations, etc. in examining and drawing up various projects, and with respect to solving problems encountered in their activities. In this respect, there have been sufficient experience and good traditions already, but new relationships with new orientation and content are also being established, and new practices are being employed.

The educational system has no regulated bodies with participation of social groups of students, academic staff and members of higher institutions, but their representatives are often members of the Boards of Trustees at schools or of various expert councils, committees, teams, work groups, etc. at certain schools, municipal bodies, the Regional Inspectorates of Education or the Ministry of Education and Science; or they are involved in the activities of nongovernmental organizations dealing with educational problems. Most often, lecturers from higher schools and academic councils, members of higher institutions, are involved as consultants or in teams in order to draw up projects and carry out research activities at a national level. Such a group of sociologists and university lecturers, associated in a civil forum, conducted a study of the state of education, of its facilities and equipment, and of the problems of pupils who have either not enrolled in or dropped out of school; and published the results from their investigations in a special book in 2002.

2.8. Methods of Financing Education

Education is financed as follows:

- Each year, the Ministry of Education and Science specifies the annual cost per pupil in compliance with the state educational requirements, differentiated by educational degree and type of school, and according to the conditions in the respective settlement, after its coordination with the Ministry of Finance.
- After the funds are specified and the national budget is approved of by the National Assembly and after the approval of the municipal budgets, the Ministry of Education allocates budget funds to capital investments, subsidies for scientific research in the field of preschool and secondary education and for training of teachers and school heads.
- The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Finance approve of the standards and provide the regulators and other economic conditions for the efficient functioning of all schools.

- Funding for maintenance and pay comes under a separate heading in the budgets of the municipalities and that of the Ministry of Education and Science. Funds are allocated to the schools and serve as basis for drawing up individual school budgets.
- Apart from the national budget, schools may raise funds themselves for maintenance and development of their facilities and equipment from the municipal budgets and from sources provided for in other laws and acts of the Council of Ministers, from additional activities, donations or contributions made by natural persons and legal entities.
- Funds from additional activities may be raised by leasing school and sports facilities, machines and equipment, renting agricultural lands, by training and manufacturing activities, by providing teaching and other services duly specified by an ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science. The above funds may be spent only by the school and obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit) that has raised them.
- Professions and specialities, types of schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) where education is fully funded by the national budget are specified in a list approved of by the Council of Ministers.
- Construction, maintenance, repairs, reconstruction and modernization of the facilities of schools is carried out mainly using funds from the budgets of the municipalities and partly from the budgets of the organizations for whose needs pupils are trained, as well as by using funds from other sources.

The change in the system of finances, resulting from the Public Education Act, is expressed in decentralization of the management and financial independence of the school. The transformation is aimed at reducing the responsibility of the state and increasing the responsibility of the municipalities with respect to the educational policy on their territory, including financing of education, which is carried out using funds provided by the national budget and the local government budgets. For educational structures funded directly by the state, the amount of the budget funds needed for secondary education is specified in the national budget. For municipal educational structures, funds are specified in the respective municipal budgets and approved of by the municipal councils. Municipalities receive funds from the national budget in the form of subsidies, the amount of which is specified in the State Budget Act for maintenance of secondary education, and while drawing up their budget, the municipalities include their own funds, too.

The budget funds for secondary education are provided by the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science and other Ministries and government departments, as well as by the budgets of the municipalities, which allocate those funds to kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) on the basis of the average level of budget funds spent during the preceding year, increased by the respective inflation rate. Such a mechanism of budget funding is applied irrespective of the fact that it is stipulated in the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act that the amount of funds needed for secondary education is to be specified on the basis of differentiated annual standard rates for pay per child or pupil in all types and degrees of schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units).

The practice of financing secondary education (including the single structure and upper secondary levels) thus established within the context of the concrete economic conditions has been reflected in the amount of the budget funds allocated to secondary education. The shortage of budget funds and the need for investments predetermine the difficulties in financing secondary education.

As a result of the recent democratic and socioeconomic changes in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education and Science has been forced to experiment and implement a new mechanism for administration and funding of schools in a large number of municipalities. This new method of funding schools is termed

“delegated budgets”. Only the main aspects related to the implementation of this mechanism will be mentioned here.

“Delegated budgets” are planned to be introduced into all schools by 2009. The main objective of the system of delegated budgets is to create and develop decentralized financial management of secondary education and to endorse the financial independence of schools. The funds under the delegated budgets are raised mainly from two sources – the national budget and loans from the World Bank. The introduction of this mechanism aims at strengthening the economic independence of schools, decentralizing the management of finances, searching for additional sources of funding, and achieving transparency with respect to allocation of funds. The mechanism is based on a number of normative acts and regulations. The school is entitled to act independently in the sphere of finances and to receive the allocated funds according to a certain formula. It is interesting to point out that the school acquires the right to keep the additional revenues accumulated – they are not deemed as regular funding - and to use them, at its own discretion, for development of its facilities. Another newly-acquired right is that, within the same financial year, funds from one budget line may be carried over to another budget line following an approval by the funding body. The funding formula is specific for each school and is used to allocate funds for the main activities.

According to Art. 13, Chapter 3 of the Higher Education Act, higher education institutions are established and carry out their activities on the basis of a granted state-owned property and annual state subsidy. The amount of the annual state subsidy for every public higher school is sanctioned by the Council of Ministers as proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science, and adopted by the National Assembly together with the adoption of the State Budget Act. The state subsidy provides the resources for support of education, development of scientific and creative activities, publishing course books and research papers, social and everyday expenses of students and lecturers, as well as capital investments.

After the introduction of the Higher Education Act in 1995, the model of subsidizing higher schools is a “historical” one, i.e. it is calculated on the basis of the resources allotted in previous years, increased by the respective yearly inflation rate, and to a great extent it does not depend on the achieved results and innovativeness. This model, on the one hand, gave certain guarantees with respect to the expected resources, and did not stimulate any search for additional resources, improvement of quality, and or the efficient distribution of the received subsidy. At the end of the 1990’s, attempts to change this model were made, as the amendments of the Higher Education Act from 1999 stipulated that the amount of the state subsidy should correspond to the number of students and the established allowance per one student in a given vocational path. At present the cost of education is sanctioned by the Council of Ministers on the basis of:

- The differentiated norms by professional paths per student;
 - The number of students and doctoral candidates;
 - The results from the assessment of accreditation of the higher schools and its specialities.
- This means that higher schools have to prove they have met certain requirements in order to be granted the subsidy they want. For the purpose of achieving greater flexibility and transparency when determining and distributing the resources for tertiary education, at a session of the Board of Rectors, the Ministry of Education and Science, and students, a Decree for amendment and supplementation of Decree No 162 of the Council of Ministers was prepared. This decree determines differentiated norms for cost of education per student by professional paths. According to the draft document, the norm for allowance per student will be annually determined by the State Budget Act for each year and multiplied by the coefficient of the corresponding path (10 professional paths are introduced). The amount of the allowance per student will depend on the overall amount of resources for higher education in general, the number of students and the assessment of accreditation of the particular higher school.

The share of the state subsidy for development of higher education for the first half of the 1990's decreased 2.5 times. After 1998 an opposite trend is observed as the share of the expenses for higher education in the gross domestic product goes up by approximately 0.10 – 0.15 points every year, and the budget allocation for higher education in 2003 was 2.8%.

Apart from the state subsidy, higher school generate income from other sources as well:

- Income from fees;
- Income from extra educational services;
- Revenues from financial operations;
- Contracts for performing consultancy and expert activities, scientific products, external organizations;
- Income from international projects and programs;
- Income from donations, wills, inheritance, sponsorship;
- Income from research, expert and consulting, artistic and creative, medical and sports activities, from industrial property, patents, copyright and other similar rights.

The current state of affairs and of the present legislative order in the above sphere were carefully analysed in the period of 2004 – 2006. A number of measures for the improvement of the system of the financial provision of education were planned.

When carrying out any financial policy, it is important to strike a balance between two basic approaches in financing. On the one hand, the state should guarantee its citizens' right to receive education and to provide the schools with at least the minimum financial means to meet their expenses. On the other, the principle of economic efficiency which means investing more means where the network is best utilized, where there is the necessary material, organizational and methodological conditions for a quality educational and training process (investing in development) should be applied.

The model for financing should be structured in a way that it creates stimuli to the never-stopping improvement of the equal access to and quality of education. In relation to this, the financial model should meet the following basic principles and requirements:

- horizontal equality in financing the educational services as a projection of the equal access to education. 'Horizontal equality' does not necessarily mean equal financing for all, but taking into account and making up for the natural inequalities in access
- clear and simple financial policy
- harmony with the aims of educational policy
- advantage of the internal efficiency stimuli over the administrative approach
- competition among the different parts of the system
- sustainability of the model and the financial rules
- subsidy provision for the financial decisions

Over the following years, it is necessary to gradually augment the finances for education as part of the GNP. The basic measures which will have a direct effect on financing education are as follows:

Introduction of the system of delegated budgets in all schools

The complete introduction of the concept of delegated budgets envisages:

- Complete vision of decentralizing the system. This includes distribution of responsibilities among the three levels of management – the central, local and school one. On the one hand, the complete concept of delegated budgets requires the standards to be implemented at a school level. On the other, however, there are natural inequalities among the different schools within one and the same municipality, which can be taken into consideration and compensated for by the local authorities only. This makes it necessary to find the right ratio between the part of the standards regarding the schools and the one regarding the municipalities. A maximum percentage of the money should reach the schools while a minimum percentage within which the municipalities could make up for the inequalities should be preserved. Besides, in order to encourage access, the municipalities will be able to operate some other instruments like social scholarships, transportation from one settlement to another, providing food and hostels for students.
- Gradual transition of most of the state schools to financing through the respective municipal budgets. Besides being an important sign of the decentralization of the system of school education, the realization of this measure would grant these schools the opportunity to keep the money which has not been spent and use them during the next school year (the so called right to transitional remains).
- Change in the model of labour regulation. The school principals should be given the right to choose, within certain limits, between more teachers with lower salaries and fewer teachers with higher salaries. This will help schools to use more flexibly two of the components which determine the number of staff – the number of pupils in a class (number of classes respectively) and the number of teaching hours. However, principals' freedom to determine the number of staff cannot be absolute. It is restricted by a number of other requirements – the study plan, the maximum number of pupils in a class, above which the quality of teaching decreases, the maximum working week, the minimum wages, etc.
- Increasing the rights of school boards of trustees by giving them an opportunity to participate in the preparation of the delegated school budget and the control over its implementation as well as the creation of school councils, which are to have financial competences.

The implementation of the system of delegated budgets in all schools should finish by the end of 2008. Until then, some preparatory work should also be done, the most important of which are the training of school heads and the creation of mechanisms for civil control over the management of the delegated budget.

Implementation of financial stimuli for the effective management and better quality of the educational process.

The schools which meet certain qualitative and quantitative characteristics (lack of classes with too few pupils, optimum number of pupils in the classes, optimum structure and content of the teaching staff, wide use of new teaching methods, development of out-of-class and out-of-school activity, etc.) will be additionally stimulated by financial means.

Besides, to achieve efficient financial management, schools should be stimulated additionally when they reach a better quality of education. The implementation of this element leads to the development and functioning of a system of external evaluation of quality.

Implementation of a common standard for financing the education of a child/pupil.

The common standard means combining the staff and maintenance cost, related to the education of one child/pupil. It is possible to introduce it as early as 2007. As far as a common standard does not mean the same standard, its introduction should be preceded by the development of a mechanism to

differentiate it so that it achieves the aims of the educational policy and compensates for the natural inequalities in the access to education. The development of such a mechanism will include: identification of the objective factors (geographical, structural, demographical) which lead to inequalities in the access to and quality of education (village, mountainous, border, scarcely populated municipalities or ones with dispersed towns and villages); identifying the relation of such factors to the necessity to grant higher (or lower) financing of expenditure; formulation of differentiating criteria.

Endorsement of program financing of the system

Financing the system on the basis of national programmes would create the opportunity to achieve priorities and aims which wouldn't otherwise be achieved to the desired extent and/or quality within the institutionalized financing.

Introduction of a system of differentiated payment for teachers

The expected development of private education in our country, especially after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union, will raise the question of the state's financial policy regarding private schools and above all the question of 'money follows the pupil' in the case of these schools too. How this problem will be solved depends on the achievement of certain results as regards two other problems – improvement of the necessary equipment at state and municipal schools and unifying the criteria and mechanisms for control over the quality of education in all schools. That is why the 'money follows the pupil' principle could be implemented in its full form not earlier than 2009.

As regards the optimization of the system of financing higher education there are two new aspects planned:

- creation of an information register for the classification of higher institutions according to the level of expenditure by vocational path;
- Preparation of analytic reports for the management of resources distributed among higher institutions.

A major problem, connected with financing higher education, is the still low level of inter-relation with the real needs of the labour market and the increasing number of unemployed specialists holding a higher diploma, which reduces its social and economic efficiency and leads to a low turnover of the money invested in students' higher education.

2.9. Statistics

INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENTS ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED-97)

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ACCORDING TO THE TYPE AND FORM OF PROPERTY

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
TOTAL	6,648	6,638	6,750
Kindergartens	3,278	3,301	3,331
Obshtoobrazovatelni (General) and spetsialni (special) schools	2,823	2,784	2,757
Nachalni (Primary) (1 st – 4 th grade)	315	295	277
Osnovni (Basic) (1 st – 8 th grade)	1,892	1,877	1,872
Progimnazii (Lower secondary schools) (5 th – 8 th grade) ¹	22	21	21

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Gimnazii (Upper secondary schools 9 th – 13 th)	165	167	168
Palni sredni obshtoobrazovatelni ucilishta (Full secondary general schools) (1 st – 13 th grade) and schools with 5 th – 13 th grade	429	424	419
Profesionalni (Vocational)	496	500	495
Uchilishta po izkustvata (Art schools)	19	19	20
Vocational upper secondary schools ²	457	459	453
Vocational colleges after secondary education	13	17	17
Vocational schools ³	7	5	5
Centres of vocational training ⁴	.	.	114
Higher	51	53	53
Independent colleges	9	10	10
Colleges within the structure of universities and specialised higher institutions	41	40	40
Universities and specialised higher institutions	42	43	43
OF WHICH PRIVATE:			
Total	128	141	254
Kindergartens	24	26	34
General and specialised schools	54	56	59
Primary (1 st – 4 th grade) ¹	6	5	4
Basic (1 st – 8 th grade)	18	22	22
Lower secondary (5 th – 8 th grade) ¹	1	2	3
Upper secondary (9 th 13 th grade)	24	23	26
Full secondary (1 st -13 th grade) and schools (5 th – 13 th grade)	5	4	4
Vocational	36	43	43
Art schools	1	1	1
Vocational upper secondary schools ²	24	26	25
Vocational colleges after secondary education	11	16	17
Centres of vocational training ⁴	.	.	102
Higher	14	16	16
Independent colleges	7	9	9
Colleges within the structure of universities and specialised higher institutions	-	-	-
Universities and specialised higher institutions	7	7	7

¹ Up to the school year of 1992/93 primary schools comprised I-III grades, while the lower secondary - IV-VIII grades

² Up to the school year of 2002/03 including technical schools and vocational technical upper secondary schools

³ Up to the school year of 2002/03 including – Vocational technical schools

⁴ Centres administering programmes aimed at the acquisition of a degree of professional qualification

ENROLLED STUDENTS ACCORDING TO THE LEVELS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED-97)

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Total	1,451,284	1,419,405	1,398,751
Pre-school education (ISCED-0)	201,145	202,803	206,243
Primary Education (1 st – 4 th grade, ISCED-1) ¹	314,221	290,017	273,045
Lower secondary (5 th – 8 th grade, ISCED-2A) ¹	330,416	312,480	295,160
Vocational training for adults - First degree of professional qualification (ISCED-2C)	.	.	4,776
Upper secondary (9 th -13th grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	374,262	373,160	367,350
Vocational training for adults - Second degree of professional qualification (ISCED-3C)	.	.	4,006
Vocational training after secondary education (ISCED-4C)	2,772	3,036	2,810
Vocational training for adults - Third and Fourth degree of professional qualification (ISCED-4C)	.	.	1,897
Higher education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	228,468	237,909	243,464
Colleges (ISCED-5B)	16,294	18,432	23,608
Universities and specialised higher institutions (ISCED-5A)	207,340	214,398	214,693
Doctoral degree (ISCED-6)	4,834	5,079	5,163
Total	41,523	48,881	64,457
Pre-school education (ISCED-0)	605	708	952
Primary education (1 st – 4 th grade, ISCED-1) ¹	1 195	1 288	1 383
Lower secondary education (V-VIII grades, ISCED-2A) ¹	817	914	900
Vocational training for adults - First degree of professional qualification (ISCED-2C)	.	.	3 733
Upper secondary education (9 th – 13 th grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	5 171	5 416	5 301
Vocational training for adults - Second degree of professional qualification (ISCED-3C)	.	.	3 604
Vocational training after secondary education (ISCED-4C)	933	1 456	2 328
Vocational training for adults - Third and Fourth degree of professional qualification (ISCED-4C)	.	.	1 112
Higher education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	32 802	39 099	45 144
Colleges (ISCED-5B)	3 660	6 254	11 250
Universities and specialised higher institutions (ISCED-5A)	29 065	32 791	33 839
Doctoral degree (ISCED-6)	77	54	55

¹ Up to the school year of 1992/93 primary schools comprised I-III grades, while the lower secondary - IV-VIII grades.

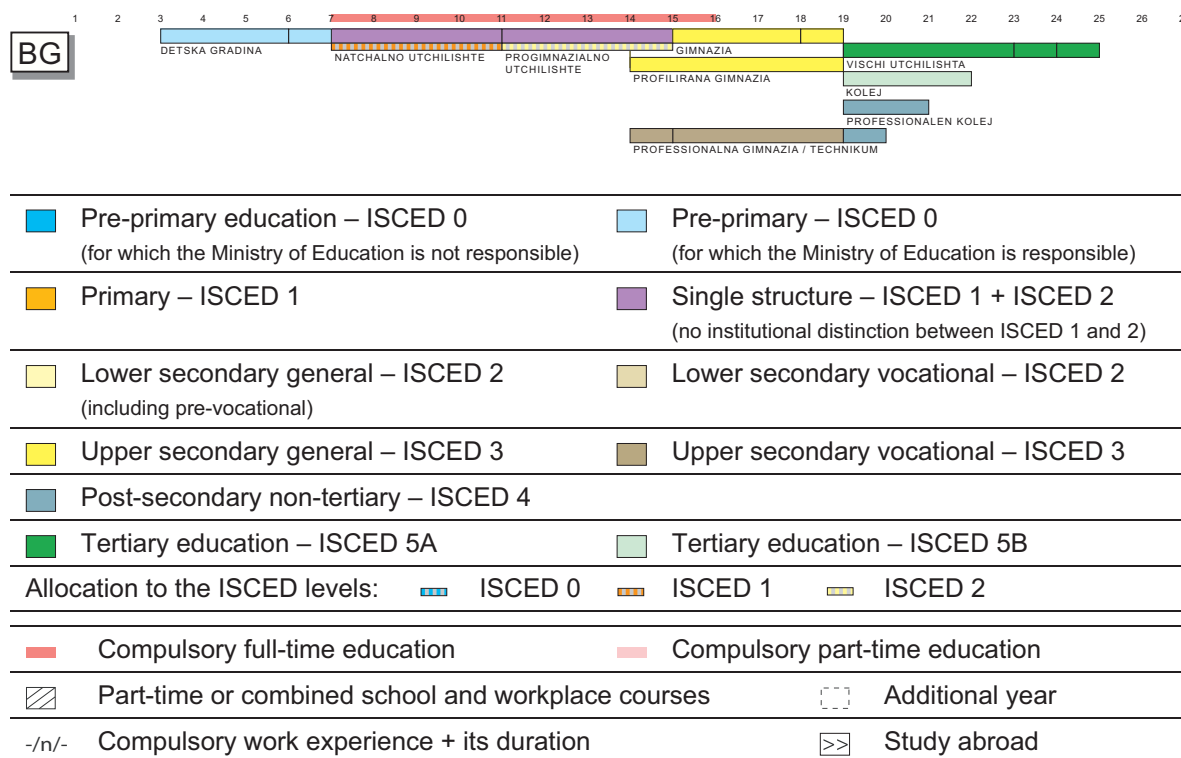
Net quotient of enlisting population in the system of education

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06 ¹
Group net quotients² distributed across levels of education according to ² MCKO - 97			
Pre-school education (ISCED-0)	74.6	73.6	73.7
Primary education (I-IV grade, ISCED-1)	100.3	99.7	99.5
Lower secondary (V-VIII grade, ISCED-2A)	84.2	84.2	84.9
Upper secondary (IX-XIII клас, ISCED-3A, 3C)	77.1	77.3	78.0
Vocational training after secondary education (ISCED-4C)	0.3	0.3	0.5
Colleges (ISCED-5B)	2.6	3.1	4.1
Universities and specialised higher institutions (ISCED-5A)	24.1	25.8	26.4
3 to 6 years	78.0	76.3	75.7
7 to 10 years.	102.2	101.6	101.4
11 to 14 years.	98.1	98.2	98.3
15 to 18 years.	82.8	82.9	83.4
19 to 23 years.	29.7	32.2	34.0

Source: National Statistical Institute

3. Pre-primary Education

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2005/06



Source: Eurydice.

Pre-primary education in Bulgaria is organized and carried out in accordance with the state educational requirement for preprimary education and training, passed with an ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science, and prepares children to start school.

Pre-primary education in Bulgaria is provided at kindergartens, which are institutions within the public education system where children from the age of three until their enrolment in first grade are brought up, educated and trained. Children are enrolled in kindergartens at the wish and choice of their parents or guardians.

The law regulates the compulsory training of children one year prior to starting school in half-day or all-day groups at kindergartens or in preparatory classes at schools.

According to their source of financing, kindergartens are state, municipal and private.

State kindergartens are of national importance and are financed by the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Science or other ministries and institutions. They educate only children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases, who are enrolled there only after all other possibilities for upbringing and education have been exhausted and with the written consent of their parents or guardians.

Municipal are those kindergartens which are financed by the municipal budgets. In order for children to be brought up, educated and trained in kindergartens, their parents or guardians pay fees established in the Local Taxes and Fees Act.

The number of children per group in the state and municipal kindergartens is determined by an ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science.

Private are those kindergartens which are opened or transformed at the request of Bulgarian natural persons or legal entities and are not financed by the state or municipal budgets. They provide education to a limited number of children of wealthier parents.

State and municipal kindergartens may provide additional educational and other services at the wish of the parents and guardians against payment, according to the children's interests and needs.

Most numerous are the municipal kindergartens and they educate 90% of all children.

According to the organization of the services offered, there are all-day, half-day and weekly kindergartens.

Most common are all-day kindergartens, where children are received in the morning, and spend the whole day there, having meals three times a day and place for sleep available. Most kindergartens are organized according to age group. They are housed in buildings especially built or reconstructed for the purpose. Many of them are equipped with a music parlour, a gym and a swimming pool.

Half-day kindergartens are most frequently opened in regions where there are not enough children to open an all-day kindergarten, in order to satisfy the children's needs to be prepared for school. Children attend such kindergartens for half a day, either in the morning or in the afternoon, without having meals, which is why parents do not have to pay any fee.

Half-day, preparatory or seasonal groups for children at pre-school age may be opened at both kindergartens and schools.

Seasonal groups are opened in certain rural areas, especially in summer, when parents are busy with farming. They are very few in number and are opened by the mayor on parents' request.

Yasleni grupi (crèche groups) for children aged from 10 months to three years may be opened at all-day or weekly kindergartens. Kindergartens with yasleni grupi are joint childcare institutions for children from the age of 10 months to their enrolment in 1st grade.

Children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases are educated at special kindergartens. Special kindergartens provide care for children who cannot be educated in mainstream

kindergartens, only at the wish of the parents. Children with special educational needs and chronic diseases may also attend mainstream kindergartens, which are obliged to admit them.

3.1. Historical Overview

Pre-primary education in Bulgaria has an over 120-year-long history. The first kindergarten was established in 1882 in Svishtov. Public pre-primary education found its place in Bulgarian legislation as early as 1891 when education in kindergartens became compulsory, although, in practice, it did not function because of lack of resources.

In harmony with international trends pre-primary education in Bulgaria adopted the principles upheld by classic educators about the organization of children's lives and the accomplishment of the age potential in the present. The principles of activity and independence in the educational process, of individual and ex cathedra teaching were adopted. Benefiting from international experience pre-primary education at the same time never stopped developing the national.

In 1911 there arose the necessity to open pre-primary educational institutions with specially trained teachers. What was emphasized was not only the social role of kindergartens for the development of society, but also their educational function related to the harmonious spiritual and physical development of children, which was carried out with communal means.

The idea of a social pre-primary education in Bulgaria was promoted quite early, without contrasting it to family education. The motivation was that social education guaranteed versatile development and preparation for school to all children – a progressive fact that prepared pre-primary education to become an effective unit in the educational system.

In 1934, the first legislative document – the Ordinance – Act on Pre-primary Education was adopted. It defined it as a stage of primary education and determined three types of children's establishments: children's centres, kindergartens and children's homes. The adoption of the Act and the appointment of the first inspector on pre-primary education in the Ministry of Education in 1937 was an important step in the legislation on pre-primary education and in the development of pre-school theory and practice.

With the adoption of the constitution of 1947, which emphasized the issues of pre-primary education as well, the municipal councils allocated special resources for children's establishments. Children were admitted at a minimal fee and they were taken care of all day long. At that time the creation of a Bulgarian research school began developing the theoretical and methodological formulations on the education of children at kindergartens. Training teachers for kindergartens was given the same attention as training primary school teachers – they all studied at colleges and universities. This enhanced the quality of work at kindergartens and as a result, more and more parents prefer such institutions when it comes to the education of their children.

3.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

A chief priority of pre-primary education is to give each child the opportunity to develop fully his/her abilities by introducing him/her to a material and social environment in which the child can acquire the skills and habits necessary for school education. Along with that, the kindergarten sets the aim to preserve the child's individuality and to encourage each child's self-expression.

In the context of children's compulsory preparation for school, which was introduced in 2003, the emphasis of educational activity in kindergartens is placed on forming vital concepts and practical skills which are important for the further studying and guarantee an equal start in school education for all children.

The program of the compulsory preparatory group envisages the provision of special measures for teaching Bulgarian to children belonging to other ethnic groups and for a social and psychological preparation for starting school.

The National Program for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006 – 2015) pays special attention to the system of pre-primary education. One of the main trends outlined in this document is the one towards establishing a closer relation between teaching and educating kids at kindergarten and preparatory groups and the requirements of school education. It also mentions the fact that a child's education starts at the kindergarten. This is the institution in which a child is placed in a new, structured social and sometimes multicultural environment. It is within this environment that a child develops his/her communication skills, displays his/her inclination to acquiring others' behavioral models, forms his/her future ideas of good and bad.

For kids whose mother tongue is different from Bulgarian, the activities related to the acquisition of the Bulgarian language are considered especially important during the year of compulsory preparation before grade 1 so that these children acquire a command of the Bulgarian language comparable to that of children who speak it as a first language. This complementary teaching of Bulgarian should follow a special methodology oriented towards their particular needs and the difficulties they encounter. Apart from the various forms of additional pedagogic help, it is crucial that these kids be placed in an integrative environment, which does not allow for discrimination on any linguistic, ethnic, cultural or other marker. It is of no less importance that more of these kids be educated in a kindergarten where they can communicate in Bulgarian on a daily basis. It is, consequently, necessary for their parents to be informed about the benefits of attending kindergarten.

3.3. Specific Legislative Framework

The main issues concerning pre-primary education are regulated by the Public Education Act (1991) and the acts for its amendment, The Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA etc.

The Public Education Act from 1991 provides for creation of both preparatory groups and classes, for the purpose of better preparation of children for their education at school.

A step forward in the direction of granting equal start to school for all children has been made in the Act of Amendment and Supplementation of the Public Education Act of 2002. It reads that the preparation of children for school one year prior to their admission in the first grade is compulsory and should be carried out in preparatory groups at kindergartens or in preparatory classes at school. By

virtue of this amendment, as from the school year of 2003 - 2004, all children aged 6 should be included in these preparatory groups/classes. The education and training of children at kindergartens is carried out according to special educational programs, approved by the Minister of Education and Science, in the different educational spheres and thus ensures that children are prepared for starting school.

The Act of Amendment and Supplementation of the Public Education Act of 2002 entitles parents of children with special educational needs to choose which institution should educate their child amongst the mainstream kindergartens or the special kindergartens (Art.21 of AASPEA of 2002). Moreover, Paragraph 4 of Art.21 stipulates that children with special educational needs are to enrol in special kindergartens only when all other possibilities for education in state or municipal kindergartens have been exhausted. Thus, all chances for subjective, incompetent and ill-disposed attitude towards these children are eliminated.

3.4. General Objectives

Pre-primary education at kindergartens aims to ensure the social, emotional, motor, cognitive and creative development of each child and the preservation of the child's individuality and the encouragement of self-expression.

Pre-primary education in Bulgaria complies with the requirements of primary school and aims at creating opportunity for every child to make the most of its natural disposition and get ready for school education through its introduction to its object and social milieu, through the child's acquaintance with universal human values and formation of certain skills and habits leading to the child's adaptation to the new environment and the process of study.

The definition of two main aims of the educational policy in Bulgaria as revealed in the National Program for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education 2006 - 2015 – to grant equal access to education and to grant quality education is reflected in the formulation of pre-school education aims. An important aspect to highlight here is its being viewed as the first step towards and prerequisite for achieving the above aims in the following years of school education.

The measures taken to grant children equal access to education and the striving to attract as many of them to school as possible should begin at kindergarten and preparatory groups. This is of crucial importance to the development of positive attitude towards school, as well as a positive motivation for studying – both being important factors for success at school. The early formation of motivation for learning guarantees a lasting positive attitude towards this activity and creates conditions for formation of motives for life-long learning. This prerequisite is especially important for children developing in an unfavourable cultural environment (for example, certain parts of the Roma and Turk communities) for some of whom education is not a priority value. It is considered that the more children come to the system of kindergarten and preparatory groups the better the children's adaptation would be when they start school and the smaller the risk of dropping out of primary school respectively.

The preparatory group provides a general psychological and personal preparation for school education in the conditions of transition towards school education, and studying is a unique value for each child provided to him/her by the educational spheres, cores and aims.

Another important task is that of integrating children with special educational needs in mainstream kindergartens as a prerequisite for their easy integration in mainstream schools later. The upbringing and education of children with special educational needs in kindergartens complies with the state educational requirement for pre-primary education of children and students with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases. In kindergartens where such children have been enrolled the head teacher establishes by an order a team consisting of: a chairperson – a teacher of a group, and members: a psychologist, a teacher qualified in special education, a speech therapist. Parents and guardians, and when necessary – others specialists, also participate in the work of the team. The team evaluates the educational needs of such children, keeps track of the dynamics of their development and drafts individual educational programs for their upbringing, training and development. These programs are approved by the head teacher of the kindergarten.

3.5. Geographical Accessibility

The system of pre-primary education in Bulgaria has at its disposal a solid material base which is capable of securing 100% inclusion of children for all-day care, but it is not distributed evenly over the country's territory. Due to current migration and demographic processes, kindergartens face certain difficulties, such as shortage of places in some towns, and in others – desolate kindergartens. Despite these difficulties each child is provided with the opportunity to attend kindergarten.

3.6. Admission Requirements and Choice of Institution/Centre

Attending kindergarten is voluntary and at the will of parents, except for the pre-school preparatory group, which is compulsory for all children one year prior to admission to school.

Apart from age, there are no other restrictions to the admission of children to kindergartens. Kindergartens accept children aged 3 - 6. Children are admitted to different groups according to their age (see section 3.8.).

The choice of kindergarten is made by parents. Children are admitted to a kindergarten according to the wishes and the choice of their parents or guardians. They may choose a particular kindergarten in the neighborhood or residential area where they live or even in another settlement depending on the interests and needs of their child, as well as according to the image and specialization of the kindergarten, its facilities and the conditions and quality of services provided by its personnel. Both the abrogation of admission based on district division and the provision of the right to choose a kindergarten are guaranteed by the PEA (Art. 18, par. 1 and par. 2). These are the necessary documents required to admit a child to a kindergarten: a written application by the parents, a birth certificate, a medical certificate from the family's GP and a document certifying the parents' income.

3.7. Financial Support for Pupils' Families

All expenses on children's upbringing and education are covered by the state. The maintenance of children in state and municipal kindergartens is covered either by the state or by the municipal budget, while parent pay a fee whose amount is determined pursuant to the Local Taxes and Fees Act. Parents and guardians of children enrolled in special kindergartens may be exempt from paying fees, if this has been envisaged in a legislative document.

According to standards for the maintenance of each child funds are provided to create conditions for upbringing, education and training. The necessary means are provided to prepare children in compulsory preparatory groups for school, including learning materials.

Parents have to pay only a fee which is intended to cover the cost of meals at children's all-day stay at a pre-primary institution. In cases when children stay half a day no fee is paid.

Certain social groups of parents (single parents, parents of more than two children, parents with established incapacity to work) are exempt from paying a fee by decision of the municipal council.

3.8. Age Levels and Grouping of Children

At kinder gardens, children are distributed in 4 groups by age. The first group includes children aged from 3 to 4 years, the second group – from 4 or 5 years old, and the third group – from 5 or 6 years old. Six-year-old children are admitted to a preparatory group. Depending on the age group, an appropriate educational content is acquired, in compliance with the state educational requirements, and relevant methods of instruction are applied. Distribution by age is not obligatory and where the number of children is less than the minimum required for distribution by age, mixed groups can be formed. State and municipal kindergartens are opened when the groups formed are at least 4, but not more than 8. Most of the kindergartens are independent institutions, which are established by the municipalities with an order of the mayor. They follow an all-day mode of work and are accommodated in specially built buildings. Wherever there are a small number of children, children's groups are opened at schools.

The minimum and maximum number of children included in kindergartens groups is regulated by Ordinance # 7 for determining the number of pupils and children in classes and groups at school, kindergartens and servicing units:

- all-day, half-day and seasonal kinder gardens – 12 to 22 children;
- yasleni grupi crèche groups within all-day kindergartens – 8 to 18 children;
- weekly kindergartens – 12 to 18 children;
- preparatory classes prior to enrollment in 1st grade – 12 to 16 children.

3.9. Organisation of Time

The pedagogical situations and the various educational activities within one school day are arranged in accordance with the requirements for the respective age group, expediently alternating the activities from the different educational fields (Bulgarian language, artistic information and literature for children, mathematics, natural world, social world, game culture and reproduction, art, music, constructive-technical activities and physical education) with play, having meals, resting, afternoon sleep, etc.

3.9.1. Organisation of the Year

The educational interaction at half-day, all-day and weekly kindergartens is carried out as a continuous process throughout the calendar year, during which parents can interrupt at their own discretion their children's attending the kindergarten for a certain period of time. The programs for the preparatory groups include fifteen weeks for the first half-year and sixteen weeks for the second half-year. The school year starts on 15 September. During the rest of the time the pedagogical interaction continues as a permanent process of upbringing.

3.9.2. Weekly and Daily Timetable

The time for organized activities of children is from 20 minutes for the 1st and 2nd group to 20 - 25 minutes for the 3rd and 4th group. For the rest of the day, children are involved in games, dances, swimming, walks and sleep. The forms of organisation of the pedagogical process and education are specific and differ from these at school. They correspond to the age peculiarities and abilities of children. The weekly load varies according to age groups.

The program for the compulsory preparatory group contains a sample arrangement of the compulsory forms of organization in half-day and all-day preparatory groups, which according to children's needs envisages 24 educational situations, or 25 for children whose mother tongue is other than Bulgarian. The educational field "Bulgarian language" envisages a module for bilingual children, which emphasizes the specifics of learning Bulgarian and acquiring the necessary communicative and speaking skills.

The program defines the structure and volume of the study content by educational fields.

3.10. Curriculum, Types of Activity, Number of Hours

The state educational requirement for pre-primary education and training defines the study content of pre-primary education, presented by the attainable knowledge, skills and relations, which are assessed as a result of the education and training of children at kindergartens according to educational fields. Accordingly, two programs for the education of children aged from 2 to 6 were developed in 1992. Teachers can choose between one of the two programs. The programs determine

the content of activities in the following spheres: development of speech and enrichment of language; mathematics; acquaintance with nature and with social life; arts; aesthetic and physical development.

The compulsory pre-primary preparation for school follows an approved program, developed on a module principle, which offers content suited to the educational needs of children: for children who have been attending kindergarten; for children who have not attended kindergarten prior to their enrolment in the preparatory group; for children whose mother tongue is other than Bulgarian and who have not attended kindergarten. The program includes expected results in the following educational fields: Bulgarian language, artistic information and literature for children, mathematics, natural world, social world, game culture and reproduction, art, music, constructive-technical activities and physical education.

3.11. Teaching Methods and Materials

The education of children at kindergartens aims to develop vital concepts and practical skills and habits, which are very important for further studying. The successful acquisition of these concepts, skills and habits is guaranteed by a variety of interactive methods and contemporary pedagogical technologies within the expertise of pre-primary teachers. The leading principles in the pedagogical interaction are tolerance and cooperation, publicity and openness, multifunctionality and consistency, intellectualisation and pragmatism, compensation and achievement.

A basic form of organizing pedagogical interaction is the pedagogical situation. In the preparatory groups the pedagogical situations are instructive and are either fixed in time – in terms of duration and week day, or non-fixed in time (but still compulsory) in terms of duration and week day. The main and leading activity at kindergarten is play. While playing children display various behavioural activities – intellectual, motor and artistic, and at the same time children start gaining social experience. Pre-primary teachers stimulate children's creative potential according to their individual qualities, abilities and interests in order to ensure children's best self-expression in the playing community and the play situation. In playing children reproduce their surrounding environment and human relationships in a simulated situation.

Kindergartens use teaching materials and learning aids approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as various audiovisual materials. The majority of kindergartens have specially furnished premises for play and also didactic materials specific to the respective age group, are free for children from the preparatory groups. Conditions for individual activities and activities in small groups are provided for children.

3.12. Evaluation of Children

Children's achievements are evaluated through teacher observation, the products of children's creativity, and through games. Teachers inform parents about what their children have learned and about the products of their activities on a weekly basis. Two or three times a year in open lessons or in other form parents are directly shown the achievements of their children. In unison with the educational aims and expected results the degree of acquisition of the study content in educational fields is envisaged to be assessed on two levels – entry level and exit level, which are entered in the

group's register. Their teachers record any changes in the physical, psychic and mental growth of children, as well as children's achievements in the course of acquiring the compulsory educational content.

At the preparatory group or the preparatory class, the children are evaluated through a talk or respective tests on their level of command of Bulgarian (for those children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian) and for their general preparation for school. The teachers maintain direct contact with the parents and give recommendations, if there are gaps in the development and preparation of the children. At the end of the preparatory group for school every child's achievements are assessed and the problems and difficulties the child has are pointed out.

3.13. Support Facilities

With a view to providing optimal care for children's psychological and physical development, kindergartens are provided with medical staff – a doctor and nurses. A psychologist and a speech therapist are employed to serve the needs of one big kindergarten, or of a group of smaller kindergartens. In determining the quotas for the number of staff in the different kinds of kindergartens, the necessity to provide the respective pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff is taken into consideration.

3.14. Private Sector Provision

Private are those kindergartens which are opened or transformed at the request of Bulgarian natural persons or legal entities. They are not financed under the national or municipal budgets and are housed in their own or leased buildings. Parents pay higher fees for the children's education and training there compared to state and municipal kindergartens.

Private kindergartens are established in line with the provisions of the Public Education Act, the Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA and Ordinance # 7 as of 2001 on opening, transforming, changing and closing down private kindergartens and schools. The procedure for opening a private kindergarten is the same as the procedure for opening a private school (see **4.16.3.**).

Private kindergartens' programs are drafted in compliance with the state educational requirements for pre-school education and training. The content of pre-school education programs should correspond to the effective syllabi of state and municipal kindergartens. When a private kindergarten is opened, its staff may offer their own program for education and training, which should be approved by an order of the Minister of Education and Science.

Most private kindergartens offer very good conditions for education and training of children, highly-qualified teachers, medical services, consultations by speech therapists and psychologists, possibilities for individual training, early foreign language learning, sports and creative activities, etc.

3.15. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures

Sticking to the framework of the compulsory requirements for pre-primary education and training, innovative approaches in education are applied and work on international projects is carried out in a number of kindergartens. The latter lead to enhancing the quality of education and enriching the technical facilities and conditions, to collaborating actively with scientific and research organizations and to doing experimental work. Against additional payment and at the wish of parents, additional pedagogical services can be provided at kindergartens – intensive foreign language teaching and computer courses, choreography, different kinds of sports, etc.

Greater innovativeness of teaching methods, better technical facilities and conditions, variety of activities and smaller number of children in a group are characteristic of the majority of private kindergartens.

3.16. Statistics

For the school year 2005/2006 the total number of kindergartens in Bulgaria is 3,331, which demonstrates an increase in comparison to previous years. The number of private kindergartens has also risen and at present there are 34 private kindergartens.

In comparison with 2004, 5,000 children more have been enrolled at kindergartens and currently 206,243 children are educated at kindergartens. The net ratio of the children enrolled is 73.7 and the ratio of included children aged from 3 to 6 is 75.7.

The number of teachers teaching at pre-primary level (ISCED-0) for the year 2005/2006 is 19,254.

Kindergarten by kind and type of ownership

	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
Kindergartens	3,242	3,127	3,278	3,301	3,331
All-day	2,572	2,494	2,464	2,438	2,421
Weekly	34	30	28	25	24
Convalescent	8	8	7	6	6
Special	13	12	12	13	12
Half-day	606	573	757	809	866
Seasonal	9	10	10	10	2
Of which private	22	20	24	26	34

Children in Kindergartens

	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
Kindergartens	199,206	201,317	201,145	202,803	206,243
All-day	180,808	183,769	181,338	181,973	183,608
Weekly	2,306	2,087	2,136	1,985	2,030
Convalescent	700	725	579	527	505
Special	913	886	911	874	815
Half-day	14,373	13,685	16,053	17,309	19,212
Seasonal	106	165	128	135	73
Of which private	458	555	605	708	952

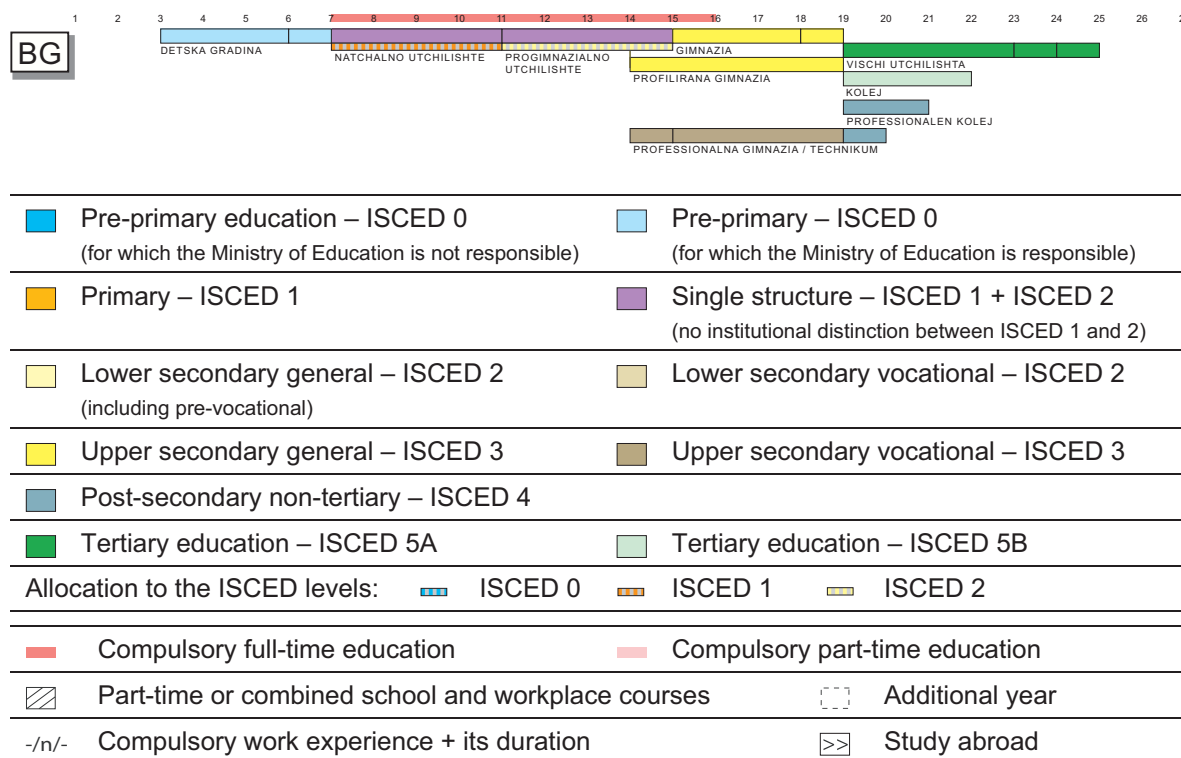
Average Number of the Students per Teacher by Level of Education

	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
Pre-primary Education	11.4	11.8	11.5	11.5	11.5

Source: National Statistical Institute

4. Single Structure Education

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2005/06



Source: Eurydice.

Single structure education in Bulgaria is called basic education: *osnovno obrazovanie*. It consists of two stages: primary – from grade 1 to grade 4 including, and lower secondary – from grade 5 to grade 8 including.

Pupils in grades 1 to 4 are educated in: *nachalni uchilishta* (primary schools) teaching grades 1st to 4th; *osnovni uchilishta* (basic schools) teaching grades 1st to 8th; *sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools) with grades 1st to 12th; arts schools and *spetsialni uchilishta* (special schools).

The pupils in grades 5 to 8 are educated in: *progimnazialni uchilishta* (lower secondary schools) teaching grades 5th to 8th; *osnovni uchilishta* (basic schools) teaching grades 1st to 8th; *sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools) with grades 1st to 12th; arts schools; *profesionalni uchilishta* (vocational schools) starting from 7th or 8th grade with a three-year course of study; sports schools and *spetsialni uchilishta* (special schools).

Pupils in the 8th grade can be educated in schools enrolling pupils with completed 7th grade, such as: *profilirani gimnazii* (specialized upper secondary schools); *profilirani* (specialized) classes in *sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools) or *gimnazii* (upper secondary schools); *profesionalni gimnazii* (vocational upper secondary schools); *profesionalni uchilishta* (vocational schools).

After the successful completion of grade 8, pupils receive a basic education certificate, which gives them the right to continue their education, or take up vocational training or exercise professions requiring completed basic education.

Basic education provides the necessary level of erudition and consistency in education, ensures pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills, a value system, interests and needs, and develops their abilities as a basis for their further education.

4.1. Historical Overview

Basic education has gone a long and productive way in the course of its historical development. The first schools –parish (cell) schools, monastery schools dating from the end of the 18th c. and the beginning of the 19th c. were predominantly primary, and new Bulgarian schools from the 30's and 40's of the 19th c. – primary and basic (up to grade 6/7).

With the formation of national educational policy and the first act – Provisional By-laws on Public Schools of 1878 all Bulgarian children were entitled to free and secular education. Primary education became compulsory and was differentiated into a separate educational level.

In 1921 the Public Enlightenment Act, ratified under Minister Stoyan Omarchevski introduced also compulsory lower secondary education, the so-called basic education. The primary school level continued to play an important role since it gave certain roundness of initial education. Basic education was of 7-year duration and included the following levels: primary – from grade 1 to grade 4 and lower secondary – from grade 5 to grade 7.

From the 1950's virtually all children, subject to education as stated by the Constitution (up to 16 years of age), attended school.

Considerable changes concerning both the educational structure and study content were effected during the socialist era (1944 - 1989).

In 1959 the Closer Link Between School and Life Act laid an emphasis on pupils' polytechnic education and its connection with industrial production. In 1960, the 8th grade, which had up till then been part of the upper secondary level, was incorporated into basic education. Thus the duration of basic education became 8 years. In 1969 the duration of the primary stage of education was reduced to three (instead of four) years. Until 1989 several curricula were adopted (1969, 1973, 1982), which create conditions for admitting children to school at the age of six, and for encompassing and keeping all children in school.

Along with the positive tendencies this period was characterized by strong indoctrination, centralization, overloaded study content, reforms which were unacknowledged and unsupported by the teachers. After 1989 the transition to a democratic society and market economy was related with changes in the structure of education, and primary education in particular. The four-year course in primary education was restored and children started to go to school at the age of 7 (1998). According to the Public Education Act (1991) basic education retains its duration, encompassing grades 1 to 8, but it becomes the first educational level, including two stages: primary – from grade 1 to grade 4 and lower secondary – from grade 5 to grade 8. Compulsory education continues until 16 years of age. Basic education is completed without passing any special exams. A certificate, which is final, acknowledges basic education.

The transition period has had a very unfavourable impact on encompassing and keeping children at school. The reasons for this are complex and difficult to surmount. Contemporary primary school endeavours to be as close to children's lives as possible, to help them learn, to whet their desire and interest to live actively, and to understand and solve independently the problems they face. The whole educational and instructive activity has been reviewed and restructured to serve this purpose.

A priority in the recent reforms concerning basic education is the development of State Educational Requirements for the study content and the respective syllabi. The academic year of 2002/2003 saw the beginning of their stage-by-stage implementation from grade 1 to grade 9. The modernization of

Bulgarian education is a process related to the development and introduction of a new curriculum. By the integrating subjects into cultural and educational areas, this process creates prerequisites for providing universal approaches to receiving and comprehending information, for broadening the horizon of pupils' knowledge, and for ensuring their more successful realization in the contemporary information society. The new curriculum provides opportunities for starting to learn a first foreign language at an early age (from 2nd grade), for studying information technology as a compulsory elective subject, as well as for integrating information technology in the educational process in all compulsory subjects. The key innovation through which the new educational paradigm is implemented is the State Educational Requirements to the study content. On the basis of these Requirements new syllabi for the compulsory subjects have been developed. The requirements specify the cultural and educational areas and determine the parameters of the educational process in terms of subjects and grades: goals, expected results, number of hours, structure and volume of the study content. The compulsory components of each syllabus are: general information on the syllabus; teaching goals in the subject; 'cores' of the study content; expected results according to sections; basic notions; context and activities for the whole core or the whole syllabus; possibilities for interdisciplinary connections; general methodological instructions for the teacher. Unlike the structure of the old syllabi, which were organized around topics, the study content in the new ones is presented through general themes which offer a global view of the forthcoming activity aiming at a gradual achievement of the standard.

Besides the formation of specific skills for each separate school subject, the syllabi include key groups of skills, which are formed across subjects, such as: language literacy, mathematical literacy, working with information, communicative skills, civil education, critical thinking and problem-solving, learning strategies.

4.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

A number of questions, related to basic education (comprising primary –from the 1st through to the 4th grade and lower secondary – from the 5th through to 8th grade) are discussed in the National Program for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education. One of the most important questions is the change in the structure of education according to which the duration of basic education is planned to be shortened by a year and the pupils are to get their basic education certificates after completing 7th grade. Another important issue is related to the optimization of the school network, which will predominantly affect *nachalni* (primary) and *osnovni* (basic) schools located in small settlements. In relation to this, a number of measures have been planned in order to make the process of this optimization smoother and to prevent it from bringing about restricted access to education due to the distant location of schools in some regions of the country. (For greater detail see 4.5.)

Some of the gravest issues concerning basic education have been singled out and the possible approaches to solving them have been discussed. One of these problems is the increasing number of pupils of compulsory schooling age who are not included in the system of education or drop out of it.

The policy of decreasing the number of those who are left out and those who drop out of school includes a wide range of measures, aiming to neutralize the influence of various negative factors which lead to children's dropping out of school. With a view to the efficient implementation of these measures the development of a system of data collection, evaluation, control and analysis of the children subject to compulsory schooling according to grades, levels and stages has been started. It is due to be implemented in the school year of 2007/2008. Together with the measures for keeping

children of compulsory schooling age at school, a system of measures for the re-integration of children who have already dropped out of school will be developed. This system will include adaptations of the syllabuses, alternative forms of education, starting 'Second chance' pilot schools. A mechanism of informing parents about their children's absences and late-comings on a daily basis is also envisaged, including by means of ICT and the national educational portal.

The underestimation of the guidance side of teaching – teaching them universal human values and appropriate behaviour – has turned into a serious problem over the past 15 years. It affects mainly pupils at basic school. This has led to problems such as discrepancy between pupils' level of knowledge and their manners, increase in the number of pupils with asocial behaviour, increase in child crime rate, difficult socialization, etc. At present, it is acknowledged that there is not only an instructional side to schooling. After a child's family, it is the teachers and school environment that influence most the formation of his/her personality. That is why, together with the measures aimed at improving the quality of the teaching process, there should be measures whose aim is to enhance the guidance role of the Bulgarian school. Below are some of these measures:

- Ritualization of school life. It is related to the development of a system of symbols and rituals, and in the long run, traditions, which will nurture pupils' sense of belonging to their school, which will, in turn, enhance their motivation to participate actively in various forms of school and out-of-school life. The ritualization of school life is, to a great extent, a question of inner organisation at a school level. A national program has been developed, which envisages:
 - o establishment of school symbols (a banner, an anthem, an emblem, and if parents and teachers find it appropriate – a school uniform or elements of school uniform);
 - o creation of traditions for the commemoration of national, local as well as school holidays – raising the national flag, listening to the national anthem, meeting the school flag, etc.;
 - o creation of a special holiday – Pupil's Day on which pupil self-government will be celebrated;
 - o approval of a system of rewarding teachers and pupils within the school and the municipality;
 - o turning the school into a pupils' territory where pupils have the opportunity to state their position regarding basic questions of their school development and governing and take active part in different forms of pupil self-government.
- Development of out-of-class and out-of-school activity – the good traditions in these spheres were abandoned during the 1990s and are now being very slowly revived, mainly because of the lack of support from the state and municipalities. The development of out-of-class and out-of-school activity is sought after in several directions:
 - o Engaging children all the year round, including during holidays;
 - o Funding based on projects with opportunities to cooperate with nongovernmental organizations;
 - o Independence in the choice of activity, as well as the financial means of the school;
 - o Further development of the system of inter-school, regional, national and international competitions, contests and Olympiads;
 - o Improvement of the system of organizing and conducting recreational and tourist activity for pupils;
 - o Encouragement and development of pupil sports activity.

4.3. Specific Legislative Framework

Basic education issues, with its two stages – primary and lower secondary – are provided for in the Public Education Act (PEA) – 1991, art. 22 (1, 2, 3), art. 23 (1, 2, 3, 4) and the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act (1999) art. 2, 3 (1, 2, 3), art. 5, art. 6 par. 1, 2.

Legislative provisions are specified in the Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA. Issues on pupils' admission to *profilirani uchilishta* (specialized schools) after the 7th and the 8th grade, the system of assessment, the number of pupils in class, etc. are discussed in the Ordinances of the Ministry of Education and Science, endorsed by the Minister of Education and Science.

The specific content of the legislative framework concerning basic education is further presented in the subsequent subdivisions of the present chapter. One of the important changes in the legislation on basic education is the introduction of integrated education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

Further changes in the legislation are presented in 2.3..

4.4. General Objectives

The objectives of basic education follow from the general aims of the educational system but their achievement has its own specific features, determined by the requirements for the educational degree, the expected result at exit level and the age characteristics of pupils.

The chief aims of the system of education defined in the Public Education Act (art. 15, par. 1, i. 1-5) are:

- Forming an independent, ethical and active individual, who as a Bulgarian citizen respects the laws, other people's rights, language, religion and culture;
- Satisfying individual interests and needs and acquiring extensive general knowledge;
- Acquiring new scientific concepts and principles for integrating previous experience into newly acquired knowledge from different fields of science and practice;
- Choosing options in training and professional qualification in accordance with the pupils' abilities and the school chosen by them;
- Developing material, cultural and ecological environment of kindergartens, schools, and *obsluzhvashti zvena* (servicing units).

The chief aims of education are also stipulated in art. 1 of the Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA:

- Mastering the general principals and laws of human knowledge;
- Acquisition and formation of national and universal values, virtues and cultural background;
- Development of individuality and encouragement of creative talents;
- Spiritual, physical and social development and a healthy way of life;
- Forming an independent, ethical and active individual, who as a Bulgarian citizen respects the laws, other people's rights, language, religion and culture;
- Completion of the degrees of education stipulated in the Public Education Act and obtaining professional qualification.

The chief aims of general education are stipulated in the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act:

- To facilitate the physical and spiritual development of pupils, their successful orientation, adaptation and realization in society;
- To create conditions for value formation connected with an awareness of pupils' Bulgarian national identity, respect of others, empathy and civil responsibility;
- To create conditions for development of needs, interests and attitudes to lifelong learning and education and self-perfection.

As an independent level, the basic degree provides certain completeness of pupils' education. In this respect the chief aims of education can be formulated as: providing the necessary level of knowledge and consistency in education; forming pupils' initial knowledge and skills at the primary stage and basic skills and knowledge throughout the whole course of basic education; creating a system of values and relations, interests and needs, developing their abilities as the basis for further education into the next level of secondary general or vocational school as well as fulfilment in social practice in areas which require completed basic education if pupils do not continue studying into the next educational level. Basic education aims also to facilitate the vocational orientation of pupils.

The National Program for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education brings forth as chief objectives of educational policy the equal access to education and the quality of education, emphasizing the link between the two.

Other important tasks of basic education include: actual provision of equal chance of education for all Bulgarian citizens and of special care of the children from social risk groups; the creation of greater opportunities for expressing personal interests and abilities; facilitating pupils' professional orientation and acquiring a profession by those who will not continue their education to the next degree; acquisition of the general educational minimum by all pupils; emphasizing harmonious personal development; unity between education and guidance in view of the discrepancy between pupils' level of acquired knowledge and of being well-behaved, etc.

4.5. Geographical Accessibility

Schools are state, municipal and private.

State schools are of national importance and are funded by the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Science and through other ministries and government departments. They use real estates which are public state property. These schools provide training and schooling for children and pupils from the whole country and are geographically distributed relatively evenly in the capital, the district centers and other larger or smaller towns and villages in order to cover all regions in Bulgaria. Vocational schools, which represent a large group of the above, are established in different territorial and administrative districts and take into account the predominant occupation of the population there, the industrial and company production, and the supply and demand in the respective sphere. When vocational schools are relatively small in number – like those in the field of agriculture and forestry, mining, construction, tourism, and hotel keeping, they are established near the places where qualified personnel are needed and with a view to admitting and training pupils from a number of districts or larger regions. More often, schools of national importance are established in the capital and larger cities, while schools of art, sport, tourism, some special schools, etc. are located in such a way that they will admit and train pupils from all regions and will try to meet all their needs. A great part of those schools have hostels or boarding houses for pupils coming from distant settlements, and some of them also provide their own transportation for pupils from neighboring settlements.

Municipal schools are established following a proposal of the municipal council and are funded by the municipalities. They are opened on the order of the Minister of Education and Science. They are geographically distributed on the whole territory of Bulgaria, in different municipalities, to conform to the number of pupils and the needs of the respective schools. Municipal schools include most of *nachalni uchilishta* (primary schools – grade 1 through to grade 4) and *osnovni uchilishta* (basic schools – grade 1 through to grade 8), as well as *sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools – grade 1 through to grade 12/13) and *obshtobrazovatelni gimnazii* (general upper secondary schools – grade 8/9 through to grade 12/13). Those schools are the most popular ones. *Nachalni* (primary) and/or *osnovni* (basic) schools are established in each settlement in Bulgaria provided that the number of schoolchildren is sufficient to meet the requirements. Such schools are established near pupils themselves and are easily accessible to all schoolchildren. Unfortunately, in recent decades – mainly for demographic reasons and due to a reduction in the number of children and pupils in small settlements, there is a growing tendency towards closing down schools when they do not meet the requirements for the number of children in classes and schools. Although the bottom limit of the required number of pupils is quite low, there are settlements where these requirements cannot be met and such schools and/or classes are closed down. In such cases, decisions are made by the Minister of Education and Science for municipal schools.

For children in settlements where a school is closed down, transportation is provided by the municipality to the school they attend. In primary classes, when the number of pupils is not sufficient to form full-numbered classes, it is possible to form “joint” classes from two different grades. Such classes are instructed by a teacher who, within the school hours, works with the children from both grades. Such classes are not established for pupils above 4th grade. Transportation to the respective schools in neighboring settlements is organized for them. *Srednite obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools – grade 1 to grade 12/13) and *gimnaziite* (upper secondary schools – class 8/9 through class 12/13) are located geographically in larger or smaller towns and larger villages where the required numbers of pupils are enrolled. They recruit children from settlements where no such schools exist and provide educational services for larger regions.

One of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science in the recent years has been related to the optimisation of educational network of the country. The low birth rate tendency has affected the number of children entering school especially in the small settlements. There the process of closing down schools is very painful because it leads to their depopulation and decline of the settlement. This is why it is necessary to act very cautiously so as to find mutually acceptable solutions. According to PEA (art. 26 (3) free transport and/or boarding school education in a local school within the closest proximity on the territory of the same municipality is provided to pupils up to 16 years of age who come from towns and villages that do not have a proper school.

In the school year 2006/2007 the process of optimizing the school network continues, influencing greatly geographical accessibility. It is recognized that on the one hand maintaining too many schools leads to inefficiency of expenses and slows down further the investment in the improvement of the quality of education and that the optimization of the school network is brought about by the worsened demographic characteristics of the country and the decrease in the number of school-age pupils. On the other hand, however, closing schools down leads to other objective problems – during the winter months some villages, especially those in the mountainous regions, are cut off and inaccessible by inter-settlement transport, which prevents children from attending school in another village or town; the optimization of the school network affects mainly *nachalni* (primary) and *osnovni* (basic) schools, which educate children between the age of 6/7 and 15 and especially for the younger pupils it is

highly unfavorable to travel to distant places daily; the closing down of a school leads to depopulation of the place and migration to bigger settlements.

In order to restrict the negative consequences of the utilization of the school network a number of measures have been discussed:

- development of the necessary infrastructure and providing transport to the central schools
- creating opportunities for the central schools to offer an all-day teaching process as well as extra-curricular activities
- protection for teachers through a number of means including their engagement in an all-day teaching process and extra-curricular activities.

4.6. Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Schooling starts when children have completed their 7th year in the year of enrolling in first grade, at a school chosen by the parents. Children can be enrolled in first grade at the age of 6 if their physical and mental development allows it in the opinion of their parents and guardians (art. 7 (2) (amend. – Official Gazette, issue. 36/98 of PEA).

There are no specific admission requirements for osnovnite uchilishta (basic schools), except for schools with special programs and schools for gifted children, where pupils can be admitted after their aptitude has been examined.

The right to choose a school is guaranteed by the Public Education Act (1991). Art. 9, par.1 specifies that: “Each citizen may exercise his/her right to education in a freely chosen school and type of education depending on his/her individual preferences and faculties. For people who have not come of age, this right is exercised by their parents or guardians.” (2).

The right to choose a school allows pupils to apply for and attend schools of high prestige, good quality of instruction, interesting and diverse activities; thus meeting their interests and needs. Enrollment in certain schools (specialized – foreign-language schools, schools of natural sciences and mathematics, sports, arts, vocational schools, etc.) is carried out by conducting a competitive examination.

Pupils can be transferred from one school to another under the terms and procedures stipulated in the Regulations on the Implementation of the PEA.

4.7. Financial Support for Pupils’ Families

In the Republic of Bulgaria, education is free of charge according to the Constitution of the country (Art. 53). The principles of accessibility to education, of equality in education, for the free-of-charge education in the state and municipal schools are specified by the school legislation (Public Education Act, Art. 6).

For a long period of time (from 1950s to 1990s) pupils used to receive free textbooks and supplementary materials for the period of compulsory education (from 7 to 16 years of age). In recent years, due to the economic problems of the country, only primary pupils enjoy this right.

The provision of textbooks, supplementary materials, study literature, clothing, food, etc. for pupils causes significant difficulties to many families, especially to the ones in which a family member is unemployed. This is valid to a greater extent for small towns and villages, for children of Roma families, among whom unemployment is rather high.

The bigger part of the unemployed who are registered by the labour offices or have low income, receive various social benefits – permanent for a certain period of time, for a particular purpose, one-time aid, etc. However, for most of the families these benefits are too insufficient to cover all their expenses and this often reflects in the irregular school attendance by their children.

Some parents have difficulties providing clothes, shoes and food for their children, especially in families with more children, often of Roma origin, and the benefits they receive are not sufficient to cover these costs. That is why many schools organize charity initiatives, aids by sponsors, donors, from pupils to their poorer classmates.

Municipalities provide snacks free of charge or at a minimal price for children from socially disadvantaged families.

Pupils who have excellent and very good marks receive scholarships, which are provided by the municipality.

The economic problems have a negative impact on the access to education for basic school pupils. Providing equal access to education for all pupils calls for more serious support granted to disadvantaged children, more scholarships and benefits from the state and civil society.

It has been established that one the most important reasons for children's dropping out of school is the difficult financial situation of their parents. Besides, the latter leads to inequality, inability to buy the necessary study materials, social and psychological problems, etc. Apart from the measures which have been already taken (among which granting one-time, e.g. at the beginning of the school year, and monthly social relief) the Program for the Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education, envisages a number of other measures for social and financial support, which are enumerated below:

- Free access to study content – the practice of providing free textbooks and supplementary materials for primary children (1st – 4th grade) will continue. Free textbooks should also gradually be granted to the children with special educational needs. The free access to study content will also be provided through the electronic study courses under construction, which will be placed on the national educational portal.
- Continuation of the activities under the National Program for the Complete Coverage of Children of Compulsory Schooling Age, approved by the 39th National Assembly – one of the measures according to this program is to provide free snacks for primary children (1st – 4th grade). If combined with other measures, it can lead to good results with regard to children who are likely to drop out. This measure, in the form of free meals at school, should also be extended to affect older pupils.
- Free transport and forms of half-board education – in 2006 the Ministry of Education and Science will continue buying buses and vans and giving them to the municipalities so that pupils can be transported to the central schools. The aim is each central school to have at its disposal at least one bus (van) in the school year of 2007 – 2008.
- Stricter binding of granting social relief with children's regular school attendance – this exists at the moment as well, but making the mechanisms more effective will help further to cover children of compulsory schooling age more fully.

4.8. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

School education is organised in consecutive grades. The duration of education in one grade is one school year.

According to the number of accepted pupils, the pupils belonging to one grade are divided into classes. According to the specific features of the studied subject the class can be divided into groups, joint groups can be formed from different classes, or individual instruction can be organized.

The school can organize joint groups in free elective subjects or for activities related to meeting the interests, abilities and needs of pupils in the fields of sport, science, technology, arts or recreation. These groups can consist of pupils from different grades and pupils coming from other schools.

The number of pupils in a class, the division of classes into groups and individual instruction are defined by ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science.

According to this ordinance (Ordinance #7/29.12.2000) the number of pupils in one class from 1st to 4th grade can be from 16 to 22, and of pupils from 5th to 8th grade – from 18 to 26.

Up to five children with chronic diseases and/or special educational needs can be accepted in state and municipal schools.

In the primary stage of basic education (grades 1 – 4) one teacher is responsible for one class, and teaches all the subject of the curriculum. In schools where there are more classes in the same grade and the school can afford it, foreign languages, art, music, physical education and sport are taught by the teachers specialists in these subjects.

In the lower secondary stage of basic education (grades 5 – 8) each subject is taught by a separate teacher, who may teach pupils from grades 5 to 8.

Pupils of the same age study in the same class. The only exception are pupils repeating the grade.

4.9. Organisation of School Time

Basic school education is organized in academic years, school terms, school weeks, school days and school hours. For further information see [4.9.1.](#) and [4.9.2.](#)

4.9.1. Organisation of the School Year

School education is organized in school years, school terms, school weeks, school days and school hours.

The duration of a school year is 31 school weeks for 1st grade, 32 school weeks for 2nd – 4th grade, and 34 school weeks for 5th – 8th grade. School weeks are divided in two school terms. The duration of the first school term is 18 school weeks.

The school year begins on 15 September and finishes on 24 May for 1st grade, on 30 May for grades 2nd – 4th grade, and on 15 June for 5th – 8th grade.

During the school year pupils take a Christmas, interterm, spring, Easter and summer holidays. First-grade pupils have three additional days for recreation during the first school term. The duration of holidays (summer holidays excluded), as well as the days for recreation of first-class pupils and other non-attendance days, is specified by an order of the Minister of Education and Science.

The school year at the extracurricular teaching establishments begins on 1 October and finishes on 31 August; and activities involving children are organized during the summer holidays as well.

4.9.2. Weekly and Daily Timetable

A school week lasts 5 days. Exceptions are permitted only if they envisaged in the curriculum.

The number of compulsory school hours per week may not exceed:

- 22 school hours for grades 1 and 2;
- 25 school hours for grades 3 and 4;
- 30 school hours for grades 5 to 8;
- 22 school hours in the evening form of instruction.

The weekly timetable includes 1 hour for work with the class, which is not included in the total number of compulsory school hours.

The weekly timetable is suited to the psychological and physical characteristics and abilities of pupils. It is developed in compliance with the requirements set by an ordinance of the Minister of Health and is approved by the head teacher of the school before the beginning of each school term.

The organization of the educational process on a school day can be half-day or full-day and includes 4 to 7 compulsory school hours. In the full-day school organization the compulsory school hours can be combined with self-study, activities according to pupils' interests, and organized recreation.

When the organization is half-day, lessons can be organized in two shifts. 1st grade pupils have classes in the morning only.

The duration of a school hour is 35 minutes for the 1st and the 2nd grades, 40 minutes for the 3rd and the 4th grade and 45 minutes for grades 5 - 8. The breaks between school hours last between 10 to 30 minutes.

When instruction is organized in two shifts, the duration of the school hour in grades 5 to 8 may be 40 minutes with permission from the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education.

The following table illustrates the time organization of a school day in the case when instruction is organized in two shifts and part of the pupils have classes only in the morning, while the rest of them - only in the afternoon. There is a lunch break only for full-day time organization, which is not described in this table. Lunch may be provided at the pupils' canteen for a certain fee at the will of pupils after morning lessons for the first shift and before afternoon lessons for the second shift. The number of school hours in one day may vary, but there is no specified distinction in the organization of the different days of the week. Since the duration of the school week is five days, Saturday is a holiday. Since there is a difference in the duration of the school hours for the different grades, additional rows have been added to the table. Morning lessons may start at 7.30 or 8 o'clock, but here only the case when lessons start at 7.30 will be exemplified. Out-of-class hours may be available at the will of parents or pupils before or after classes, provided municipal funds and positions for teachers and supervisors are available. It provides supervision and help in the preparation of homework:

A 5-day school week length of school day, each day of the week					
Monday – Friday	Out-of-class periods (before regular lessons)	Lessons (starting and finishing times of morning classes)	Lunch break	Lessons (starting and finishing times of afternoon classes)	Out-of-class periods (after regular lessons)
Grades 1 - 2	-10 minutes physical exercises before classes in some schools	7.30 – 10.25 (four periods) or 7.30 – 11.05 (five periods)		13.30 – 16.25 (four periods) or 13.30 – 17.05 (five periods) (II grade only)	
Grades 3 - 4		7.30 – 10.45 (four periods) or 7.30 – 11.30 (five periods) or 7.30 – 12.15 (six periods)		13.30 – 16.50 (four periods) or 13.30 – 17.35 (five periods)	
Grades 5 - 8 (in case of 45-minute periods; if a period is 40 minutes long, see grades 3 - 4)		7.30 – 12.00 (five periods) or 7.30 – 12.50 (six periods)		13.30 – 18.05 (five periods) or 13.30-18.50 (six periods)	
Saturday	day off				

4.10. Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

The state educational requirement for the levels of education the general education minimum and the curriculum was stipulated in a law: the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act of 1999.

The distribution of academic time over subjects, grades, stages and levels of education for attainment of the general education minimum is stipulated in an ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science.

The curriculum contains: the names of the compulsory, compulsory-elective and free elective subjects; the distribution of subjects in the grades; the yearly and weekly number of school hours in subjects; a timetable of the school year; a description of the organization of instruction in the respective school.

The subjects in the new curriculum are integrated in the following educational and cultural areas: Bulgarian language and literature; Foreign languages; Mathematics; Informatics and Information Technology; Social sciences, civil education and religion; Natural sciences and ecology; Home economics and technology; Physical education and sports.

The curriculum includes three types of subjects: A. compulsory, B. compulsory-elective and C. free-elective.

Section A of the curriculum specifies the number of compulsory school hours and subjects which provide the attainment of the general education minimum. The number of school hours given for each subject is compulsory for all schools. Section B of the curriculum specifies the school hours in the compulsory-elective subjects, which provide an opportunity for building on the general education minimum according to pupils' interests and abilities. This school time is used for the attainment of the general education minimum and at the choice of pupils for learning a foreign language, for broadening pupils' knowledge and developing pupils' skills in different subjects.

Section C of the curriculum defines the free elective subjects, which provide education according to the pupils' choice outside the subjects from the cultural and educational areas defined in the curriculum.

Every school by a decision of the pedagogical council passes a school curriculum which specifies the compulsory elective and free elective subjects and the distribution of school hours in these subjects for the whole educational stage. The school curriculum complies with pupils' interests and the potential of the school.

School curricula envisage a more extensive instruction in computer science. From the 2006/2007 school year the compulsory teaching of information technology starts in the lower secondary stage, and as a compulsory elective subject – from 1st grade. It is also necessary to include modules for early vocational orientation at the lower secondary stage.

The changes in the curricula should not burden pupils with additional workload. The curriculum should distribute school time in a more balanced way, synchronising it with the volume of the study content in the various general education subjects.

The organization of the educational process for each subject of the curriculum is done by the teacher according to a preliminary topic plan into school weeks. The topic plan for the subjects from the compulsory education is prepared by the teacher before the beginning of the school year and is endorsed by the head teacher of the school.

Distribution of school time in grades and staged in basic education

	CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS	BASIC EDUCATION										
		PRIMARY STAGE					LOWER SECONDARY STAGE					
		GRADES				Total					Total	Total
	GRADES	I	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st – 4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	5 th – 8 th	1 st – 8 th
	SCHOOL WEEKS	31	32	32	32		34	34	34	34		
	SUBJECTS											
A.	Compulsory Subjects											
1.	BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE					889					680	1,569
	Bulgarian Language and Literature	217 7	224 7	224 7	224 7	889	170 5	170 5	170 5	170 5	680	1,569
2.	FOREIGN LANGUAGES					256					442	698
	First Foreign Language		64 2	96 3	96 3	256	119 3,5	119 3,5	102 3	102 3	442	698
	Second Foreign Language											
3.	MATHEMATICS COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					476					680	1,156
	Mathematics	124 4	112 3.5	112 3.5	128 4	476	136 4	136 4	136 4	136 4	544	1020
	Computer Science											
	Information Technology						34 1	34 1	34 1	34 1	136	136
4.	SOCIAL SCIENCES CIVIC EDUCATION					111					442	553
	Homeland	31 1				31						31
	Man and Society			48 1.5	32 1	80						80
	History and Civilization						68 2	68 2	51 1.5	51 1.5	238	238
	Geography and Economics						51 1.5	51 1.5	51 1.5	51 1.5	204	204
	Psychology and Logic											
	Ethics and Law											

	Philosophy											
	World and Personality											
5.	NATURAL SCIENCES and ECOLOGY					112					510	622
	Surrounding World		32 1			32						32
	Man and Nature			32 1	48 1.5	80	85 2.5	85 2.5			170	250
	Biology and health education								68 2	68 2	136	136
	Physics and Astronomy								51 1.5	51 1.5	102	102
	Chemistry and Environmental Conservation								51 1.5	51 1.5	102	102
6.	Arts					444					442	886
	Music	62 2	64 2	48 1.5	48 1.5	222	51 1.5	68 2	51 1.5	51 1.5	221	443
	Art	62 2	48 1.5	64 2	48 1.5	222	68 2	51 1.5	51 1.5	51 1.5	221	443
7.	HOME ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY					127					170	297
	Home economy and technology	31 1	32 1	32 1	32 1	127						127
	Home technology and economics						51 1.5	51 1.5			102	102
	Technology								34 1	34 1	68	68
8.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT					286					306	592
	Physical Education and Sport	62 2	64 2	80 2.5	80 2.5	286	85 2.5	85 2.5	68 2	68 2	306	592
	TOTAL Compulsory subjects	589 19	640 20	736 23	736 23	2701	918 27	918 27	918 27	918 27	3,672	6,373
B.	COMPULSORY ELECTIVE SUBJECTS	93 3	64 2	64 2	64 2	285	102 3	102 3	102 3	102 3	408	693

	TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOL HOURS IN COMPULSORY AND COMPULSORY ELECTIVE SUBJECTS	682	704	800	800	2,986	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020	4,080	7,066
		22	22	25	25		30	30	30	30		
B.	FREE ELECTIVE SUBJECTS	124	128	128	128	508	136	136	136	136	544	1052
		4	4	4	4		4	4	4	4		
	TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOL HOURS IN COMPULSORY, COMPULSORY ELECTIVE AND FREE ELECTIVE SUBJECTS	806	832	928	928	3,494	1,156	1,156	1,156	1,156	4,624	8,118

State Educational Requirements for study content and syllabi have been developed for the subjects studied at the primary stage of basic education. They came into force for the first grade in the 2002/2003 school year. The syllabi present the objectives of each subject; expected results on study content cores; the study content by topics, concepts, context, activities and interdisciplinary connections; specific methods and forms of assessment of pupils' achievements; brief methodological directions on the application of the respective syllabus. Apart from the specific skills formed in the various school subjects, they include key groups of skills, which are formed across subjects such as: linguistic literacy, basic mathematical knowledge, working with information, communication skills, critical thinking and problem solving, learning-to-learn skills.

The guiding principles in defining the new study content are related to the need to decrease the volume of information and the academic style of presentation; to suit the content to the age of the pupils and their personal experience; a more practical orientation of the material etc. The new course books, developed in accordance with the State Educational Requirement for the study content and the syllabi and introduced together with the curriculum, provide wider opportunities to learn by thinking and experiencing, not by reproducing ready knowledge. The availability of three sets of course books for each subject ensures freedom of the choice of methodology, which is suited to a full extent to pupils' educational needs, but on the other hand it poses problems with using the chosen textbook in case of transfer to another school.

Therefore it is necessary that course books for each subject in each grade have an established common structure – the total number, the sequence and the formulation of the topics in the course books in one and the same subject for one and the same grade should be the same. It is also necessary to improve the system of course book evaluation and approval.

4.11. Teaching Methods and Materials

The modernization of the educational process aims at achieving the State Educational requirements. The priorities in teachers' and pupils' activities are changing – from reproduction and instruction towards creativity and research. Emphasis is laid on the active role of the pupil and the provision of opportunities for free expression and development of reflecting behaviour.

Various teaching methods, techniques and academic activities are employed in the process of education at basic schools.

In basic education teaching is done by combining traditional methods, such as: narration, explanation, demonstration, lectures, etc. with contemporary ones, such as: research or dialogue methods, counting on pupils' participation through presentations, reports, essays. Seminar lessons with brainstorming, binary lessons, etc are also held. Small group activities are organized and emphasis is laid on the independent creation of products according to the specific subject that is taught (essays, projects, models, etc.)

In the school year of 2002/2003 new textbooks were introduced along with the new syllabi. They were commissioned on the principle of competition. Several types of textbooks which teachers could choose from were offered. The teaching community reacted equivocally to these new ideas. The debate about textbooks continues with the prospect of creating really up-to-date learning materials of a good design for basic education.

Only textbooks and supplementary teaching materials that have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science can be used in the public education system. More than one textbook can be approved for one and the same subject for each grade. Every teacher and every school can choose one of the textbooks approved. The basic criterion for approving a textbook is its compliance with the respective syllabus and with the State Education Requirements, which guarantees that in spite of the variety of offered textbooks, the common requirements are met.

If the necessary technical facilities are available, audio-visual means and various visual materials are used in teaching.

The National Strategy and Action Plan for Introducing ICT to Bulgarian schools envisage the following concrete actions to be taken in order to achieve the improvement of teaching methods through the use of ICT:

- Providing broad-band internet connection at every school – this is planned to happen by the end of 2007.
- Construction of a National educational portal – its aim is to support the process of school education in an up-to-date manner. The portal will give lots of opportunities to all participants in the study process – pupils, teachers, head teachers, parents – with the option for 1,000,000 users to work simultaneously. It will provide different electronic courses of study, tests (to be used in internal and external assessment), electronic school documentation and a wide range of information. The users will be able to communicate through various thematic forums; they will have access to the web pages of all schools in the country as well as to the registers of the Ministry of Education and Science and will be able to use different search engines. Teachers will be able to communicate with pupils and their parents, who, in turn, will be able to communicate with the school. The portal was launched at the beginning of the 2006/2007 school year and gradually is gradually becoming the basis of a national electronic network of knowledge.
- Development of electronic study courses – they will not replace the traditional paper based textbooks but because of their greater potential (interactivity, cross-referencing, many versions

of tests, etc.) they will support pupils in acquiring better the study material. Such courses will be gradually developed for use in the primary and lower secondary stages.

- Providing a multimedia projector in every Bulgarian school – until the end of 2006 every school in the country should have at least one multimedia system. This will lead to additional opportunities to use contemporary teaching methods.

4.12. Pupil Assessment

Pupils' knowledge and the results of their education are assessed pursuant to Ordinance # 3 from 15 April 2003 (and its latest alterations of September 2005) on the system of assessment. The basic principles of assessment are stipulated in it – objectives, types of assessment, organization, forms, frequency of assessment, formation of term, annual and final marks, etc. The specifics of assessment on all stages and levels of education comply with pupils' age characteristics.

Pupils' achievements in the primary stage are evaluated according to the expected results outlined in the syllabi for every grade and subject. For children from 1st grade go through an evaluation of their level of readiness for school at the beginning of the school year and the results help teachers differentiate and tailor the study process according to pupils' individual needs. At the beginning and the end of the academic year, pupils from grades 2 to 4 do written tests to register the level of knowledge and skills for the respective grades but the results do not have any weight in the formation of the annual marks. The current assessment of pupils in the first grade is done through qualitative indicators only. The results of the current assessment of pupils from grades 2 to 12 is expressed by both qualitative and quantitative indicators – excellent (6), very good (5), good (4), fair (3) and poor (2). The pupil completes the grade if his/her annual mark is not less than fair (3).

The current marks of pupils from 2nd to 12th grade are entered in their mark books and the class register.

In assessing the general education minimum in the subjects of Music, Arts, Home Economics and Technology, and Physical Education and Sports the motivated participation of the pupils during classes and their efforts to surpass their individual achievements is taken into account.

Pupils who have not attained the educational minimum sit for corrective exams. Those who do not take the corrective exam or receive another poor mark (2), repeat the grade. Pupils from the first grade, who do not master the study content, do not repeat the grade. Instead, teachers work with them individually.

According to Ordinance № 3/2003 assessment in the whole system of education is internal and external (Art. 4), (see chapter IX). The teacher is the one who does the internal assessment, while the school head teacher, a school board, and administrative officers from the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education conduct the external assessment. Assessment is done through regular checkups, exams, inspections for establishing the level of attainment of the State Educational Requirements for study content. The different types of regular inspections on every subject are stipulated in SER and in the syllabi and they can be:

- oral examinations
- written examinations
- practical examinations (Art. 5, par.1, 2, 3).

Examinations are: equating, corrective, for change of a mark. They are either individual or common. Pupils who have received a poor mark in a compulsory or a compulsory elective subject sit a

corrective exam. To continue their education in a higher grade such pupils have to sit a correction examination in the respective subject and receive at least a fair mark (3). If they receive a poor mark (2), pupils repeat the grade.

Assessment in the process of school education aims to determine the results achieved by the pupils in the academic subjects during the school year and to award current, term and annual marks in the compulsory, compulsory-elective and free-elective subjects (Art. 8, par.1).

Upon completion of basic education final marks for each subject are awarded.

Ordinance № 3/2003 stipulates in detail periodic examinations: - oral, written, term tests, practical tests (Section II), formation of term, annual and final marks (Section III), administering exams in the process of study (Section IV).

The current assessment system bears some serious criticism, outlined in the Program for School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006 – 2015):

- with regard to internal assessment – the methods used are traditional and not quite efficient; there is still subjectivity in assessment;
- with regard to external assessment – there is still no national system of external assessment (despite the efforts of recent years along these lines).

According to the plan, the process of nation-wide implementation of testing at the Bulgarian schools will start in the school year of 2006/2007. Tests will become the leading form of both continuous and final assessment – on completion of each stage of education. The system of control and evaluation of quality is to be changed in two ways:

- Development of the system of internal assessment – this presupposes the wide use of tests both in the continuous assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge throughout the school year but as a form of assessing the entry and exit levels – measuring the knowledge and skills at the beginning and at the end of the school year.
- Creation of a system of external assessment – it will include compulsory assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills at the end of each educational level – for basic education there will be two external assessments: at the end of primary (IV grade) and at the end of lower secondary (VII grade). These are to be carried out through standardized exams (tests). The exams after the VII grade will be used to establish the degree of acquisition of the general educational minimum and as an entry to upper secondary education. It is planned for the first national standardized test after the 7th grade to take place in the school year of 2008/2009 (this will be the first year when pupils will study according to the new structure of education).

The wide use of tests as a form of assessment presupposes the creation of a bank of questions in all the school subjects and its on-going enrichment, as well as the preparation and distribution of collections of tests.

The opportunities to be offered by the national educational portal will also be used. There will be sample tests uploaded on the portal to support the internal and external evaluation. Many versions of such tests are to be found as part of the electronic study courses. The portal will contain matrices to help teachers develop and enrich their own tests. The best tests, created by teachers, will be approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. They will be used as sample assessment materials in the process of external evaluation.

A more elaborate investigation into the issues of the mass introductions of tests (form, schedule for their trialling and introduction distributed over years and subjects) will be undertaken with the help of a specially designed action plan developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

4.13. Progression of Pupils

At the end of 1st grade all pupils get a certificate of completed first grade where the overall annual mark is qualitative (formulated in words only). It represents the results from all academic subjects with qualitative indicators: satisfactory, good, very good and excellent.

The annual results of pupils from grades 2, 3 and 4 in different subjects of the curriculum is entered in their mark books, which verifies the completion of the grade. Pupils who complete grade 4, are issued a certificate of completed primary stage of basic education in which the annual marks in academic subjects of the compulsory and elective education, studied in grade 4 (art. 23 (2) /amend. – Official Gazette, issue. 36/98) are entered.

Admission to the lower secondary stage is free, but pupils are admitted to specialized classes (with intensive instruction on foreign languages, mathematics, arts, sports) after passing an exam.

The results from lower secondary education – grades 4 – 8 are entered as current, end of term and annual marks in pupils' mark books. Pupils' average mark for the year and their progress to the next grade are also registered in pupils' mark books.

Pupils who have not attained the educational minimum sit for corrective exams. Those who do not take the corrective exam or get again a poor (2) mark, repeat the grade. Pupils from grade 1, who do not master the study content, do not repeat the grade. Additional individual work is done with them.

4.14. Certification

Completion of basic education is certified with a Certificate Of Completed Basic Education, which is final (Public Education Act, 1991, Art. 23, par. 3). A Certificate of basic education is obtained after the completion of grade 8 and it entitles its holder to continue his/her education or vocational qualification (Public Education Act, art. 23, par. 4) or exercise professions requiring completed basic education.

During the school year 2006/2007 the basic education will still be completed after 8th grade, whereas after the introduction of the new structure of education, such a Certificate of basic education is to be issued on completion of the 7th grade.

4.15. Educational Guidance

The Ministry of Education and Science specifies the principles and the strategy of the state policy in the field of professional orientation, builds up and maintains the system of professional orientation for pupils, carries out the co-ordination of units and the control of their activities.

In 1993, the building of the structures of the professional orientation system at a national, regional and local level was launched. In 1994 a network of 27 regional Pedagogical Consultancy Offices located in the towns that were former regional centres, with a total number of 90 specialists was built in the same

year. The appointment of a pedagogical adviser per 500 pupils at school is regulated at a local/school level.

In 1999, the 27 regional Pedagogical consultancy offices were closed and at present the system of professional orientation for students functions only at the level of the Ministry of Education and Science (Centre for Professional Training and Orientation) and at a school level.

Career consultancy is carried out by the pedagogical advisers at schools. According to the job description of the pedagogical adviser, professional orientation activity is among his/her major activities.

Orientation to professions starts after the age of 12, i.e. from 5th form (after graduating the first degree of basic education) until graduation from secondary education. In accordance with the structure of the educational system, mainly 7th and 8th form students attend consultations on professional orientation before their enrolment in secondary schools. 10th, 11th and 12th graders do so too in connection with their application to higher schools.

Professional orientation activity is organised along several directions:

- School/educational orientation – includes choice of an educational opportunity (kind of school, training profile, educational degree, form of training, possibilities for a change during training);
- Professional orientation – includes choice of profession or labour role. The main activities of the consultant are directed towards discovery of academic and professional interests, motifs and adjustments of profession selection, orientation of values and profession selection, medical indications and contraindications in case of profession selection. Professional orientation in the education system is carried out through the prism of educational orientation;
- Personal and social orientation – it is related to solving personal, social and psychological problems of pupils and their families. Quite often in consulting practice, the educational orientation unlocks the need to solve personal, social and psychological issues (emotional, communicative, adaptation difficulties, difficulties in training, problems with the pupil's status in the class, etc.) as well.

The wide spectre of spheres of orientation which are carried out in the system of education is specified by the age of the users of this kind of service on the one hand, and on the other hand by the increase in personal and emotional problems of people at the background of the economic and social difficulties our country is overcoming.

The indicated spheres of orientation are carried out through two basic forms of consulting: general consulting and specialized consulting. The general consulting is dedicated to provision of educational information, as well as information, related to the school, educational and professional orientation. The general consulting is carried out individually or in a group.

Specialized consulting is: pedagogical – related directly to learning problems and the connection between school achievements and school selection; psychological – related to the research of the individual features of the personality and the school and professional choice, and medical – related to consulting pupils with chronic diseases and the possible medical indications and contraindications for studying specific professions. As a rule, specialized consulting is carried out individually.

4.16. Private Education

Private are these schools, which are opened or transformed on the request of Bulgarian natural persons or legal entities, which are not financed under the national or municipal budgets and are

housed in their own or leased buildings. Parents pay fees for their children's education, including within the compulsory school education age of 16.

Private schools are entitled to issue valid diplomas for acquired educational degree in line with the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act and Ordinance # 7/2001 on establishing and transforming and closing down private schools and all other statutory instruments in the field of education.

The curricula of private schools are drafted in line with the requirements of the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act, the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act and Ordinance # 6 as of 2001 on the distribution of school time for acquiring the general education minimum by grades, stages and levels of education.

At private schools providing general education the study content in subjects within compulsory and specialized education is developed in compliance with the respective educational requirements, valid for state schools.

The curricula of private profesionalni uchilishta (vocational schools) and profesionalni gimnazii (vocational upper secondary schools) should meet the following requirements: the professions, in which they offer training, should be included in the vocational education and training list; vocational training they provide should be structured according to the requirements of the Vocational Education and Training Act; the content of their professional training syllabi should comply with the state educational requirements for acquiring vocational qualification.

The following types of private schools operate within the educational system of this country (given by types and educational level):

- Private nachalni uchilishta (primary schools – 1st and 4th grades) - 9;
- Private progimnazii (lower secondary schools – 5th to 8th grade) - 2;
- Private osnovni uchilishta (basic schools – 1st to 8th grade) - 19;
- Private sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta (secondary general schools – 1 to 12th grade) - most of them offer extensive foreign language, arts and computer training – 6;
- Private language and profilirani (specialized) upper secondary schools after completing the 7th grade – 23;
- Private profesionalni gimnazii (vocational upper secondary schools) after completing the 7th and 8th grade – 24.

The majority of private schools offer additional educational services, better study conditions, smaller parallel classes (of 10 to 15 pupils), full-day training, better facilities, transportation, recreation opportunities and excursions for the pupils, breakfast and lunch, sports and theatrical activities, etc. Seventeen private schools work under international projects within the EU Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and other programmes.

Enrolment in some private schools, after the 7th and the 8th grade, is free and in others, after entrance exams.

For more information, see below.

4.16.1. Private schools corresponding to law-stipulated types of schools

All private schools, which provide the acquisition of an educational degree and are authorized to issue diplomas, meet the requirements for *nachalni uchilishta* (primary schools), *progimnazialni uchilishta* (lower secondary schools), *osnovni uchilishta* (basic schools), *gimnazii* (upper secondary schools), *sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools), *profesionalni* (vocational), sports, arts and *spetsialni uchilishta* (special schools), stipulated in the Public Education Act.

The applications for opening and transforming a private school or kindergarten should specify the type of the establishment, the forms of education and the organization of the school day, the fields of specialization for *profilirani gimnazii* (specialized upper secondary schools) and *profilirani* (specialized) classes within *gimnazii* (upper secondary schools) and *sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta* (secondary general schools), the professions for *profesionalni uchilishta* (vocational schools) and *profesionalni gimnazii* (vocational upper secondary schools), etc. If there are inconsistencies with the statutory instruments, they should be eliminated. This is allowed only once. Otherwise, the Minister of Education and Science denies opening the kindergarten or school.

4.16.2. Private schools not corresponding to law-stipulated types of schools

There are no private schools in the Bulgaria providing an educational degree, which do not comply with the requirements for types of schools envisaged by the law.

There are many private schools and additional courses outside the institutionalized educational system designed both for pupils and adults but their completion does not lead to acquiring an educational degree.

4.16.3. Establishment of Private Schools

Private schools and kindergartens are opened on the request of a Bulgarian natural person or legal entity. The following documents are needed to open such an establishment:

- Application to the Minister of Education and Science;
- Documents, providing data about the applicant: for members of the public – copies of a document of civil status and a conviction status certificate; for legal entities – copies of a court ruling for registration and a current legal status certificate; for sole traders – the latter documents plus a conviction status certificate.
- Documents related to the school education or pre-primary education and training: a draft curriculum, data about the teaching staff (teachers should have a bachelor's, a master's or an expert's degree and hold a professional qualification of a "teacher" or the right to teach in general and to teach the respective subject), a draft contract for training;

- Documents, related to the facilities and equipment: a certificate of ownership or contract for using the respective facility, premises with the respective equipment, a project for reconstruction or building activities, a hygienic conclusion, a sanitary permit, a certificate of compliance with the statutory requirements for fire safety, permit for using the respective building, etc.
- Documents for providing medical services for children and pupils;
- Documents certifying that the necessary state fees have been paid: fees are paid for considering an application on opening or transformation of a private school or private kindergarten.

The applications for opening such an establishment are filed with the Ministry of Education and Science all the year round. The Minister of Education and Science decides whether to order or deny opening of a private school or kindergarten.

4.16.4. Licensing of Private Schools

Private schools and kindergartens acquire the status of legal entities on the day of promulgation of the Minister of Education's order on the opening in the "Official Gazette".

The order should include:

- the name, seat and registered address of the school or kindergarten;
- the type of school or kindergarten;
- the areas of specialization and/or vocations in which training will be carried out;
- the school's right to issue official documents for completed grade, acquired educational degree and professional qualification;
- data about the person, who has been granted a permit to establish a private school;
- the person, managing and representing the school.

A fee is paid for the issue of a permit on establishing or transforming a private school or kindergarten, depending on the type of these institutions.

4.16.5. Financing of private schools

Private schools and kindergartens are not financed within the state or municipal budgets and use their own or leased facilities.

Certain financial and tax reliefs have been introduced on proposal by the Bulgarian Private Schools Association:

Under a National Assembly decision, value added tax is not imposed on private school fees;

The Sofia City Council adopted amendments to its ordinance on leasing municipal property to private schools and kindergartens which regulate the issue of the amount of such a lease and the contract signing procedure. The Commission for Protection of Competition has given a positive stance with regard to the equal treatment of private, state and municipal schools.

Proposals about tax reliefs for natural persons and legal entities investing in education and about amending the state and municipal ownership laws with regard to the terms of leasing of facilities by private schools have been filed with the National Assembly.

4.16.6. Free choice of a private school

The right of each citizen to receive his/her education at a freely chosen school and a chosen type of education depending on his/her individual preferences and faculties, as provided for in the Public Education Act, allows pupils to choose either a state and municipal or a private school – primary, basic, secondary general or vocational. Pupils are completely free to exercise this right of choice, but education at private schools is paid for by their parents or guardians; thus, the right to choose a private school is exercised only by pupils who wish to enter such a school, but only when their parents are able to pay for their studies. Private schools are not funded by the budget and the entire cost per schoolchild is met by the tuition charges. Some private schools offer better conditions for training – a smaller number of pupils in the classes and groups, computer rooms, swimming pools, a boarding house, language laboratories, their own transportation, etc. It is believed that a greater emphasis is put on the personal development of the child at such schools and additional services and amenities such as quality food, ecologically clean environment, special interest clubs, sport and arts, highly qualified and motivated teachers, who are proficient in modern methods of education and upbringing, are provided. Private schools are still the minority and are located predominantly in the bigger cities of the country. In the school year of 2002/2003 private primary schools (grades 1 – to 4) were 9 with 138 pupils and private basic schools (from grades 1 to 8) 19 with 1,668 pupils.

4.17. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures

Alternative forms of education are offered mainly at private schools. There are also some state basic schools and *profilirani* (specialized) classes with intensive foreign language teaching, mathematics, sports and arts instruction.

Innovation projects and experiments are carried out and new teaching strategies are applied, information technologies are used in many schools in the country including basic and primary ones.

4.18. Statistics

Data for the school year 2005/2006 compared to data from previous years

Number of educational institutions leading to completion of basic education (including primary – grades 1st to 4th and lower secondary – grades 5th to 8th)

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
General and special schools	2,823	2,784	2,757
Nachalni (primary: 1 st – 4 th grade)	315	295	277
Osnovni (Basic: 1 st – 8 th grade)	1 892	1 877	1 872
Progimnazii (Lower secondary schools: 5 th – 8 th grade)	22	21	21
Palni sredni obshtoobrazovatelni (full secondary general - 1 st – 13 th grade) and schools with grades 5 th – 13 th	429	424	419
Private schools:			
General and special schools	54	56	59
Nachalni (primary 1 st – 4 th grade)	6	5	4
Osnovni (basic 1 st – 8 th grade)	18	22	22
Progimnazii (Lower secondary 5 th – 8 th grade) ¹	1	2	3
Palni sredni obshtoobrazovatelni (1 st – 12 th grade) and schools with grades 5 th – 13 th grade	5	4	4

Pupils enrolled in basic schools

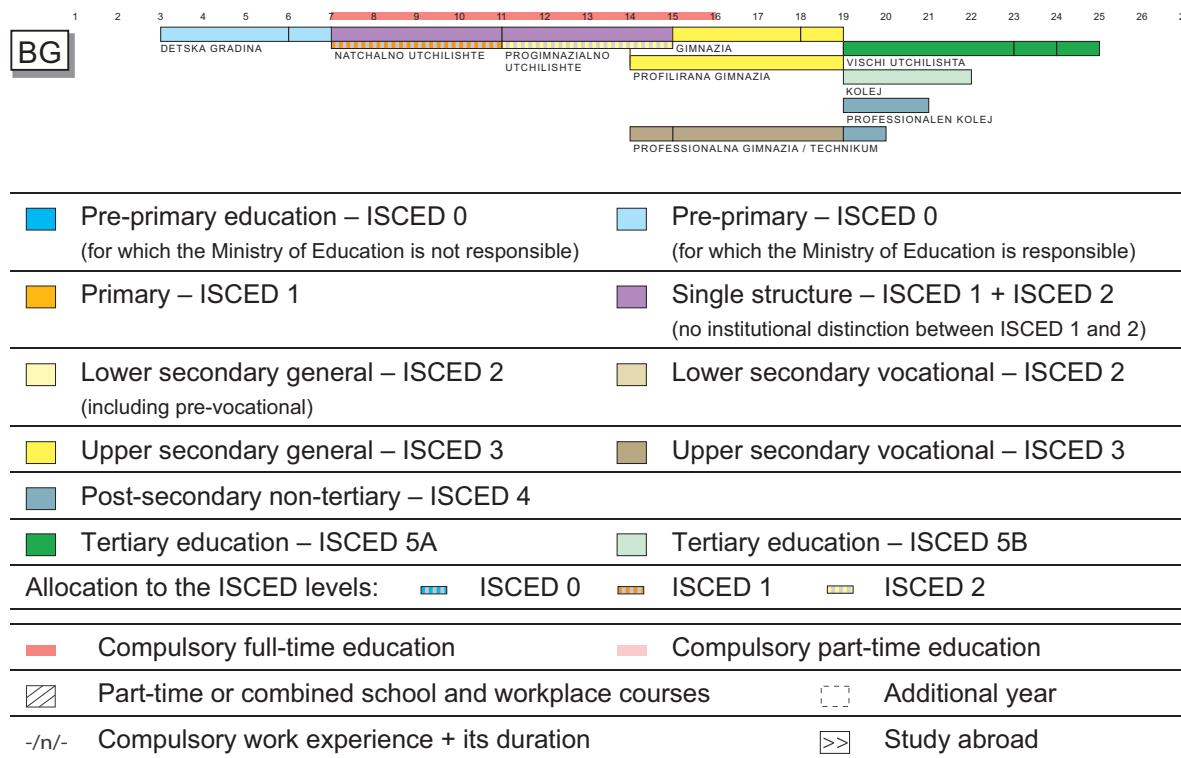
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Primary education (1 st – 4 th grade, ISCED-1)	314 221	290 017	273 045
Lower secondary education (5 th – 8 th grade, ISCED-2A)	330 416	312 480	295 160
At private schools			
Primary education (1 st – 4 th grade, ISCED-1)	1 195	1 288	1 383
Lower secondary education (5 th – 8 th grade, ISCED-2A)	817	914	900

Net ratio of the pupils enrolled in basic schools and by age groups

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06 ¹
Group net quotients² by degrees of education MCKO - 97			
Primary education (1 st – 4 th grade, ISCED-1)	100.3	99.7	99.5
Lower secondary (5 th – 8 th grade, ISCED-2A)	84.2	84.2	84.9
7 -10 years	102.2	101.6	101.4
11 - 14 years	98.1	98.2	98.3

5. Upper Secondary and post-Secondary non-Tertiary Education

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2005/06



Source: Eurydice.

In the Republic of Bulgaria the upper secondary level of education is carried out at a single stage (upper secondary/high school education), lasting 4 or 5 years and leading to completion of secondary education.

Secondary education is acquired on completion of the 12th (13th) grade and successfully taking state matriculation exams. It is certified with a diploma of completed secondary education, which is final and entitles the holder to continue his/her education or vocational training.

Upper secondary education can be divided into general (with general and specialized profilirani schools) and vocational. General secondary education is acquired at general schools (with a course of study of 3, 4 years) and profilirani (specialized) schools (with a course of study of 4, 5 years). Pupils can be admitted to specialized schools after the completion of the 7th or the 8th grades, passing the entrance exams, which correspond to the specialization of the respective school (Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, humanities, etc.).

Upper secondary education provides the attainment of the general education minimum and whenever possible profile-oriented training in accordance with state educational requirements.

Upper secondary vocational education provides the attainment of the general education minimum and the acquisition of qualifications in a given profession in accordance with the state educational requirements.

Educational programs for vocational technical schools with 2-year-duration years are offered after the completion of basic education. The acquired vocational qualification gives access to the labour market.

5.1. Historical Overview

At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, there was a transition from medieval school to a modern, progressive type of school and the ecclesiastical and religious education was changed for the secular, thus commencing the systematic learning of separate subjects. The new Bulgarian school was set up on the principals of the new modern pedagogy – visualization, consciousness and active involvement, continuity, consistency. In the 19th c. the formation of a three-stage education system began to evolve:

- Primary school – with a course of education of 2 – 3 years;
- Preparatory school – with a 3- or 4-year course of education, where different subjects were studied;
- Class school (with the character of incomplete high school) - 3 or 4 years with secular study content. Then the first complete high schools with a 6-year course of education were created. There were only three such schools for the whole country – in Gabrovo, Plovdiv and Bolgrad.

The total length of the course of education encompassed 10, 11 or 12 years, like the education in other European countries.

The actual formation of high school education into a separate educational level within the secondary education dates back to this period.

New types of class schools were opened after the 40s of the 19th c., and schools with liberal and natural sciences profiles were formed in addition to those with general education study content.

After the Liberation of Bulgaria the following structure of the system of education was endorsed with the first Education Act by the Minister of public education I. Guyzelev

- Primary school – 4 years;
- Three-grade school – 3 years;
- High school – 4 years;
- The total length of the course of secondary education was 11 grades.

The high school course of education was increased to five years with the National Education Act of 1909 and the middle stage was called pre-secondary for the first time. The internal structure of high school education was formed as follows – a junior level of three years and a senior level of two years. They were divided into two departments – classical (studying classical Roman literature and classical languages), semi-classical (with one obligatory classical language and one elective) and regular (with emphasis on the study of algebra and geometry) along with the general comprehensive education.

The Act of 1921 preserved the junior and senior level of high school but “regular” classes were created within the junior level, – subjects like agriculture, commerce, cooperative science were included thus facilitating education’s democratization thus effecting the successful fulfilment of young people. The senior level of high school preserved its general education character, the progress from a “regular” class to junior level was free without any exams. Those who finished a complete high school course were entitled to continue their education to a school of higher education.

In 1925 two special acts in the field of vocational education were issued – the Commercial and Industrial Education Act and the Agricultural Education Act. Thus secondary education branched into two big divisions – general and vocational. Depending on the source of their financial support, vocational schools were termed *district*, *municipal*, *affiliated to chambers of trade and industry*, *to foundations*, *to associations* and also *private*. Pupils who had completed a pre-secondary school were admitted to secondary vocational schools, the course of education being 4 or 5 years. Bulgarian language and at least one western European foreign language, book keeping, commercial correspondence were studied in addition to specialized subjects and a one-month practical training

was organized during the summer. Education ended with a matriculation exam. Those who completed their education successfully were eligible for higher education in the respective subject.

After 9.09.1944 serious measures were taken to overcome illiteracy and increase the level of education of all people. The trend was one of making secondary education universal, free and accessible to all. 50 complete and 60 incomplete high schools were opened within one year /1944 - 45/ only, the intensive building of schoolhouses in the next decades continued. The system of secondary vocational education was expanded and the gradual introduction of polytechnic education began. Evening high schools for adolescents who did not have the opportunity to complete their secondary education were opened.

The creation of secondary polytechnic schools, which combined the positive aspects of general comprehensive schools and vocational schools, started with the Closer Connection Between School and Life Act of 1959 and within a very short period of time they were established as the most widespread types of schools of secondary education. There were also a number of specialized schools – language, mathematics, arts, sports, and pedagogical, etc. Specialists with secondary education for different professional areas were trained in the various technical schools and the secondary vocational technical schools.

Those who completed their secondary education irrespective of the type of school were eligible for admission to higher schools in a subject of their choice.

In recent years, a number of changes have been made in the sphere of upper secondary education. Among the most significant are the changes in educational content –State Educational Requirements, new syllabi for the secondary education level, and new curricula for all subjects have been developed and put to practice. Changes have also been made in the assessment of students' achievements, connected with the wider application of test assessment, higher consistency and measuring the entrance and exit level in mastering the educational content, regulating the compulsory character of state matriculation examinations. A trend for stronger specialization and giving the students a choice within the frames of the curriculum has been observed at this stage of education, envisaging a smaller in volume general education minimum. The striving is to respond to the interests, needs and abilities of the students. In accordance with the global and European requirements the instruction in foreign languages and computers is applied more widely than before. Efforts are made to raise the quality of the secondary education, its general accessibility, for durability and applicability of the knowledge and skills, transparency in grading and ensuring independent evaluation of the students' results.

In the field of the upper secondary vocational education changes are also under way – in 2003 a new list of the professions for the vocational education and frame program for acquiring vocational qualification were confirmed; development and confirmation of SER by professions and for the national examination program began; all vocational schools have been transformed according to the statutory regulations. A major priority is binding vocational training with labour market requirements.

5.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

As regards the upper secondary level, the major question discussed over the past few months is related to the envisaged by the National Program for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006 – 2015) suggestions for changes in the structure of education. The questions of changing the study plans, syllabi for the general secondary and vocational secondary level of education as well as the necessity to link education and the labour market more closely are related to that.

According to the suggestion, the upper secondary level is to be divided in two stages:

- First upper secondary stage (8th – 10th grade) – at its end students will finish their compulsory education and students at vocational upper secondary schools will be able to acquire first degree of professional qualification. For the students leaving the system after grade 10, the plan envisages the development of short modules to prepare them for the acquisition of a profession.
- Second upper secondary stage (11th – 12th grade) – during this stage students will develop further and acquire specialized knowledge and skills and will be able to prepare for their training at a tertiary education institution. At this stage students at vocational schools will receive training for acquiring second or third degree of professional qualification. The 13th grade in vocational education is abolished.

The 8th grade will be a year of intensive study of foreign languages and ICT and/or for vocational training for all students.

The new educational structure is expected to display the following advantages:

- Equal rights of the students from one and the same year at the end of basic education – all students finish basic education, receive a certificate and go on to the next level of education without changing their school.
- Guaranteed access to the constitutional requirement for compulsory study until the age of 16 and provision of opportunity to go out of the system.
- Acquisition of one and the same General educational minimum at all types of schools.
- Horizontal and vertical passability of the system.
- Possibility to adjust vocational training more quickly to the dynamics of the labour market.
- Keeping the traditional Bulgarian educational invention - the preparatory class (of intensive study of a foreign language) which leads to very good results.
- Providing students of different abilities, needs and interests with the opportunity to find their place in the system of education.
- Enhancing students' motivation to stay longer within the system of school education.

5.3. Specific Legislative Framework

In terms of legislation the upper secondary level of education is done within one stage with duration of four to five years and leads to the completion of secondary education.

The most important statutory documents which regulate the terms and procedures of admission, education and completion of secondary education are: the Public Education Act; the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act; the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act and Ordinance #6 of 2001 issued on its grounds on the distribution of school time for acquiring the general education minimum by grades, stages and levels of education; Vocational Education and Training Act; Ordinance #7 of 2002 on determining the number of pupils and children in classes and in groups at schools, kindergartens and servicing units; Ordinance #3 of 2003 on the system of assessment; Ordinance #11 of 28 March 2005 on admitting pupils to state and municipal schools; the Curriculum of gimnaznii (upper secondary schools), profilirani gimnazii (specialized upper secondary schools) and sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta (secondary general schools) after basic education; the Curriculum of profilirani gimnazii (specialized upper secondary schools) and specialized classes in upper secondary schools and sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta (secondary general

schools) with admission after the 7th grade with intensive foreign language instruction; the Curriculum of profesionalni gimnazii (vocational upper secondary schools) with admission after the 7th grade with intensive foreign language instruction (there are about 150 kinds of curricula for vocational education and training, approved with an administrative act by the Minister of Education and Science, determining the different forms of training, the major documents being the Framework programs, the State Educational Requirements and the National Examination programs for acquiring professional qualification); the Curriculum of sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta (secondary general schools) – evening schooling; the Curriculum of sports schools, the Curriculum for all subjects at the upper secondary level of compulsory (specialized and non-specialized) education, compulsory elective and free elective subjects; Ordinance of the Ministry of Education and Science of 2003 on the academic examination programs for the state matriculation exams, etc.

There have been no legal changes with regard to the upper secondary level since 2004.

A new ordinance regulates the acceptance of students to municipal and state schools (for more detail, see [5.7.](#)). The change in the Public Education Act concerning upper secondary is related to the consecutive postponing of the conduction of the compulsory matriculation examinations (for more detail regarding changes in legislation, see [2.3.](#)).

During the current and the following school years training at the upper secondary level (9th – 12th grade) will be carried out according to the legislation presented in the 2004 Dossier.

The pending changes in the structure of high schools have not yet been legally regulated. They will be introduced as follows:

- Starting in the school year of 2006/2007, students in the fifth grade will be trained according to the new educational structure of basic education (see section [4.2.](#)).
- After finishing basic education in 2008/2009, these pupils will be the first to be trained according to the new educational structure of the upper secondary school level, i.e. it will be introduced in the school year of 2009/2010.
- At the end of the school year of 2011/2012 the first certificates for the graduation of the first upper secondary stage will be issued.
- At the end of the school year of 2013/2014, the first year taught entirely within the new educational structure will graduate and sit state matriculation exams.

5.4. General Objectives

The principal aims of upper secondary education are identical to the aims underlying the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act and in Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act – see section [4.4.](#).

At the level of upper secondary education the emphasis is on the encouragement and development of individual interests and abilities, facilitation of the future accomplishment of pupils, formation of specialized knowledge and skills, gaining broader general knowledge, adoption of civil society values, etc. The possibilities for choice within the curriculum in the upper secondary stage of education facilitate the overall development of pupils in the areas where they demonstrate most intense interest.

The principal aims of general comprehensive training are:

- To facilitate the physical and spiritual development of pupils, their successful orientation, adaptation and fulfilment in society;
- To create conditions for value formation connected with feelings of Bulgarian national identity, respect of others, empathy and civic responsibility;
- To create conditions for development of needs, interests and attitudes to lifelong learning and education and self-perfection.

The changes in the structure of education are closely related to certain alterations in the aims of upper secondary education, which, in fact, will start being achieved during the school years to come. The major trend is connected to granting bigger personal choice of the type and level of education so that it corresponds to the personal aims of a student more fully; improving one's chance of social realization through the acquisition of more comprehensive computer and foreign language instruction as well as through increasing the opportunities to get vocational training; supporting the labour market realization of students who do not continue their education to the second upper secondary stage, etc.

5.5. Types of Institution

General upper secondary education is provided by:

- Secondary general schools, which encompass all educational levels (1st – 12th grade).
- Profilirani (specialized) schools with intensive foreign language instruction (language schools) – admission after the 7th grade, on the basis of competition. They span the 8th to the 12th (13th) grade.
- Profilirani (specialized) secondary schools – admission is after the 8th grade (natural sciences and/or mathematical schools, humanities schools, sports schools, arts schools, etc.). They span the 9th to the 12th (13th) grade.

Complete upper secondary vocational education is provided by vocational upper secondary schools – they admit pupils with completed basic education (9th – 12th/13th grade) and or after completed seventh grade (8th – 13th grade). Vocational upper secondary schools provide vocational education through the acquisition of second degree of vocational qualification with duration of four years or of third degree of vocational qualification with duration of five or six years.

Secondary vocational education may be acquired at vocational schools, the attendance of which leads to the acquisition of second degree of vocational qualification.

Special schools leading to completion of secondary education and/or acquisition of vocational qualification function for pupils with special educational needs.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education is provided by vocational colleges which offer vocational education leading to acquiring fourth degree of professional qualification by persons who have already completed their secondary education. The duration of study at vocational colleges is up to two years depending on the degree of professional qualification of the learner. Students at vocational colleges pay tuition fees.

The acquisition of fourth degree of professional qualification gives the right to college-leavers to exercise professions, including complex activities, performed under changing conditions, as well as to take on managing responsibilities for the work of other persons and the distribution of resources.

Vocational colleges are institutions belonging to the system of secondary education and do not lead to a degree of higher education, only to a degree of professional qualification.

5.6. Geographical Accessibility

The characteristics of school distribution at the level of upper secondary education are generally the same as those presented in Chapter 4 for schools offering basic education – see section **4.5.**

Upper secondary schools are distributed mainly in the cities, where the number of pupils is greater. Pupils living in villages where there is no school offering secondary education, travel to an appropriate school outside the village. There are discounts on travelling costs for pupils and students for railway and city transport and for certain bus services.

The optimization of the school network with regard to education institutions granting general secondary and vocational secondary education has some specific dimensions. According to the plan, it should be executed in close relation to the development of the different regions of

the country, their social and economic status and the general status of the labour market.

It is also envisaged that local authorities will have greater rights to decide not only on the number of general secondary and specialized secondary schools but on the number of vocational schools on the territory of the respective municipality as well. The professions and specialities should be more closely related to the specific features of the region, its industrial development and the need for certain specialists for the different branches.

5.7. Admission Requirements and Choice of School

For the present school (2006/2007) year the conditions and regulations concerning enrolment in secondary schools are determined according to Ordinance № 11 of March 28th, 2005 concerning enrolment in state and municipal secondary schools. It cancels the action of Ordinance № 8 of 2001, which was last changed in 2004, which regulated the process of enrolment in state schools and unspecialized classes.

The Ordinance determines the conditions and regulations for enrolment in state and municipal schools in the:

- 8th grade – in profilirani gimnazii (specialized upper secondary schools), in profilirani paralelki (specialized classes) with intensive foreign language instruction at sredni obshtobrazovatelni uchilishta (general secondary schools), vocational upper secondary schools and classes leading to the acquisition of professional qualification at general secondary schools and profilirani gimnazii (specialized upper secondary schools);
- 9th grade – in profilirani gimnazii (specialized upper secondary schools), in specialized classes at general secondary schools, in high schools, in vocational high schools, in non-specialized parallel classes at general secondary schools and in classes leading to the acquisition of professional qualification within general secondary schools, in vocational upper secondary schools and other upper secondary schools;
- 7th or 8th grade for the acquisition of professional qualification and basic education – in vocational schools and vocational parallel classes within basic, general lower secondary and upper secondary schools.

This ordinance determines the conditions and regulations for enrolment in state and municipal vocational colleges and vocational high schools of persons holding a secondary level certificate.

Students can apply to an unlimited number of schools. The approved plan for enrolment and enrolment in non-specialized classes for the region distributed according to schools are publicly displayed at the Regional Inspectorate of Education not later than April 15th.

Up to 5 students suffering from chronic diseases, physical and sensor disabilities can be enrolled in each class. In profesionalni uchilishta (vocational schools) and vocational upper secondary schools these could also be students from the institutions for raising and educating children deprived of parental care.

The chief of the Regional Inspectorate of Education approves of the state enrollment and the enrollment in the non-specialized parallel classes at every school not later than September 5th.

Students are enrolled after examining their abilities and/or their documents. Examining their abilities can be done through three types of exams:

- in a school subject;
- a test;
- examination of abilities.

The study and examination syllabi as well as the evaluation criteria are approved by an ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science and are made known at schools and regional inspectorates not later than January 31st. The topics for the entrance exams are approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

Entrance exams for the 8th and 9th grades should be taken on the territory of the region where the students have graduated the 7th grade or basic education. When a certain exam is planned to be carried out in a region, students can sit for this exam on the territory of another region. The positioning is done in descending order according to the total examination marks and the stated order of wishes. Applying for one specialism, one specialty within a profession or one non-specialized parallel class for each of the stated schools is considered one wish.

The positioning has three stages. A student can be positioned according to one wish at each stage of the positioning.

Students are enrolled in the 8th or the 9th grade at the school where they are accepted by submitting the following documents:

- An application addressed to the school principal;
- The original certificate for completion of the 7th grade or a basic education certificate;
- the original of the medical certificate issued by the student's GP when applying for the specialisations of 'Arts' and 'Sports' and the specialities within vocations.

Accepting students to the 8th grade

Students are accepted to the 8th grade:

- At the specialized upper secondary schools and specialized classes with intensive foreign language instruction at secondary general schools;

- At vocational upper secondary schools and classes leading to the acquisition of professional qualification at secondary general schools and specialized upper secondary schools.

Students are enrolled after sitting entrance exams. Only students who have completed the 7th grade in the year of application can submit an application form.

The requirements for application are that the student should:

- have received at least pass (3.00) mark at each of the entrance exams, determined as significant for the formation of the total final marks for a specialisation and specialities within a profession;
- the specialisations of "Art", "Sports" or specialities within professions, which will not have an unfavourable effect on their health.

The entrance exams are as follows:

- for the specialisms of "Humanities", "Nature Studies", "Foreign languages" and "Technology", as well the specialities within the profession – in Bulgarian language and Literature and in Mathematics;
- for the specialisations of "Art" as well as certain specialities within professions requiring abilities from the sphere of fine arts, music or choreography – a test and examination of abilities in arts, music, choreography respectively;
- For the specialisation of "Sports" – a test and examination of abilities in sports.

The final marks qualifying for positioning is formed as follows:

- the specialisation of "Humanities" – as the sum total of the mark from the Bulgarian language and Literature exam multiplied by three, the mark from the Mathematics exam, the mark in Bulgarian language and Literature from the certificate for the completion of the 7th grade and the mark in one more subject;
- for the specialisations of "Nature studies" and "Technology" – as the sum total of the mark from the Mathematics exam multiplied by two, the mark in Mathematics from the certificate for the completion of the VII grade and the mark in one more subject determined as significant for the formation of the total final marks;
- for the specialisation of "Foreign languages" – as the sum total of the mark from the Bulgarian language and Literature exam multiplied by two, the mark from the Mathematics exam multiplied by two, the marks in Bulgarian language and Literature and in Mathematics, the mark in Bulgarian language and Literature and in Mathematics from the certificate for the completion of the 7th grade;
- for the specialisations of "Arts" and "Sports" as well as certain specialities within some professions requiring abilities from the sphere of Arts, Sports and Choreography – as the sum total of the mark from the test multiplied by two, the mark from the examination of the respective abilities and the marks in two subjects determined as significant for the formation of the total final marks;
- For the specialities within professions – as the sum total of the mark from the Bulgarian language and Literature exam, the mark from the Mathematics exam multiplied by three and the marks in two subjects determined as significant for the formation of the total final marks.

The first stage of the positioning ends with the enrolment of the accepted students or with applying for participation in the second stage. The students who have not been accepted at the first stage or who have been accepted according to their second or next wish, but who have not been enrolled and have submitted an application, continue their participation in the next stage of the positioning. To participate in the third stage of the positioning, students submit an application to the Head of the Regional Inspectorate, in which they can reorder their wishes. Doing so, students lose the place they have taken at the previous stages of the positioning. If the case is that after the third stage the number of students is smaller than the minimum number of students required, the Chief of the Regional

Inspectorate distributes the students according to the order of their next wishes in a parallel class with vacancies.

Accepting students in the IX grade

Students are accepted in the 9th grade:

- In specialized upper secondary schools, in secondary general schools and in other upper secondary schools;
- in vocational upper secondary schools and vocational schools, in non-specialized classes and classes leading to the acquisition of professional qualification at secondary general schools, specialized upper secondary schools and other upper secondary schools.

Students are accepted after submission of the required documents or after taking an entrance exam in a subject or after examination of their abilities. Students are accepted in non-specialized classes after submission of the required documents.

Upon applying students are required to:

- have finished basic education;
- be not older than 17; they should have turned 17 in the year of application – for regular education, they should already have turned 16 or should be turning 16 in the year of application for evening classes;
- prove that the specialisations of "Arts", "Sports" or the specialities within professions will not affect unfavourably their health;
- have been given at least fair (3,00) at the entrance exam in the cases of such.

The students should submit the following documents at the school:

- Application for stating their wish to take part in the positioning (according to the model established at the particular school)
- A copy of the certificate for completion of their basic education;
- A copy of the certificate proving the mark from the entrance exam in the cases of such;
- A copy of the medical certificate issued by the student's GP.

Students should order the specialisations, specialities within professions and/or the non-specialized classes according to their own wish in the application form.

The positioning is done at the school. Each stage of the positioning ends with enrolling the accepted students and declaring the number of vacant places at the Regional Inspectorate and at the school.

Accepting students after finishing the 6th or 7th grade or accepting persons holding a secondary education certificate

In order to acquire professional qualification and basic education after finishing the 6th and 7th grades, students are accepted to vocational schools, and vocational classes at basic, lower secondary and secondary general schools after submission of the required documents. The conditions and regulations for application, positioning and enrolment are determined by a resolution of the pedagogical council.

Persons holding a certificate for completion of secondary education are accepted to vocational colleges and vocational high schools. The conditions and regulations for application, positioning and enrolment are determined by a resolution of the pedagogical council.

Accepting students with chronic diseases, physical and sensor disabilities as well as students from the institutions for raising and educating children deprived of parental care

Students having chronic diseases, physical and sensor disabilities are accepted to specialisations, specialities within professions or non-specialized classes upon their request through submission of the required documents if this will not affect their health unfavourably. Students from the institutions for raising and educating children deprived of parental care are accepted to the specialities within professions upon their request through submission of documents. The chief of the Regional inspectorate appoints a committee to direct such students, which consists of three RIE experts, a lawyer and a pediatrician, chosen by the regional health centre.

Directing students with disabilities and chronic diseases is done according to a:

- list of diseases for accepting students to specialized upper secondary schools, specialized classes at upper secondary schools or secondary general schools, approved of by the Minister of Education and Science;
- list of the chronic diseases, physical and sensor disabilities and the specialisations and professions which will not affect these conditions unfavourably, approved of by the Minister of Health in agreement with the Minister of Education and Science.

The committee directs the students according to the complexity of his/her disease and the restrictions following from that, the marks from the first school term in the subjects determined as significant for the formation of the total final marks for the respective specialism or speciality within a profession as well as the student's wishes.

The committee directs the students from the institutions for raising and educating children deprived of parental care according to their marks in the subjects determined as significant for the formation of the total final marks for the respective specialisation or speciality within a profession for the first school term as well their wishes.

Holding a document certifying that the person has completed the 7th grade (for those who apply after the 7th grade) and a certificate of basic education (for those who apply after the 8th grade) is a compulsory condition for the admittance to an entrance exam. It is not necessary to sit an entrance exam to be accepted to some of the non-specialized classes, as well as some specialized upper secondary schools and vocational upper secondary schools if the school's pedagogical council had accepted such a resolution (e.g. due to lack of enough applicants). In such cases students are accepted according to their final marks from their certificate of basic education.

The right to choose a school has already been discussed in chapter 4, see section **4.6.**

5.8. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

School education in Bulgaria is free, including secondary education. There are no registration or tuition fees at state and municipal secondary schools. At private schools, however, parents pay tuition fees determined by the school.

5.9. Financial Support for Pupils

See section 4.7.

There are discounts for pupils for the city transport and a 50% discount on inter-city railway transport. Upper secondary students are entitled to receive scholarships – more precisely these are the excellent students and those coming from socially disadvantaged families.

5.10. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Pupils within one and the same age group form the grades and classes at the upper secondary level in different schools leading to completion of secondary education in the daily form of schooling.

Division into classes and groups for the different academic subjects and the formation of groups from different classes is done within one and the same grade.

In the evening form of schooling and in adults education forms, which acquire secondary education, classes and groups are formed by pupils who are of different age groups.

The size of classes for the different types of schools and educational levels is set according to Ordinance №7 of 2000 r. for determining the number of pupils and children in classes and in groups in schools, kindergartens and servicing units.

For sredni obshtoobrazovatelni uchilishta (secondary general schools) – both specialised and non-specialised – at upper secondary level (9th – 12th grade), the number of pupils in a class is at least 18 and 26 at the most.

Between 18 and 26 pupils are included in one class at vocational schools and vocational upper secondary schools.

In the evening form of schooling this number is from 18 to 30 pupils.

In the part-time form of schooling it is from 15 to 35 pupils.

If the number of pupils is insufficient to form a class for intensive foreign language instruction after the 7th grade at specialised upper schools, at secondary general schools and sports schools and for classes with admission after the 9th grade at secondary general schools as well as for vocational schools a minimum number of pupils is sufficient to form a class

If in the next grades of the upper secondary level of education the number of pupils in a class falls under the required minimum, classes with one and the same specialisation at a secondary general school or with the same specialities and professions at vocational schools are reorganized and pupils are placed in other classes with the same specialisation or speciality. If there is no such option pupils are transferred to other schools. Classes in the last grade of a high school can exist with at least 13 pupils.

At the upper secondary level of education classes can be divided into groups in the following cases:

- In classes where pupils learn different foreign languages a group is formed with at least 10 pupils, if this language is not learned in other classes of the same grade.
- For laboratory exercises in Chemistry and environment protection, Physics and astronomy, Biology and health education whenever the class is more than 25 pupils;
- In computer science and information technology the minimum number of pupils in a group is eight;

- Classes formed from two specialisations or from two specialties/professions are divided into two groups during the instruction in the specialised subjects and in the subjects related to the vocational training whenever it is different for the two specialties/professions;
- When the number of pupils in vocational schools and vocational upper secondary schools is insufficient to divide the classes into groups for foreign language learning, the formation of mixed groups of pupils from one and the same class with at least 11 pupils in a groups is allowed;
- For art and sports profiles groups can be of 5 – 7 and 3 pupils respectively;
- Grouping is also done according to subjects for vocational training, for study and laboratory practice, for drawing, construction, modelling, etc.;
- Groups in compulsory elective and free elective education have at least 8 to 12 pupils depending on the academic subjects.

5.11. Specialisation of Studies

General comprehensive education at Bulgarian schools is accomplished by studying subjects, grouped in the following cultural and educational fields:

- Bulgarian language and literature;
- Foreign languages;
- Mathematics, computer science and information technology;
- Social sciences and civic education;
- Natural sciences and ecology;
- Arts;
- Home economics and technology;
- Physical education and sports.

However, at the upper secondary level, there are greater opportunities for pupils to choose intensive learning in certain subjects from cultural and educational fields preferred by them. Class periods for compulsory elective education at the upper secondary level comprise 45% to 80% of the compulsory class periods.

School time for compulsory elective education at the upper secondary level is used for general, specialised and vocational training.

Teaching hours for general training are divided between academic subjects of the cultural and educational fields and mother tongue learning and up to 72 teaching hours can be allotted to them in the 9th and the 10th grade, up to 108 teaching hours in the 11th grade and up to 93 teaching hours in the 12th grade.

Teaching hours for specialised training are divided between three or four academic subjects, studied at upper secondary level and chosen out of one or several different cultural and educational fields with the purpose of acquiring sound and profound knowledge and competences in certain scientific and/or practical areas. These profiles are:

- Humanities;
- Natural sciences and mathematics;
- Foreign languages;
- Technological;
- Sports;
- Arts – Music, Choreography, Fine arts, Christian art and culture;
- Specialised training is done in academic teaching hours allotted to compulsory and compulsory elective education, depending on the respective grade in the curriculum.

Specialised subjects are studied as follows:

- In grade 9 – one or two specialised subjects;
- In grade 10 – two or three specialised subjects;
- In grade 11 – three or four specialised subjects;
- In grade 12 – three or four specialised subjects;

Specialised subjects from the 9th to the 12th grade are studied during not less than 108 teaching hours per year, and in the 12th grade – during not less than 124 teaching hours per year.

Teaching hours in compulsory-elective education at vocational schools and vocational upper secondary schools are used for compulsory vocational training and compulsory-elective general education and vocational training.

Pupils can change their area of specialization by submitting a request to the head of the school if there is a vacant place at the respective group or class the pupil wants to attend. If the new area of specialization is very different from the previous one, the pupil may have to sit for additional equating exams.

5.12. Organisation of School Time

School time is organized in school years comprising from 32 to 38 school weeks distributed into two terms. For further information see sections **5.12.1.** and **5.12.2.**

5.12.1. Organisation of the School Year

The school year is divided into two school terms. For pupils it begins on 15th September and finishes on 30th June for class 9, 10 and 11 and at the end of May depending on when the 31st week ends for the last grade (12 or 13th). For administrative purposes the school is open throughout the calendar year. During the school year, pupils take a Christmas, interterm, spring or Easter and summer vacation. First-grade pupils take additional days for recreation during the first school term. The duration of vacations (summer vacation excluded) and other non-attendance days is specified by an order of the Minister of Education and Science.

The school year at the extracurricular teaching establishments begins on 1st October and finishes on 31st August; while activities for children are organized during the summer vacation as well.

5.12.2. Weekly and Daily Timetable

The duration of school instruction is not more than 38 and not less than 31 school weeks, which are divided in two school terms. The duration of the first school term is 18 school weeks, the duration of a school week is five school days – exceptions are allowed only if provided for in the syllabus.

The number of compulsory teaching hours in a school week may not exceed:

- thirty-two teaching hours, in grades 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13;

- twenty-two teaching hours, in case of evening classes.

The class-teacher hour is included in the weekly schedule of school studies in addition to the compulsory school hours.

The organization of a school day is half-day and full-day and includes from 4 to 7 compulsory teaching hours. Half-day organization may be carried out in two shifts – morning and afternoon.

The weekly schedule of school instruction takes into consideration the psychophysical features and capabilities of pupils. It is prepared in such a way that it meets the requirements of an ordinance of the Minister of Health.

The duration of a teaching hour is:

- Forty-five minutes, in grades 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13;
- Forty-five minutes, in case of evening classes;
- Fifty minutes, in school and laboratory practice;
- Sixty minutes, in manufacturing practice.

Breaks between teaching hours (lessons) may not be shorter than 10 minutes and not longer than 30 minutes.

When lessons are organized in two shifts, the school-hour duration may be 40 minutes with permission by the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education.

5.13. Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

The curriculum structure envisages three types of education: compulsory, compulsory-elective and free elective.

Compulsory education provides the attainment of the general education minimum, which is compulsory for all schools and is the basis of general comprehensive education.

Compulsory-elective education provides additional instruction within the subjects from the cultural and educational areas corresponding to the interest and individual abilities of the pupils. The share of compulsory-elective education at upper secondary level is between 45 to 80% of the compulsory hours. Academic time for compulsory-elective education at upper secondary is used for general, specialised or vocational training.

Compulsory-elective education at vocational schools and vocational upper secondary schools is used for compulsory vocational training and compulsory-elective general and professional training.

In sports and arts schools compulsory-elective education is used for specialized education in the respective sports and arts.

Free elective education provides instruction in areas and activities offered by the school and elected by the pupils, which may be outside the cultural and educational areas. Its duration is up to four class periods per week for all classes in accordance with the curriculum and is not compulsory for pupils.

Compulsory teaching hours include compulsory and compulsory-elective education – in the upper secondary level they can be not more than 32 school hours per week.

The curriculum contains:

- The name of the subjects included in the compulsory, compulsory-elective and free elective education;
- Allocation of subjects according to grades;
- The annual and weekly number of teaching hours for instruction in the separate subjects;
- School year schedule;

Every school complying with the provisions of the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act develops its own curriculum. School curricula at the upper secondary level of education for the specialised classes within secondary general schools, the arts and sports schools are developed on the basis of curricula, endorsed by the Minister of Education and Science after they have been synchronized with the respective government institutions.

Current Curricula at the upper secondary level of education:

CURRICULUM of UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS, SPECIALISED UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS and sECONDARY GENERAL SCHOOLS after completion of basic education

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS		educational level				
		UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL				TOTAL
	GRADES	9	10	11	12	9 – 12
	SCHOOL WEEKS	36	36	36	31	
	ACADEMIC SUBJECTS					
A.	COMPULSORY EDUCATION /CE/					
1.	BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE					417
	Bulgarian language and literature	108 3	108 3	108 3	93 3	417
2.	FOREIGN LANGUAGES					422
	First foreign language	72 2	72 2	72 2	62 2	278
	Second foreign language	72 2	72 2			144
3.	MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					494
	Mathematics	108 3	108 3	72 2	62 2	350
	Computer science	72 2				72
	Information Technology	36 1	36 1			72
4.	SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CIVIC EDUCATION					584
	Homeland					
	Man and society					
	History and civilization	72 2	72 2	72 2		216
	Geography and Economics	54 1,5	54 1,5	36 1		144
	Psychology and Logic	54 1,5				54
	Ethics and Law		54 1,5			54
	Philosophy			54 1,5		54

	World and personality				62 2	62
5.	NATURAL SCIENCES AND ECOLOGY					468
	Surrounding world					
	Man and Nature					
	Biology and health education	72 2	72 2			144
	Physics and Astronomy	72 2	72 2	36 1		180
	Chemistry and environmental conservation	72 2	72 2			144
6.	ARTS					72
	Music	36 1				36
	Art	36 1				36
7.	HOME ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY					
	Home economy and technology					
	Home technology and economics					
	Technology					
8.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT					278
	Physical education and sports	72 2	72 2	72 2	62 2	278
	TOTAL for COMPULSORY EDUCATION /CE/	1008 28	864 24	522 14,5	341 11	2735
B.	COMPULSORY-ELECTIVE EDUCATION /CEE/	144 4	288 8	630 17,5	651 21	1713
	TOTAL for CE+ CEE	1152 32	1152 32	1152 32	992 32	4448
C.	FREE ELECTIVE EDUCATION /FEE/	144 4	144 4	144 4	124 4	556
	TOTAL for CE+ CEE +FEE	1296	1296	1296	1116	5004

CURRICULUM of SPECIALISED UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS and SPECIALISED classes in UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS and SECONDARY GENERAL SCHOOLS with admission after completion of GRADE 7 with intensive FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS		EDUCATIONAL LEVEL					
		UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL					
							TOTAL
GRADES		8	9	10	11	12	9 – 12
SCHOOL WEEKS		36	36	36	36	31	
ACADEMIC SUBJECTS							
A.	COMPULSORY EDUCATION /CE/						
1.	BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE						561
	Bulgarian language and literature	144 4	108 3	108 3	108 3	93 3	561
2.	FOREIGN LANGUAGES						1482
	First foreign language	648 18	144 4	144 4	144 4	124 4	1204
	Second foreign language		72 2	72 2	72 2	62 2	278
3.	MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY						602
	Mathematics	108 3	108 3	108 3	72 2	62 2	458
	Computer science		36 1	36 1			72

	Information Technology		36 1	36 1			72
4.	SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CIVIC EDUCATION						677
	Homeland						
	Man and society						
	History and civilization		54 1,5	72 2	72 2	62 2	260
	Geography and Economics		54 1,5	54 1,5	54 1,5	31 1	193
	Psychology and Logics		54 1,5				54
	Ethics and Law			54 1,5			54
	Philosophy				54 1,5		54
	World and personality					62 2	62
5.	NATURAL SCIENCES AND ECOLOGY						643
	Biology and health education		72 2	72 2	72 2		216
	Physics and Astronomy		54 1,5	72 2	72 2	31 1	229
	Chemistry and environmental conservation		54 1,5	72 2	72 2		198
6.	ARTS						144
	Music	36 1	36 1				72
	Art	36 1	36 1				72
7.	HOME ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY						36
	Technology	36 1					36
8.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT						350
	Physical education and sport	72 2	72 2	72 2	72 2	62 2	350
	<i>TOTAL FOR COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)</i>	1080	990 27,5	864 24	522 14,5	341 11	4495
B.	<i>COMPULSORY-ELECTIVE EDUCATION (CEE)</i>		162 4,5	288 8	630 17,5	651 21	1033
	<i>TOTAL FOR CE + CEE</i>	1080	1152	1152	1152	992	5528
C.	<i>FREE ELECTIVE EDUCATION (FEE)</i>	144	144	144	144	124	700
	<i>TOTAL FOR CE + CEE + FEE</i>	1224	1296	1296	1296	1116	6228

CURRICULUM OF VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH ADMISSION AFTER COMPLETION OF GRADE 7 WITH INTENSIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS		EDUCATIONAL LEVEL					
		UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL					
GRADES		8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
NUMBER OF SCHOOL WEEKS		36	36	36	36	31	
ACADEMIC SUBJECTS							
A.	COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)						

1.	BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE						530
	Bulgarian language and literature	144 4	108 3	108 3	108 3	62 2	530
2.	FOREIGN LANGUAGES						1065
	First foreign language	468 13	1444	108 3	108 3	93 3	921
	Second foreign language			72 2	72 2		144
3.	MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY						468
	Mathematics	108 3	72 2	72 2	72 2		324
	Computer science		72 2				72
	Information Technology		36 1	36 1			72
4.	SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CIVIC EDUCATION						602
	History and civilization	36 1	72 2	72 2	72 2		252
	Geography and Economics	36 1	54 1,5	54 1,5			144
	Psychology and Logic		54 1,5				54
	Ethics and Law			54 1,5			54
	Philosophy				36 1		36
	World and personality					62 2	62
5.	NATURAL SCIENCES AND ECOLOGY						540
	Biology and health education	72 2	72 2	36 1			180
	Physics and Astronomy	72 2	72 2	36 1			180
	Chemistry and environmental conservation	72 2	72 2	36 1			180
6.	ARTS						72
	Music		36 1				
	Art		36 1				
7.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT						
	Physical education and sport	72 2	72 2	72 2	72 2	62 2	350
	TOTAL FOR COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)	1080 30	972 27	756 21	540 15	279 9	3627
B.	COMPULSORY-ELECTIVE Education (CEE)		180 5	396 11	612 17	713 23	1901
	TOTAL for A and B	1080	1152	1152	1152	992	5528
C.	FREE ELECTIVE EDUCATION (FEE)	144	144	144	144	124	700
	TOTAL FOR A+B+C	1224	1296	1296	1296	1116	6228

Note:

After the completion of grade 7, the level of "Basic education" is considered completed.

The specific Curricula for different professions may provide education in the 13th grade for the acquisition of the 3rd degree of vocational qualification according to the Vocational Education and Training Act.

CURRICULUM SECONDARY GENERAL SCHOOLS – evening form of INSTRUCTION

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS		EDUCATIONAL LEVEL				
		UPPER ECONDARY LEVEL				
		9	10	11	12	TOTAL
GRADES						
NUMBER OF SCHOOL WEEKS		36	36	36	31	
ACADEMIC SUBJECTS						
A.	COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)					
1.	BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE					386
	Bulgarian language and literature	108 3	108 3	108 3	62 2	386
2.	FOREIGN LANGUAGES					288
	First foreign language	72 2	72 2			144
	Second foreign language	72 2	72 2			144
3.	MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					360
	Mathematics	72 2	72 2	72 2		216
	Computer science	72 2				72
	Information Technology		36 1	36 1		72
4.	SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CIVIC EDUCATION					548
	Homeland					
	Man and society					
	History and civilization	72 2	72 2	72 2		216
	Geography and Economics	36 1	36 1	36 1		108
	Psychology and Logic	54 1,5				54
	Ethics and Law		54 1,5			54
	Philosophy		18 0,5	36 1		54
	World and personality				62 2	62
5.	NATURAL SCIENCES AND ECOLOGY					324
	Biology and health education	54 1,5	54 1,5			108
	Physics and Astronomy	54 1,5	54 1,5			108
	Chemistry and environmental protection	54 1,5	54 1,5			108
6.	ARTS					
	Music					
	Art					
7.	HOME ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY					
	Technology					
8.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT					
	Physical education and sport					
	TOTAL for COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)	720	702	360	124	1906
B.	COMPULSORY-ELECTIVE EDUCATION (CEE)	72 2	144 4	396 11	558 18	1170
	TOTAL FOR A+B	792	846	756	682	3076

Curriculum OF SPORTS SCHOOLS

	CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL				
		UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL				TOTAL
	GRADES	9	10	11	12	9 – 12
	SCHOOL WEEKS	36	36	36	31	
	ACADEMIC SUBJECTS					
A.	COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)					
1.	BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE					420
	Bulgarian language and literature	80	80	120	140	420
2.	FOREIGN LANGUAGES					310
	First foreign language	40	40	40	35	155
	Second foreign language	40	40	40	35	155
3.	MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					380
	Mathematics	60	80	80	80	350
	Computer science	40	40			80
	Information Technology	40	40			80
4.	SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CIVIC EDUCATION					600
	Homeland					
	Man and society					
	History and civilization	60	60	60	70	250
	Geography and Economics	60	60			120
	Psychology and Logic	60				60
	Ethics and Law		60			60
	Philosophy			40		40
	World and personality				70	70
5.	NATURAL SCIENCES AND ECOLOGY					360
	Surrounding World					
	Man and Nature					
	Biology and health education	40	40	40		120
	Physics and Astronomy	40	40	40		120
	Chemistry and environmental conservation	40	40			120
6.	ARTS					80
	Music	20	20			40
	Art	20	20			40
7.	HOME ECONOM AND TECHNOLOGY					140
	Home economy and technology					
	Home technology and economics					
	Technology					
8.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT					250
	Theory and Methodology of Sports training	60	60	60	70	250
	TOTAL FOR COMPULSORY EDUCATION (CE)	700	720	560	420	2400
B.	COMPULSORY-ELECTIVE EDUCATION (CEE)	160	240	340	400	1140
	TOTAL for CE+ CEE	860	960	900	820	3540
C.	SPORTS Education (SE)	1152	1152	1152	1152	4608
	TOTAL for CE+ CEE + SE	2012	2112	2052	1972	8148

The above presented curricula are valid for the school year of 2006/2007.

The introduction of the new structure of education will lead to changes in the study content, curricula and syllabi at upper secondary level.

It is envisaged that students should have the same general preparation within the 8th grade education, i.e. they will study the same general subjects with the same number of teaching hours at all schools. The only difference will be in the ratio between the foreign language education, computer education and vocational preparation according to the type of school.

The intensity of foreign language study will vary at the different schools. At specialized schools it will comprise 17 teaching hours a week, at vocational upper secondary schools - 15 teaching hours a week, while at all the other types of schools it will be 6 teaching hours a week. The rest of the teaching hours (from 15 to 17 and from 6 to 17) will be used as follows: for vocational training at the vocational upper secondary schools, for more intensive IT education and modular education within the school subject of 'Technology' at secondary general schools (e.g. 'Management', 'Entrepreneurship', etc.), for instruction in the special subject (arts, choreography, sport) at specialized schools.

There will be some changes and updating of the study content in relation to vocational education and orientation through granting access to a wealth of information about education and training using the national educational portal as well as through the creation of a network of career centres.

5.14. Teaching Methods and Materials

Upper secondary pupils possess a higher level of intellectual development and knowledge and skill formation, which facilitates the application of more various methods of education. The most wide spread methods of education at the upper secondary level of education in the Bulgarian school are:

- Presentation of the study material by the teacher – narrative, explanation, lecture, combined with the use of visual aids and technical means;
- Discourse methods of education – talk, discussion, debate, which stimulate pupils' reasoning;
- Methods of individual work with school literature – at upper secondary they find broader application;
- Methods of direct study of the real world – observation, school experiment, research into historical and other documents;
- Methods of close indirect study – demonstration, modelling;
- Methods of practical activities – exercise, situational method, laboratory and practical work, topics development;
- Situational and role play methods.

Bringing teaching methods up-to-date at upper secondary level is done in two ways:

- Giving 'ready-made knowledge' will be replaced with more active methods, provoking independence, creativity and developing students' skills to make independent decisions;
- Greater use of the possibilities of ICT in education (for more detail see point **4.14.**) According to the plan during the new school year of 2006/2007 every 100 students will have 11

computers at their disposal. The national educational portal will be equipped with electronic courses in all compulsory school subjects at the secondary level.

For information on textbooks, teaching aids and teachers' choice of methodology see section **4.11.**

5.15. Pupil Assessment

Organization of pupils' assessment is regulated by Ordinance №3 of 2003 on the system of assessment (last amended in September 2005), which stipulates the state educational requirements for the system of assessment.

Assessment is done:

- in the course of school education;
- on the completion of secondary education;
- on the completion of vocational education;
- on the completion of vocational training.

Assessment is both internal and external. The teacher is the one who does the internal assessment. The school principal, the school board, and administrative officers from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Regional Inspectorate of Education, National Boards of State Matriculation Exam Assessment, Boards for Assessment Vocational Qualification Exams conduct the external assessment.

Pupils' assessment is done in different formats:

- On-going assessment – it could be done through oral examinations, written examinations (term tests and class tests), practical examinations.
- Exams – equating, for change of the result, state matriculation exam for the acknowledgement of secondary education, examinations for the acquisition of vocational qualification after the completion of vocational education;
- Assessment for establishing the attainment of the state educational requirements for study content – it is done for certain grade, stage or level of education.

Assessment is done using a six-point rating system – the marks awarded are: excellent 6, very good 5, good 4, fair 3 and poor 2. Assessment may be done according to other rating systems, which are equalized to the six-point one.

Current, term and annual marks are awarded during the academic year on compulsory, compulsory-elective (specialised and general education) and elective education. Final marks on all academic subjects are awarded on completion of secondary education. The pupils' entrance level is assessed at the beginning of every school year.

After the successful completion of grade 12, pupils will sit for state matriculation exams. State matriculation exams are two and are specified in the curriculum, one of them being in Bulgarian language and literature, and the other one – according to a pupil's choice. If a pupil wishes so, he/she can sit for a third state matriculation exam on a school subject chosen by the pupil from the compulsory or the compulsory-elective subjects according to the school's curriculum.

The state matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is administered in two equal examination versions according to the subject syllabi and the examination syllabi developed on the basis of the study content covered during compulsory education according to the curriculum. Pupils sit for the state matriculation exam only on the examination version of their choice.

The second state matriculation exam is administered in accordance with the subject syllabi and the examination syllabi developed on the basis of the study content covered during compulsory education according to the curriculum, which reflects the general education minimum for the upper secondary level of education.

Subject syllabi and examination syllabi are adopted with an Ordinance of the Minister of education and science, and for schools funded by the budget of another ministry or institution – after they are synchronized with the respective minister or head of institution.

State matriculation exams can be administered as oral, written, or practical depending on the subject. Their format and duration are determined by the respective subject and examination syllabi.

State exams for acquiring a degree in vocational qualification comprise an exam in the theory of the profession and speciality and an exam in the practice of the profession and speciality. State exams for the acquisition of the second degree of vocational qualification are taken in compliance with national examination programmes for each profession, approved by the Minister of Education and Science after the successful completion of the 12th grade, and for the third degree of vocational qualification - after the successful completion of the 13th grade, for professions, which are studied at the arts schools – after the successful completion of the 12th grade.

The on-going, end-of-term and final assessment is done as described. Testing as a method of assessment is being used more widely. Students will finish this and the next school years (2006/2007 and 2007/2008) without having to take the compulsory state matriculation exams.

It is planned that with the introduction of the new structure of education at the end of the 10th grade there will be a nation-wide external assessment of the acquisition of the general educational minimum and students will receive a certificate for completion of the first stage of their upper secondary level. According to the marks received during the three years of the first upper secondary stage and the results at the national external assessment, as well as according to their wish, students will be able to continue their education at the second upper secondary stage at the same or at another school or leave the system of education and turn to the labour market.

The second upper secondary stage will end with taking state matriculation exams leading to the acquisition of secondary education.

It is planned that the exams after the 10th and after the 12th grades will be administered in the form of standardized tests.

Until the introduction of the national standardized external assessment at the end of each level for each student, the examination of students' abilities leading to the acceptance to different schools after grade 7 will be done in a test format. The first test of this kind is to be administered in the school year of 2006/2007.

In order to help pupils get used to being tested in this way, mock exams will be administered among 12-graders, chosen at random. The number of pupils taking these mock exams will increase every year.

5.16. Progression of Pupils

After the pupil completes the grade he/she is eligible to progress into the next grade if the awarded annual mark in the academic subject of the compulsory, compulsory-elective or the specialised education is not lower than fair (3.00). Pupils who got a poor (2.00) mark, sit for a corrective exam in the respective subjects, but in not more than two regular corrective examination sessions during the academic year which are administered after the end of the school classes in June or July or from 1 to 13 September according to a procedure, specified with an order of the school head. Pupils who do not sit for the corrective exam repeat the grade with the exception of those who are in their last year at upper secondary school. However, such pupils can additionally sit for a corrective exam.

Completion of a high school grade is certified with a pupil's mark book. Certificate of completed grade is given to pupils who are 16-year-old and who leave school.

5.17. Certification

Diploma of completed secondary education is issued to pupils who have completed grade 12 and have passed the state matriculation exams. The diploma is issued according to the state educational requirements for the level of education, the general education minimum and curriculum and for the statutory documents on the system of public education. The diploma is issued by the school, in which the pupil has completed grade 12.

If the pupil has not passed the state matriculation exams he is issued a certificate of completed last grade of secondary education, which entitles him/her to continue his/her vocational education for acquiring qualification in a given profession.

Completed secondary vocational education is certified by a diploma for completed secondary education, certificate of professional qualification and competence. Certificate of professional qualification is issued to pupils with completed the 12th or 13th grade who have passed the state matriculation exams for acquisition of vocational qualification according to the state educational requirements for vocational education and training, for acquisition of qualification in given professions and for the system of assessment.

Pupils trained at vocational schools, vocational upper secondary schools and art schools (at upper secondary level) acquire also a degree in professional qualification. According to the Vocational Education and Training Act the degrees of vocational qualification are four and the fourth degree is attained through training after completion of secondary education.

Completion of secondary education at a respective school leads to the attainment of second (4-year duration of studies) and third degree (5 or 6-year duration of studies) of vocational qualification.

Diplomas of completed secondary education and certificates of professional qualification issued by schools are entered in the respective registry books kept by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Diploma for completed secondary education entitles the holder to apply to a higher education school.

With the introduction of the new structure of education students will receive a separate document for the completion of the first upper secondary stage of the upper secondary level.

There will be a certificate to prove the completion of the first upper secondary stage. Within this stage students can also obtain the first professional qualification which will be certified with a respective certificate.

There will be a certificate for those who have graduated the second upper secondary stage (but who have not taken the state matriculation exams) or a Diploma of secondary education which will grant them the opportunity to apply to a university. It is planned that in the future, the marks from the state matriculation exams will be valid for enrolment in a tertiary education institution without taking an entrance exam. Within the second upper secondary stage, students will be able to obtain the second or the third level of professional qualification.

5.18. Educational/Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links

Please see section 4.16.

5.19. Private Education

In addition to the state and municipal schools secondary education may be acquired at private schools as well – in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act concerning the opening and transformation of private schools and the provisions of all other statutory documents in the sphere of education they have the right to issue state acknowledged diplomas for completed secondary education.

There are no separate regulations for private schools providing basic education and private schools providing upper secondary education. For this reason most of the information on private education in chapter 4 is relevant for upper secondary education as well. For detailed information on drafting the curricula, legislative regulations, establishing, licensing and funding of private schools see section 4.16.

The following types of private schools providing secondary education within the educational system operate in this country:

- Private secondary general comprehensive schools (grades 1 – 12) – most of them provide extended foreign language learning, arts, computer training;
- Private language and specialised upper secondary schools after the 7th grade;
- Private vocational upper secondary schools after the 7th and the 8th grade.

The majority of private schools offer additional educational services, better study conditions, full-day schooling, better facilities, provide transport, holidays and excursions to the pupils, include breakfast and lunch and grant an opportunity to participate in sports and performing arts events.

Enrollment in some private schools after the 7th or the 8th grade does not require taking exams while others require entrance exams. Parents pay fees for the education of the pupils.

5.20. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures

A number of innovative school organizations – working on regional and international projects, experimental schools with new specialisations and specialities, offering additional educational services, etc., exist within the state system of education.

Teaching subjects in foreign languages at profile-oriented high-schools with intensive language learning, as well as the variations in curricula for sports schools, arts and vocational schools can be viewed as alternative school instruction– see the tables of curricula in section **5.13.** Exceptionally, pupils above 16 can be educated in the evening form of education, provided for adults. In some case, (for example, in the case of pupils experiencing health problems or who have stopped attending school over a longer period of time) pupils can be offered individual or independent form of instruction.

5.21. Statistics

DATA CONCERNING THE SCHOOL YEAR OF 2005/2006 COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS

NUMBER AND TYPES OF SCHOOLS LEADING TO COMPLETION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND COLLEGES WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
General and special schools	2 823	2 784	2 757
Gimnazii (Upper secondary schools) (9 th – 13 th)	165	167	168
Palni sredni obshchobrazovatelni uchilishta (Full secondary general schools) (1 st – 13 th grade) and schools with grades 5 th – 8 th	429	424	419
Vocational	496	500	495
Art schools	19	19	20
Profesionalni gimnazii (Vocational upper secondary schools)	457	459	453
Vocational colleges after secondary education	13	17	17
Profesionalni uchilishta (Vocational schools)	7	5	5
Private			
General and special schools	54	56	59
Gimnazii (Upper secondary schools) (9 th – 13 th)	24	23	26
Palni sredni obshchobrazovatelni uchilishta (Full secondary general schools) (1 st – 13 th grade) and schools with grades 5 th – 13 th	5	4	4
Vocational	36	43	43
Art schools	1	1	1
Profesionalni gimnazii (Vocational upper secondary schools)	24	26	25
Vocational colleges after secondary education	11	16	17

NUMBER OF STUDENTS AT UPPER-SECONDARY AND AT COLLEGES AFTER SECONDARY EDUCATION

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Upper secondary education (9 th – 13 th grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	374 262	373 160	367 350
Vocational training in post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED-4C)	2 772	3 036	2 810
Private education			
Upper secondary education (IX-XIII grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	5 171	5 416	5 301
Vocational training post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED-4C)	933	1 456	2 328

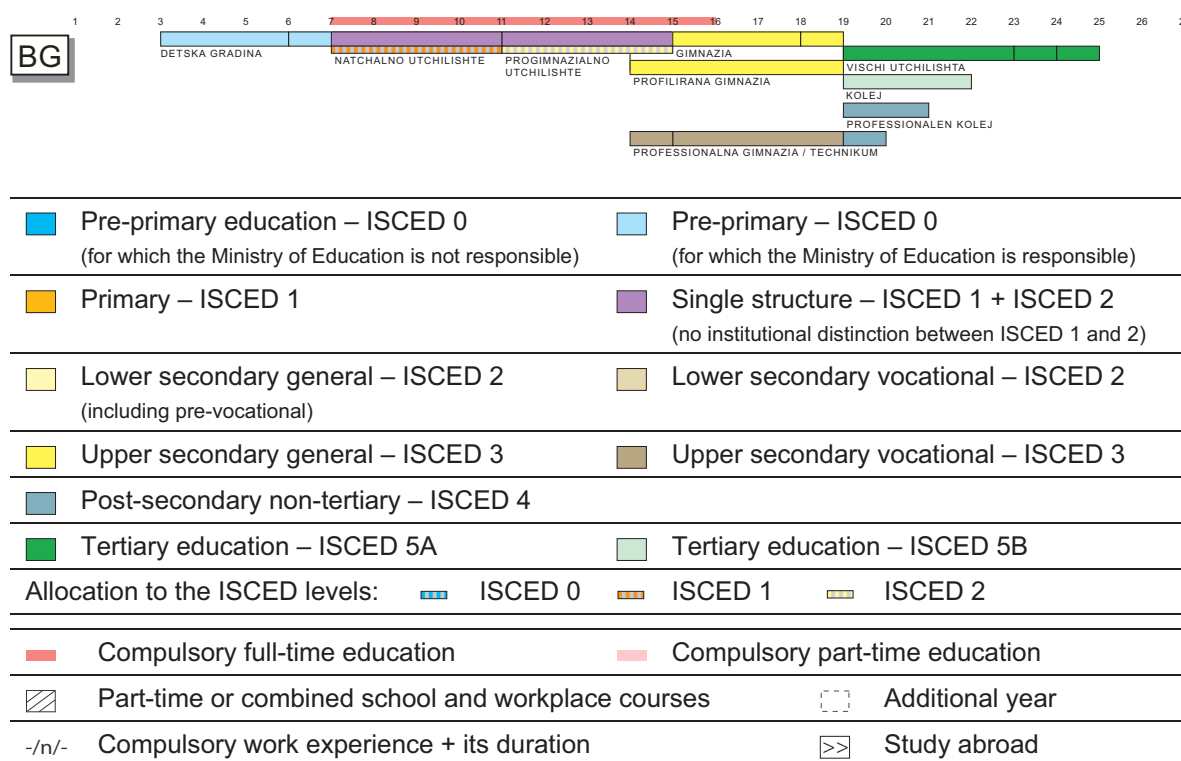
NET RATIO OF THE ENROLLED AT UPPER-SECONDARY AND ACCORDING TO AGE

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06 ¹
Group net ratios distributed BY educational degree according to ISCED – 97			
Upper secondary education (9 th – 13 th grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	77.1	77.3	78.0
Vocational training in post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED-4C)	0.3	0.3	0.5
15 – 18	82.8	82.9	83.4

Source: National Statistical Institute, data as of March 2006

6. Tertiary Education

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2005/06



Source: Eurydice.

The mission of Bulgarian Tertiary Education over the next decade is to fulfil personal as well as public educational, scientific, and professional, qualification and cultural needs through high quality preparation for effective professional and personal realisation in the society of knowledge. Under the conditions of developing a democratic civil society in Bulgaria, since the beginning of the transition period, higher education has aimed at forming active civil consciousness through all its educational and training activities.

At present, the process of modernising its system is related to two main challenges, namely: integration in the European higher education space (Bologna process) as well as research at a European level and reformation of the system of achieving adequacy to market economy and labour market.

According to the priorities for the economic development within the European Union, in answer to the global social and economic changes, Bulgarian higher education is being thoroughly reformed in terms of its institutional structure and content. The main characteristics of the reform (which started in 1990 but became purposeful in 1995 with the adoption of the Higher Education Act) are as follows:

Granting and guaranteeing higher schools academic autonomy.

Developing mechanisms for providing the quality of tertiary education.

Granting equal, life-long access to higher education for all social groups.

Applying measures for the effective public funding and resource provision for higher education.

Including higher education users in the development of policies and procedures for its quality assurance.

At present, there are 51 higher education schools in the country, which are either public (state-owned) or private. This number includes universities, specialised higher education schools and colleges.

The management of the system is done at a state and at an institutional level. The state is responsible for the development and carrying out of a long-term state policy and creation of conditions to grant academic autonomy, quality preparation of students and adequate conditions for doing research. Institutions are managed according to the principles and rights of the academic autonomy but the state supports the development of modern institutional management through distributing resources on a competitive basis.

The higher education reform is further assisted by its growing internationalisation at national, institutional, programme level as well as the level of human resources (academic staff, students, and administrative staff).

Bulgaria participates actively in the bologna process as a party, which has signed the Common Declaration of European Ministers of Education in 1999.

A list of higher education schools:

- Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
- Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”
- Veliko Tarnovo University “St. Cyril and Methodius”
- South-western University “Neofit Rilski” – Blagoevgrad
- Shumen University “Episkop Konstantin Preslavski”
- Russe University “Angel Kanchev”
- Thracian University “Stara Zagora
- “Asen Zlatarov” University – Burgas
- National and World Economy University – Sofia
- Economics University – Varna
- Economic Academy “Dimitar Tsenov” – Svishtov
- University of Architecture, Construction and Civil Engineering – Sofia
- Technical University – Sofia
- Technical University – Gabrovo
- Chemical Technologies and Metallurgy University – Sofia
- Mining and Geology University – Sofia
- Forestry - technical University – Sofia
- Food Technologies University – Plovdiv
- Agricultural University – Plovdiv
- Medical University – Sofia
- Medical University – Plovdiv
- Medical University – Varna
- Medical University – Pleven
- National Sports Academy – Sofia
- National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts - Sofia
- National Academy of Arts – Sofia
- State Music Academy – Sofia
- Academy of musical and dance arts - Plovdiv
- New Bulgarian University - Sofia
- Burgas Free University
- Varna Free University
- American University in Bulgaria – Blagoevgrad
- National Military University “Vasil Levski” – Veliko Tarnovo
- Naval Academy – Varna

- Higher School of Construction – Sofia
- Higher School of Transport – Sofia
- Academy of the Ministry of Interior – Sofia
- Military Academy “G. S. Rakovski” – Sofia
- Specialised Higher School of Library Services and IT – Sofia
- Telecommunication and Postal Services College
- Management, Trade and Marketing College – Sofia
- Agrarian College – Plovdiv
- Drama College “Lyuben Grois” – Sofia
- Higher School of Insurance and Finances – Sofia
- “Telematics” College – Stara Zagora
- International Business School – Botevgrad
- Economics and Administration College – Plovdiv

6.1. Historical Overview

Higher education in Bulgaria originated in the late 19th century after the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. The first Bulgarian university was opened in Sofia. It started its activities with three faculties: Law Faculty, Physics and Mathematics Faculty, and History and Philologies Faculty. The higher education structure was established in the 1920's and the 1930's. The establishment of university education (considered elite) marked the foundation of specialised higher education institutions, whose task was to prepare qualified specialists for the new Bulgarian industry, which had just appeared but which was developing really quickly. During this period, tertiary education in the country was influenced both by the national idea concerning higher education and its role, by the active relations of the academic circles with the intellectual elite of Central and Western Europe. In 1920, the first private tertiary institution was established – the Balkan Middle East Institute on political sciences, which was transformed into Open University for political and business sciences. Higher education institutions of that period do not have only an educational mission, but they are also play a key role in transforming Bulgaria from an underdeveloped agrarian country into a modern European one. The structure of the higher education system was thoroughly changed after WWII. In 1947, a Higher Education Act was passed, abolishing the traditional principles of academic independence and self-governing as a result of which the system was completely unified. Universities mission was one of creating the work force which was to turn Bulgaria into an industrialised country as well as of providing specialists who would contribute to the centrally planned economy and the development of the socialist society. As a result, there appeared two processes governing the higher education system: 1. institutional specialisation and differentiation, which led to a considerable increase in the number of the specialised higher education schools (the majority of them – related to engineering and pedagogy) and 2. strongly ideologised content of education and international isolation. Research and development activities were mainly carried out by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which concentrated the scientific resource and potential related to scientific development. After the abolition of the totalitarian regime at the end of 1989, a transformation process started changing the higher education system in line with the political, social and economic processes in the country. The first five years of this transition period were characterised by a lack of purposefulness of the changes. The system was governed according to the Academic Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions Act (1990). This law made it possible for some students to obtain tertiary education against paying a certain fee. Consequently, the number of university students increased twice in five years, while the system was not prepared to react adequately and provide quality under these circumstances and this led to some negative reactions on part of the public. In turn, it led to the adoption of a new law – Higher Education Act which banned paid-for tertiary education and combined the principles of academic independence with those of greater accountability and transparency of results, changed the one-level structure for a multi-level one, created a National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency and

started private higher education, putting state and private higher education institutions under equal conditions as regards the procedures for opening an institution, quality standards, evaluation and accountability before the state. The diplomas issued by both private and state institutions are equally valuable in academic spheres and on the labour market.

Bulgaria's participation in the Bologna process accelerated the otherwise historically created tendencies and led to quick legal and practical changes making the system close to European standards and models.

6.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

The current challenges before the higher education system are connected with the necessity to establish market orientation, predominant participation of the users in determining the future development of the system, the application of mechanisms (both legislative and practical) for the establishment of the lifelong learning concept and ensuring the unhindered mobility of young people.

The main topic of ongoing debates is the establishment of an efficient connection between tertiary education and the labour market. A large part of the employers declare that there is a lack of specialists with the qualifications necessary for the immediate performance of labour duties in a highly technological environment. There is also a deficiency of adequately prepared employees in the sphere of services, tourism, information technologies and natural sciences. There is a severe deficiency of qualified foreign language teachers within the system of school education. A serious issue connected with the labour market is the lack of opportunity for practical skills acquisition through the programmes in tertiary education. The facilities and equipment for practical training of future specialists are outdated and the functioning enterprises are unable to provide enough places for trainees. Another issue subject to discussion in relation to education and the labour market is the orientation of higher education towards more and generally applicable skills and key competences. Both in public and professional respect there is an ongoing discussion about the introduction of an approach which is to define and measure the results from activities in higher education through the results achieved by individual learners on certain structural levels.

Despite the fact that curricula and syllabi have been subject to a serious reorganization due to the adopting of degree education, during the process of their drawing up the principle of "opportunities on supply" and not "conditions of demand" is still applied. A large number of the tertiary schools draw up their curricula in compliance with the available scientific and teaching capacity, and not in compliance with the requirements of the employers and the labour market. In that relation, the concept of a real module principle and the development of curricula according to the desire of the students /personal educational and vocational profile of students/ have not been introduced yet.

There are two clearly defined and complementary levels that function within the system created to ensure the quality of tertiary education- internal institutional ensuring of quality and external assessment, conducted on a national level. The idea for complementation and interaction between the two levels gives good results and helps harmonize institutional and national policies. However, there is still a certain degree of formality in the functioning of the internal quality systems which results in too many responsibilities and expectations in relation to the activity of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. Different possibilities are being discussed for exchange of good practices between the institutions themselves for the application of internal systems for maintaining the quality,

strengthening internationalization when the criteria for institutional ensuring of quality are improved, the positive effect from the participation of external experts/foreign/ and the possibilities to restrict the accreditation procedures to institutional level.

A serious issue in ensuring the academic activity and the achievements of tertiary schools is the withdrawal of young people from the academic career. Despite the legislative and practical measures that have been applied in that field for the past few years, there is only a very slight increase in the interest in doctoral education. Among the main factors affecting that process are the low financial provision of that specific educational and scientific degree and the realization of the graduates in an academic aspect /higher schools, scientific institutes etc./ as well as outside the academic structures.

The financial support of state tertiary schools is turning into an ever growing problem for the system. On the one hand, the state budget funds allocated to that are very insufficient and represent one of the lowest percent of the GDP allocated to higher education as compared to Europe /0,9%/. On the other hand, the higher schools themselves do not absorb these funds efficiently enough. New ways for the more efficient and rational use of the available resources need to be found as well as alternative sources of funding of the system. Good examples in that respect can be seen in some universities /mainly technical/ which ensure additional financial resources through contracts for the implementation and introduction of scientific projects. Another means of funding that is being discussed are tuition fees that students pay for their education.

All the issues discussed within the system of higher education and the suggestions for changes are connected with the general striving of the national and institutional levels for improvement in the quality of tertiary education and its efficient management.

6.3. Specific Legislative Framework

At the present moment in the Republic of Bulgaria the necessary legislative framework for the functioning of higher education and its integration in the European education space is established. Certain elements from the framework are discussed and changed periodically according to the requirements of the changing social and economic reality. The main legislative documents in operation are:

- The Higher Education Act– 1995 /latest amendments 2006 /; - regulates the structure, functions, management and funding of the higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria. The Higher Education Act establishes the framework of the higher education system, regulates the responsibilities of the different management levels, the academic autonomy, the structure and organisation of the teaching/learning process, regulates the rights and obligations of the academic staff of the higher schools, the organisation of research activities, the rights and obligations of the students, doctoral candidates, and post-doctorate students, defines the accreditation conditions for higher schools, defines the parameters of the property and finances of higher schools, regulates the conditions for the acknowledgement of the right to exercise a regulated profession on the basis of professional qualification acquired in an EU member state. The Act includes additional provisions connected with the rights of the EU member states to open branches on the territory of Bulgaria as well as additional provisions for the education of EU citizens.
- Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act /1972 / - regulates the academic degrees and ranks, the conditions and order for their granting and how they are to be revoked with the aim to cooperate for the development of science and for the practical application of its

achievements. The Regulations on the Implementation of the Act operates together with it. The Act regulates the structure of the Supreme Testimonial Commission as an independent body with the Council of Ministers.

- Ordinance on the state requirements for the acquisition of higher education and educational qualification degrees (Bachelor, Master and Specialist) /Decree by the Council of Ministers №162 from 2002 /; the aim of the ordinance is to determine standards for the conducting of education in the programmes of Bachelor, Master and Specialist educational qualification degrees. It determines the goals and tasks of the respective qualification degrees, the teaching duration, the ratio between lectures and practical preparation of students, the conditions to sit for state exams.
- Decree 125 by the Council of Ministers of 2002 for the ratification of the Classifier of the Fields of Higher Education and the Vocational Paths - determines nine areas of higher education and more than 60 professional directions. The Classifier has been developed in compliance with the structure of ISCED 97 and presents the opportunity for gathering, processing and comparing of information on an international level.
- Ordinance on the state requirements for recognizing higher education acquired or periods of education completed at foreign higher schools Decree by the Council of Ministers # 167 of 2000 – the state requirements for the recognition of education acquired at foreign higher schools and periods of education completed at foreign higher schools; the information insurance of that activity is regulated.
- Ordinance # 21 of 2004 by the Minister of Education and Science for the implementation of a system for credit accumulation and transfer within the higher education institutions - the ordinance regulates the rules for credit accumulation and transfer in the system of higher education in compliance with the ECTS rules. The application of the credit accumulation and transfer system has been introduced to all the institutions for higher education within the country with the Higher Education Act.
- Ordinance on the state requirements for the admission of students at higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria (adopted by a Decree by the Council of Ministers № 79 of 09.05.2000) – the state requirements for admitting students at the higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria after they have graduated secondary education and requirements for sending Bulgarian students to study at foreign higher schools; the rules for admitting foreigners as students at the higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria are established; the way to ensure language and specialized training for the foreigners who have been admitted as students in the Republic of Bulgaria is determined.
- Ordinance on the state requirements for the admission and education of Doctoral students /Decree by the Council of Ministers # 222 of 2000/ - the state requirements for the admission and education of Doctoral students at the higher schools and scientific organizations which includes both Bulgarians and foreigners, the financial and material and technical provision of the education of Doctoral students.
- Ordinance on the state requirements for the content of the documents issued by the higher schools of 2004 – the requirements for the contents of the documents issued by higher schools /diploma, professional qualification certificate, transcript of academic record, student's book, identity card, certificate, general ledger of the higher school, diploma registering book/ and a system of requisites is established for each of them; with this ordinance the obligatory issuing of a European Diploma Application is introduced.
- Ordinance of the use of student hostels and canteens /Decree by the Council of Ministers 327 of 1997 /latest amendments 2002/ - it regulates the general conditions for the management, maintenance and use of student hostels and canteens; the way of distribution and the exploitation control of student hostels and canteens are established.
- Ordinance on the state requirements for distance education at higher schools /Decree by the Council of Ministers # 292 of 2004/ – it establishes the state requirements for the organizing of distance education, the organization of the teaching/learning process, the use of technological devices, the conditions for ensuring quality.

- Ordinance # 9 on the terms and procedure for utilizing funds allocated from the state budget for the scientific, artistic and creative activities of the higher schools – 2003;
- Decree # 90 of the Council of Ministers for the term and procedure for granting scholarships to students, doctoral candidates and post-doctoral students from the state higher schools and scientific organisations /2000/ - establishes the conditions and order for scholarship granting for the different forms of education at state higher schools.
- Decree # 145 of the Council of Ministers of 16.06.2006 for the determining of application and tuition fees at state higher schools- the decree is updated each year and it takes into account the economic situation.
- Decree # 103 of the Council of Ministers of 1993 for performing educational activity for Bulgarians abroad – expresses the state policy for assisting foreign citizens and persons without citizenship who are of Bulgarian nationality and live outside or in Bulgarian communities abroad.
- Regulations on the Activity of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Decree by the Council of Ministers 106 of 2000 – regulates the structure, activity, management, funding, and the organization of the activities of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency; the Regulations specify the organization of the evaluation and accreditation processes, in relation to which criteria sheets for the conducting of the procedures have been developed.

6.4. General Objectives

According to the Higher Education Act, a main goal of the higher education in Bulgaria is the preparation of highly qualified specialists and the development of science and culture. Higher education aims to promote universal values and the national spiritual traditions, irrespective of ideologies, religions and political doctrines. The higher education reform has established three main goals which determine the development and organization of the teaching/learning process:

- Preparation for the labour market – the structure, contents and order of the higher education qualifications are aimed at following the requirements of employers as well as at improving the employment aptitude of specialists with higher education. In that sense, the system for continuing education and training has been of ever growing importance in the higher education system;
- Personal development- a challenge aimed at individualization of the professional and educational profile of the specialists with higher education and at improving the general competitiveness of the national economy;
- Developing and maintaining contemporary and practical knowledge – represents an integral part of the higher education reform for seeking connections between higher education and science; a main evaluation criterion of the higher schools is the research and development activity, publications of the teaching staff and the contribution of the higher school to the regional and national economy;
- Development of an active civil society supporting the foundations of a democratic social structure.

A main goal of higher education within the lifelong learning concept is the providing of a wider access to higher education and the creation of equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in higher school programmes. With the beginning of the Transition period all barriers on access to higher education were removed. The Higher Education Act does not allow privileges or restrictions connected with age, race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, social background, political views and religion. In addition, the Act regulates alleviations for admitting groups at risk of social isolation- people with disabilities, mothers with children etc. Financial and social support for disadvantaged students. EU citizens apply and are educated under the same terms and procedure as Bulgarian citizens.

Changes in the goals and priorities of higher education in Bulgaria are determined by the national context and the common European policies in that field.

6.5. Types of Institution

Higher schools in Bulgaria are state and private. State higher schools conduct their activity on the basis of an annual state subsidy, the state property and revenue they have raised themselves. Private higher schools could have different structure, way of management and appointing of the managing bodies as compared to the compulsory ones for state higher schools under the condition that this does not violate academic freedoms. Both state and private higher schools are established on the basis of a common procedure, by force of a decision of the National Assembly and are subject to equal rights and obligations.

Higher schools are:

- Universities – educate a wide range of specialists from professional tracks in at least three out of four main scientific fields; have their own academic staff, equipment and facilities which ensure practical training as well; conduct education in the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degree in the respective fields, have the necessary contemporary means for information servicing of education;
- Specialised higher schools- conduct education in one of the main fields in science, arts, physical education and military science; the specific field of training of specialists is included in the name of the higher school; can teach in the Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral degrees of education qualification. The specialised higher schools issue diplomas equal in value as the one issued from universities and teach under the same legislative requirements;
- Independent colleges – conduct training leading to the acquisition of a Specialist education qualification degree; have their own academic staff; colleges can be established within the structure of universities and specialised higher schools and in this case, in terms of structure, they are considered main units of the higher school.

NUMBER OF ACCREDITED HIGHER SCHOOLS IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

	UNIVERSITIES	SPECIALISED HIGHER SCHOOLS	INDEPENDENT COLLEGES
STATE HIGHER SCHOOLS	31	5	1
PRIVATE HIGHER SCHOOLS	4	2	8
TOTAL	35	7	9

The Bulgarian higher education system differentiates between academic and vocational higher education. The Specialist education qualification degree belongs to vocational higher education and is closely related to immediately entering the labour market. Despite that, the law has provided opportunities for continuing the education to a higher degree in compliance with the terms and procedure established by the higher schools themselves.

Education in the Doctoral educational and scientific degree can be conducted besides at specialized higher schools also at the structures of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the National Centre for Agrarian Sciences, the National Centres for Public Health and other scientific organizations. Doctoral students at scientific organizations have the same status and rights as those at higher schools.

6.6. Admission Requirements

Citizens accepted into the higher education system are who have acquired a secondary education diploma which gives them access to the continuation of education to a higher degree. This refers to both citizens who have graduated their education in Bulgaria and citizens who have graduated abroad. The admission of students to higher schools is conducted in compliance with the provisions of the Higher Education Act, the State Requirements for the admission of students and Doctoral candidates and the higher schools regulations in compliance with the higher schools autonomy rules in relation to the selection criteria and procedures. Students and Doctoral students are admitted by means of an admission exam. Higher schools can organise their own admission exams, organize joint exams together with other schools on a contractual basis, acknowledge the exam results from another higher school or acknowledge the results from the secondary education graduation exams as admission exams to the higher school. Special alleviations and the order stated in the higher school regulations are applied to the admission of students, belonging to groups at risk of social isolation as well as to those who have demonstrated special success during their secondary education- prize- winners from national and international Olympic competitions, people who have won medals at Olympic, world and European championships. Candidate ranking is usually conducted on the basis of their exam grades which include the admission exams grades and also the results from the respective subjects from the secondary education diploma.

6.7. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

The Higher Education Act of 1995 abolishes paid education as a possible access to the higher education system which is so far divided into state order (students who do not pay for their education) and paid education (students who pay the whole price of their education). Since the indications of the state's financial difficulty to fully provide for the sharply increased number of students have become clearly visible, the Act has decided upon the introduction of state tuition fees to be paid by all the students within the system. The fees are differentiated according to professional fields. The amount of the fees is differentiated on the basis of the form of education- full-time or part-time studies. The part-time studies fee is usually 1/3 less than that for the full-time form of education. The annual amount of fees is within the limit from 200 to 1,000 BGN.

The amount of tuition fees per one year for state higher schools is determined annually by the Council of Ministers. Students pay their fees in equal installments at the beginning of each semester. The amount of the fees cannot be higher than 30% of the norm established for the respective professional directions. The Act exempts from tuition fee payment the socially disadvantaged students and higher military schools cadets. Tuition fees are not paid by students, Doctoral candidates and post-doctoral students who have been admitted under international agreements and this matter has been settled on a reciprocal basis. Foreign students, citizens of non EU member states pay fees amounting to the education allowance norms of the respective professional tracks.

Besides tuition fees higher schools are free to introduce fees for different administrative services.

Private higher schools determine their tuition fees irrespective of the calculated state norms about the cost of education according to professional tracks.

6.8. Financial Support for Students

Bulgarian students and students citizens of EU member states have the right to receive financial support in the form of scholarships and loans. Students and Doctoral candidates have the right to apply for state budget scholarships, scholarships established by higher schools and scholarships of natural persons and legal entities. The amount, terms and procedure for students and Doctoral candidates to receive their scholarships is determined by the Council of Ministers and the Higher Schools Regulations or by the will of the donor. Scholarships in higher education could be scholarships based on academic achievements and scholarships for social assistance.

When scholarships for academic achievement are granted, this is done on the basis of the average grades from the previous two semesters.

The amount of scholarships is close to that of the minimal salary for the country.

The head of the higher school, the Rector, has the right to award students with prizes and grant them assistance in the following cases:

- As awards for the achievement of success in the field of academic, research and development and other activities;
- As assistance in cases of poor financial circumstances.

Students are entitled to preferential conditions for loans which would ensure their tuition and maintenance during their studies.

6.9. Organisation of the Academic Year

The educational process is organised into an academic year, divided in two semesters. Instruction during at least one semester can lead to taking an exam and gaining credits. The study content is organised in academic hours and self-study. The combination of lecture-halls participation, self-study and educational achievements leads to gaining credits.

Usually, the academic year starts on October 1st, although it is possible for it to begin either earlier or later. A semester is usually 15 academic weeks long.

The qualification degrees within the higher education system are determined on the basis of the number of years a course lasts. However, the number of credits is now being taken into consideration. The first degree of higher education (bachelor) requires minimal preparation following a four-year study plan; the second degree (master) requires minimal preparation following at least a one-year study plan after a completed bachelor's degree; the third degree (doctor) requires minimal preparation following a three-year study plan after completion of a master's degree; the degree of a 'specialist' is awarded on completing college education with a minimum duration of study of three years after completion of secondary education.

To have certain period of study recognised, one has to have completed at least one semester and has to have taken exams successfully.

6.10. Branches of Study, Specialisation

The main distinction within the system of higher education is made on the basis of qualification degrees.

Study towards the first one (*bachelor*) provides basic and widely varied education in professional tracks and speciality. It is at this stage that students are supposed to acquire basic skills and key competences (e. g. general or specialised foreign language learning, computer skills, aimed at achieving personal development and at supporting a student's professional and research skills)

Study towards the *master's* degree provides in-depth preparation combined with specialisation in a certain sphere.

Study towards acquisition of a *doctoral* degree is carried out in separate specialities.

In 2002, a Classifier of the Fields of Higher Education and the Professional Tracks was developed and adopted. According to it, the spheres of higher education in Bulgaria (and the respective professional spheres belonging to them) are as follows:

- Pedagogic sciences – theory and management of education; pedagogy; pedagogy of education.
- Humanities – philology; history and archaeology; philosophy; religion and theology.
- Social, economic and legal sciences – sociology, anthropology and cultural studies; psychology; political sciences; social activities; public communications and information sciences; law; administration and management; economy; tourism.
- Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics – physical sciences, chemical sciences, earth sciences; mathematics; informatics and computer sciences.
- Technical sciences – machine engineering; electrotechnics; electronics and automation; communication and computer sciences; transport; marine navigation and aviation; materials and sciences on materials; architecture, construction and geodesy; research, obtaining and processing of mineral resources; metallurgy; chemical technology; biotechnology; food technology; general engineering.
- Agrarian sciences and veterinary medicine - plant growing; plant protection; stock-breeding; veterinary medicine; forestry.
- Health care and sports – medicine, dentistry; pharmacy; public health; health care; sport.
- Arts – theory of arts; fine arts; music and performing arts; theatrical and film arts.
- Security and defense – national security, military studies.

All specialities, belonging to the above enumerated spheres, offer education towards acquiring a 'bachelor's degree with the exception of architecture, law, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, which offer one-level education leading directly to the acquisition of a master's degree.

The requirement for the duration study changes depending on the format of education (full-time or extra-mural). The part-time option usually lasts a year longer.

Tertiary schools offer specialisations which represent programmes aimed at in-service qualification within the notion of life long learning. Specialisations are carried out according to a specialised study plan without leading to the acquisition of a higher educational degree or a new speciality. Admission of specialising students to particular institutions is carried out according to the conditions determined in their regulations.

6.11. Curriculum

The study process at higher schools is carried out according to a set of documents specific for each speciality, which comprises qualification characteristics distributed across the study plan, curricula, the yearly schedule of the study process. The study content in each discipline is organised in relatively self-sufficient units. Each unit should include a minimum of 15 hours lecture-hall activities. An academic hour lasts 45 minutes. There are compulsory, elective and facultative disciplines. Higher schools provide each student with opportunities to choose disciplines within the approved of study plan. Study plans are implemented after being approved of by the academic council.

Training in regulated professions is done under nationally approved plans (standards).

If a student desires, he/she can complete his/her tertiary education earlier (following the so called individual plans).

After completion of all envisaged obligations (according to the study plan) a diploma is issued regardless of the calendar term of education.

Curricula and syllabi contain guidelines for evaluation. Study plans may include participation in practical activities, internships, research programmes as part of the study plan. Within the Bologna process and under the conditions of applying European dimensions in tertiary education, all study plans in Bulgaria include compulsory modules for training in ICT and foreign languages. Depending on the particular speciality, this foreign language training can be intensive, or extensive, continuing throughout the whole study period. A number of tertiary schools have established their own contemporary foreign language centres (through European-funded projects or depending on their own means) which offer additional training to undergraduate and doctoral students.

The Higher Education Act allows acquisition of a second major (within study towards the acquisition of one and the same degree) or recognition of certain modules within the existing academic autonomy.

6.12. Teaching Methods

The preparation of learning materials, supplementary materials and other sources of information is considered an important aspect of higher education quality and therefore it is taken into consideration when forming the institutional evaluation and accreditation. The use and creation of different learning materials is part of the academic autonomy. Information and resource centres (including libraries, halls with internet access are part of the higher school structure and the realization of certain aspects of the study process. To maintain a university status, institutions have to maintain a library whose book stock is relevant to the educational and scientific processes at the higher school.

The forms of training used are lectures, seminars, practical workshops. Their ratio is determined according to the study programmes and regulations of the higher schools. ICT is becoming an

inseparable part of tertiary education thus providing students with a greater freedom and independence during their studies.

6.13. Student Assessment

The forms of evaluation and assessment procedures are determined by the respective institution's regulations. How exactly this is to be carried out, is specified in their curricula and syllabi. A basic form of assessment of knowledge in the higher schools is the written exam. Students' knowledge and skills are assessed according to a six-grade system, which includes: - Excellent (6);

- Very Good (5);
- Good (4);
- Fair (3);
- Poor (2).

A successfully passed examination is considered an exam taken with at least Fair (3).

Higher schools may introduce through their own regulations further systems for assessment of their students' achievements but they should provide comparability of results.

To assess students' skills and knowledge acquired during the process of study, higher education institutions provide a credit accumulation and transfer system whose aim is to guarantee a choice of disciplines, self-study, mobility on the basis of mutual recognition of separate periods of education which, in turn, correspond to the particular speciality study plan and the respective education and qualification degree. The credits are given as a form of evaluating students' responsibilities, towards a certain discipline or a module as part of the sum total of their responsibilities and they are necessary for the successful completion of an academic year or semester. In each discipline, credits are formed on the basis of the prescribed number of lectures, seminars and workshops, self-study (in laboratories, libraries; course theses, homework assignments, exams taken, other forms of evaluation determined by the higher school. Such credits can be awarded for participation in internship programmes, successful defense of course and diploma papers, if these activities are envisaged by the study plan. The credit accumulation and transfer system is based on 60 credits given per academic year and 30 credits per semester, distributed in study disciplines and/or modules according to the study plan of the speciality and the education and qualification degree or on the basis of a compatible with the above-described system. The conditions under which the credit accumulation and transfer system is applied is regulated by an Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science.

Completion of first and second degree of each speciality is marked by taking a state exam or a defence of a thesis. State exams or Diploma paper defense are carried out according to national requirements for completion of education before a specially appointed state committee, which includes lecturers from the higher school and on certain occasions, external representatives (e.g. persons belonging to different employers' organisations).

The doctoral degree includes academic preparation and exam taking. The education and qualification degree of 'doctor' is awarded to a doctoral student who has taken all the exams envisaged in the respective study plan and has defended his/her Thesis according to the regulations of the Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act.

6.14. Progression of Students

To complete successfully an academic year, students have to take all the exams envisaged by the respective Curriculum. However, under certain circumstances, stipulated in the respective higher education institution, separate disciplines exams can be postponed until the following academic year. Higher schools create opportunities and determine the conditions for:

- acquisition of a second or third major within education towards one degree;
- transition from one educational degree to another;
- acquisition of a higher educational degree;
- completion of education earlier than officially envisaged on students' request;
- partial education of Bulgarian and foreign students at a university; faculty or speciality chosen by them;
- transfer of students from one higher school, faculty, speciality, form of education into another;
- interruption of education on request of undergraduate, doctoral and specialising students as well continuing education after such an interruption.

6.15. Certification

Higher schools issue a diploma for completed degree of higher education, a European diploma supplement as well as a certificate for professional qualification and some other important documents. Diplomas are acknowledged by the state when education conforms to the Higher Education Act and the state requirements. Diplomas issued under these conditions are stamped with the state coat of arms. A European diploma supplement is issued on request by the student. In cases of completion of programmes which do not lead to completing an educational degree, but are related to in-service training, the higher schools issues a certificate according to the conditions stipulated in a special Ordinance.

6.16. Educational/Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links

Providing educational/vocational guidance is a relatively new sector within the higher education system. The need to offer such services appeared with the separation of the system into degrees and the establishment of the first degree as widely profiled, which made it necessary that students themselves take a more active participation in planning their own educational and professional profile. Transition into a higher degree and the need to make an informed choice of a master's programme (the ratio of bachelor's:master's programmes on offer is 1:6 or 7). This requires students to be knowledgeable about labour market perspectives and their own capabilities to access it.

It took two years (2005 – 2006) to establish career centres within the network of higher schools (in 24 higher schools). Career consultants were trained and web pages for all these career centres were created. The establishment of these centres represents an important step towards binding tertiary education with employers' needs. Career orientation offers information on the demand of specialist in a particular region, in various enterprises, as well as information on the graduates according to their specialisation. These centres offer career consultancy and support students' internships and professional practices. The first master's programme on preparation of career consultants was

created, which is expected to provide the necessary quality of activities performed at the higher schools career centres.

6.17. Private Education

In compliance with the Higher Education Act, private higher schools are established on request of physical bodies or legal entities. They have to be entitled to ownership of the real estate, movables and premises, necessary for preparing specialists for study, scientific, artistic and other activities corresponding to the particular field of the respective higher education institution. To open a private higher school, it is necessary to prepare in advance a draft financial plan ensuring its activity. A constituent act is enclosed in the draft for the founding of private higher education schools. It contains the following details:

- type, title and headquarters;
- object of activities;
- name (company) of the founder;
- property submitted by the founder for the needs of the higher school activities as well method of financing;
- management of representation;
- rights and obligations of the founders;
- responsibilities of the founders in case they participate in the management of the higher education school.

Private tertiary schools have the right to receive subsidy on a competitive basis both nationally and internationally together with state tertiary institutions.

6.18. Organisational Variations, Alternative Structures

The Higher Education Act envisages the following forms of tertiary education:

- full-time;
- part-time;
- evening;
- distance.

These days, more often than not, the above forms of tertiary education are blended into one and the same course of study and it is becoming difficult to find a pure form of tertiary education. Electronic means of communication along with various forms of self-study take up a prominent position among methods of education.

Carrying out distant education in its pure form means that some specific resources and conditions have been provided. In order to ensure that quality distance education is organized in Bulgaria, this particular form is discussed in a special Ordinance, envisaging all the requirements for its carrying out. The legal basis related to distance education is not restricted in view of the specialities or degrees of education. It is rather at the discretion of the respective tertiary school which specialities and which degrees are to be offered in a distance format.

All the activities concerning planning, organising and performing distance studies are carried out by a special unit at the respective tertiary school, i.e. its Distance Learning Centre. This Centre is responsible for the technological and technical provision of the course of study.

Distance learning is organized on the basis of study documentation, approved of by the academic council following the joint suggestion of the major unit which carries out the particular course and the Distance Learning Centre.

The documentation is the same as the a compulsory one, accompanied by a list of the team involved in the distant course, a reference material regarding organisation of access to information sources, a list of the technical and communication means, a system of examination and assessment, means of controlling the exam procedures and making them transparent, as well as a system of controlling the quality of education offered.

6.19. Statistics

According to the 2006 statistics offered by the National Statistical Institute, the system of higher education is characterised by the following statistical indices (as per the academic year of 2005 – 2006):

- educational structure of the population aged 25 – 64 during 2005:
 - o basic and lower education – 28%;
 - o secondary education – 51%;
 - o higher education(university – 17%;
 - o college education – 5%;
- total number of students – 243,464
- distributed in degrees of education as follows:
 - o specialist's degree – 23,608
 - o bachelor's and master's degrees – 214,693
 - o doctoral degree – 5,163
- distributed in types of higher education institutions:
 - o students at state higher education schools – 198,320
 - o students at private higher education schools – 45,144;
- lecturers – **23,933**
 - o lecturers at state higher education schools – 29,925
 - o lecturers at private higher education schools – 3,008;
- higher education graduates – 46,038
 - o state institutions higher education graduates – 40,198
 - o private institutions higher education graduates – 5,840;
- foreign students' profile – total number – 8,652, distributed in continents as follows:
 - o Europe – 5,804;
 - o Asia – 2,656;
 - o Africa – 130
 - o North America – 58;
 - o South America – 2;
 - o Australia and Oceania – 2
- students:lecturers ratio

- o universities and specialised higher schools – 11.8;
 - o average number of students per lecturer at colleges – 12.0;
 - o student:lecturer ratio at private higher schools – 15.0;
- net quotient of enrolled population:
 - o universities and specialised higher schools (ISCED – 5A) – 26.4%;
 - o colleges (ISCED - 5B) – 4.1%

7. Continuing Education and Training for Young School Leavers and Adults

The socio-economic situation in Bulgaria for the past decade has been characterized by destabilization of the labour market, an increase of unemployment, especially in certain regions of the country, decline of some professions and a considerable growth of the requirements to employees' level of education and qualification. It sets as a priority task the necessity for renovation and considerable changes in the system of adult education.

The different forms of adult education are intended to satisfy the needs of a large range of people – people who for different reasons have dropped out of the educational system after the age of 16, but who are willing to continue their education, unemployed, under-qualified workers, willing to achieve a higher level of education, etc.

Adult education aims at attaining certain degrees of education (basic, secondary – general or vocational) as well as at acquiring specialized skills with a view to facilitating the mobility and access of the labour force to the market.

Outside the system of adult education, systems for qualification of the employees within different branches of economics have been built. They encompass the separate professional groups and are related to improvement and development in the respective vocational field.

The target groups of adults directed to vocational education and training are:

- unemployed persons in need of supplementing the occupational training they have in view of enhancing their competitiveness on the labour market;
- unemployed persons who wish to change radically their vocational and qualification status in accordance with the newly formed market conjuncture ;
- employed persons for whom the inevitable changes in their employer's requirements for their profession have occurred under the conditions of transition to market economy, including an urgent change or supplementation of existing knowledge and skills (necessary prerequisite for keeping their employment) ;
- persons freed from detention facilities;
- disabled persons who have the right to exercise a profession;
- officers and military staff who have left the army.

On a national level, the Council of Ministers determines the state policy in employment. After a proposition made by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, each year, the Council of Ministers accepts a National Action Plan on Employment. Executive power bodies are responsible for implementing the policy regarding employment and vocational training of those who are not part of the public education or tertiary education system.

The Minister of Labour and Social Policy develops, coordinates and implements the state policy for promoting employment of the unemployed and for training aimed at providing professional qualification for both unemployed and employed people and for providing protection on the national labour market.

With the amendments of the Employment Promotion Act (2003) concerning the implementation of the state policy regarding promoting employment, protection on the labour market, giving professional information and consultancy, vocational and motivational training for both employed and unemployed persons as well as employment mediation led to the establishment of a National Employment Agency under the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. A National Council for the Promotion of Employment

under the Minister of Labour and Social Policy was also established to act as a body of cooperation and consultancy when developing the country's employment policy.

The state employment policy and vocational training in the different regions is carried out by the district administration offices, the bodies of local governance together with the local branches of the National Employment Agency and the local branches of the respective ministries, organisations and social partners.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy together with the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the development and coordination of the policies and strategies for acquiring professional qualifications for adults – employed and unemployed – on a national level. It organises and manages the National system for training towards acquiring professional qualifications for employed and unemployed persons. It also does research into, analysis and prognosis of the state of affairs, development and needs for acquiring professional qualification of adults.

A National Council Consultancy on the vocational training of the labour force has also been established. It includes representatives of ministries, agencies, committees, employers' and employees' organisations and other non-profit legal entities. This Council coordinates the development of a national policy and strategy for training towards acquiring professional qualifications for employed and unemployed persons, it coordinates and monitors the interaction between the representatives of employers' and employees' organisations on a national level in relation to life long learning. It also harmonises the needs for education towards acquiring professional qualifications.

The activities related to adult education are also carried out by the National Employment Agency, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and other institutions as indicated in the respective laws or Council of Ministers acts. The changes of 2005 mean that training towards acquiring professional qualifications can be done by vocational education centres licenced according to the active legal regulations as well as by vocational school, art schools, vocational upper secondary schools, vocational colleges and tertiary education institutions.

The National Employment Agency and/ or its branches carry out selection of training institutions as is regulated by the Law on public orders. The evaluation of the submitted proposals is done on the basis of economically most advantageous proposal and following a methodology approved by the Minister of labour and social policy.

The mediation services are organized and granted by the National Employment Agency and natural persons or legal entities having more than 50 per cent Bulgarian shares and registered according to Bulgarian legal regulations. The National Employment Agency grants its mediation services free of charge in cases of employing Bulgarian citizens, Bulgarian citizens who live abroad, as well as foreign citizens who stay in the country under an international agreement, in which Bulgaria has legal obligations or under agreements with foreign employers and licensed mediation agencies paying for the mediation services done as well as with similar foreign institutions engaged in employing Bulgarian citizens abroad.

All programmes and employment encouragement measures are carried out after being approved of by the National employment enhancement council and the regional employment committees after their being financially secured by the budget for the respective year. The MLSP provides an annual financial statement in evidence that they are secured by the State Budget Act for the respective year

so that these programmes and employment measures can be implemented. Each year the National Employment Agency provides the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with a proposal for the programmes and employment measures and a financial plan for it according to the regulations for preparing a budget for the respective year. Every year, The Minister of labour and social policy approves of the plan proposed by the National Employment Agency and secures it financially. The amendments to the Employment Promotion Act determine the conditions and regulations for using preferences under employment programmes. The latter can also be approved of by an order issued by the minister of labour and social policy. The carrying out of employment programmes and training measures is secured with financial resources for wages, additional payments within minimal limits, as stated in the Labour Code and the regulations for its implementation. Other types of payment concern resources for annual leave, and since the amendment from 2005 payments paid by the employer to the Pension funds, the Employment accidents and professional illnesses funds, the General illnesses and maternity funds, on the gross wages, payments paid by the employers for the Unemployment funds on the gross wages, for training towards acquisition of professional qualification, motivational and literacy training, for encouragement of the mobility of unemployed persons' who are registered in the local branches of the National Employment Agency, for scholarships, for transportation and accommodation for participants in literacy training courses or courses granting acquisition of professional qualification – for the period of training – for transportation, accommodation of those taking part in motivational courses; interest payments under credits granted according to the MLSP guarantee schemes for granting credits to disabled people or in the case of initiating and development of economic activity and opening of new work places.

According to their purpose, the financial resources are distributed among employers, unemployed persons and training organisations. The amount of money given to the different programmes and employment measures is determined annually by the National action plan for employment (see section 7.9.).

In the case of liquidating enterprises or pending mass lay-offs teams consisting of representatives of the organisation's employees, or the Director of the Labour Office department, who are active during the period from the notice-giving to the end of the mass lay-off. The teams survey the employees' needs for mediation in the process of seeking employment and professional qualifications and they cooperate with the Labour Office departments in the granting of employment services, they also propose projects for training towards an additional professional qualification or retraining bound with employment opportunities. The teams also support employees in their seeking suitable training courses with the aim to keep their employment or their occupying another position.

7.1. Historical Overview

The foundations of adult education in Bulgaria were laid by St Kliment Ohridski. He organized Sunday school for adults thus endeavouring to give them the necessary practical knowledge in the area of agriculture and crafts.

After the fall of Bulgaria under Turkish supremacy (1396) the economic and cultural upheaval of the country was considerably delayed. The first Sunday schools for educating adults how to read and write and expanding their general knowledge were opened as late as the 18th century. The liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1878 initiated the widespread policy for the advance of adult education. In 1878 Marin Drinov created the "Provisional By-laws for Public Schools", which was the first statutory act to deal with the issues of adult education movement in the Duchy of Bulgaria. This statutory act paid special attention to adult education. Sunday and evening schools were opened for many of those who had finished only the course of primary school, as well as for adults who had not managed to

acquire primary education, in order to raise their educational level. That is why it is believed that the Provisional By-laws laid the foundations of continuing education in Bulgaria.

The new Commercial and Industrial Education Act of 1924 divided all vocational schools into secondary, applied and *supplementary*. Adult education was achieved in supplementary schools, which aimed to increase the education and the occupational training of workers and employers in the respective professions, which had not completed vocational schools or high school. Supplementary vocational education had its beginnings in the evening and Sunday courses during which lectures in the field of agriculture, commerce, crafts, etc. were delivered before broader audiences in order to expand their general and specialized knowledge. Community centres and the teachers' community took part in these courses. Thus in the 19th century many young boys and girls aged 14 to 21 attended supplementary craftsman schools predominantly in the evenings. At first such a school was opened in the town of Varna thanks to the Commercial and Industrial Chamber. Later the supplementary schools were faced with the task of providing not only vocational but also higher level of education than the one given at basic schools.

From 1944 to 1989 adult education was of varied significance to the educational policy of our country – both in the curricular and extra curricular forms of adult education.

As early as 1944 evening courses which later were expanded into evening schools were started in some schools. The first evening schools were general– evening pre-secondary school and upper secondary schools.

During the following years, other forms of adult education were created to facilitate working people. They were of an extra-mural or distant format. Evening and extra-mural vocational schools and technical schools were opened. By 1970 the evening form of education in all types of schools had expanded considerably. The increase in the number of people attending evening and extra-mural courses in technical schools and higher educational institutions was the greatest. During the academic year of 1962/1963, special vocational schools providing workers of up to 35 years of age with opportunities to complete basic education were opened. In 1967 shift classes were organized in a number of technical schools and upper secondary schools along with the evening and extra-mural courses. These shift classes were affiliated to factories to facilitate the workers.

In 1972 a unified system of education, maintaining and increasing workers' occupational training was launched with a Decree of the Council of Ministers # 1. Vocational and Study Centres affiliated to all big enterprises (VSC) were created. Factory classes were the most wide spread forms of schooling there. Education was carried out according to special curricula and syllabuses so that workers could finish basic and secondary vocational and technical education in good time. The length of instruction was different depending on the level of education of the learners. Factory classes were affiliated to different schools – general or vocational. The system of education was regular and extra-mural.

Adults who obtained diplomas of secondary education irrespective of the type of school and the form of schooling (evening, extra-mural, shift, private students) were eligible to apply for continuing their education at all higher educational institutions and colleges.

The Centre for Vocational Training of Workers (CVTW) was created in 1977 with the technical assistance of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which together with the already existing Scientific Research Institute On Labour (SIL) provided the scientific and informational as well as the methodological support of continuing education. This created the prerequisites for the expansion of the network of extra-curricular forms of adult education. They provided systematic knowledge necessary to perform various work activities. In the 70's and 80's, about 30% of workers and employees hired in material production as well as in the non-material sphere were trained in courses and schools for acquisition of vocational training or expansion of their existing vocational training - only 3% of them were trained in courses for acquiring vocational training and the rest of them were trained in in-service courses increasing their vocational qualification.

Thus, a fairly autonomous system had emerged by 1980, which in the mid 90's already included 900 academic institutes, centres and schools affiliated to enterprises and municipalities.

The activities on the expansion of vocational training and retraining were led methodologically by the Ministry of Public Education, and organizationally – by the Ministry of Labour and the respective Industrial Sectors' Ministries and Institutions.

Until 1989 the above-described expansion of vocational training and retraining was carried out through:

- vocational and study centres, functioning as educational units affiliated to enterprises and territorial divisions;
- study centres and units affiliated to scientific, designer bureaus, engineering, technology implementing and other organisations;
- permanently operating schools and ad hoc organized target courses, affiliated to enterprises;
- study and vocational training complexes, which functioned on the basis of integrated secondary and higher educational institutions, enterprises and scientific units for joint activities on staff training and expansion of occupational training;
- international centres with the status of joint ventures in the form of partnerships between local and famous schools and higher educational institutions from abroad.

7.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

The Bulgarian government defines the expansion of activities as well as granting wider access to different forms of educating adults both within the formal system of education and outside it as a very important task. Teaching adults is viewed within the context of a whole strategy for encouraging life long learning (LLL). It includes all types of training activities during a person's life, which aim at developing his/her knowledge and competences of personal, civic, social and/or professional nature.

Within the Bulgarian context, participation in different forms of educating adults has been motivated by pragmatic considerations mostly and has been aimed at granting direct access to the labour market and increasing the competitive power of both the employed and the unemployed. In the past couple of years, there have been several growing tendencies, which determine the increased necessity to educate adults in various spheres:

- The number of school drop-outs is growing. Having no professional qualifications, such young people have poor chances to succeed in life. According to data gathered by the Regional Inspectorates of Education, for the school year of 2004/2005, 19,193 out of 963,051 students who were enrolled for the year dropped out of school. Between one-fourth and one-third of all students do not finish their secondary education.
- At the moment, the unemployment rate with young people is calculated at 28,1%. The latest data show that 40,8% of the permanently unemployed have low or no qualifications.
- The unemployment rate in several regions of the country remain high (for example in Targovishte – 26,9%). The unemployment rate is highest in the ex-industrial regions where factories have been closed down and where no new work places have been offered since.
- Another problem typical of Bulgaria is the vast increase in the number of unemployed specialists holding a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. The latter is due to the number of students admitted to universities being unrelated to the real demands of the labour market. In 1996, the number of unemployed holding a degree in tertiary education was 19,148, while at the moment, their number is twice as big – 39,557. Another tendency, worth noting is that a great part of the specialists with a tertiary education degree take a position requiring lower qualifications. Despite their high qualifications these people turn to different forms of education, re-training, master's programmes in other spheres in order to increase their own competitive power on the labour market.

- Instability of work places both in the state-owned and privately owned sectors of economy – in Bulgaria, it is still normal to restructure or even liquidate whole enterprises, administrative and scientific units. A great part of the laid off persons start seeking opportunities for acquiring new skills and qualifications.
- It is notable that apart from the forms for acquiring professional qualifications the two most popular adult education forms are foreign language and ICT training. In addition to the European Union requirements for learning three foreign languages spoken in Europe and mass computerisation, this strong interest in acquiring foreign languages and computer skills is due to the opening of new work places at foreign and joint companies as well as privatised firms. Having adequate foreign language and ICT skills has become a prerequisite for a successful career in many spheres.

The Bulgarian government and the European Commission reached an agreement to develop a Strategy on adult education which consists mostly of a methodology for adult vocational education supported by the PHARE programme in 2003. **The emphasis was laid predominantly on activities determined by the above reasons.** Besides, a National Strategy for Continuing Professional Training (2005- 2010) has now been developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bulgarian Industrial Association, and the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria. The strategy was passed by the Council of Ministers on 14.10.2004. Its strategic aim is: to create and develop the conditions for acquisition and enhancement of vocational qualification of the labour force in order to enhance its employability, professional career and individual development. In order to fulfil these aims, a number of strategic objectives have been specified:

- enhancement of the conditions granting access to continuing vocational training;
- achievement of effective and coordinated interaction among all institutions engaged in continuing professional training;
- providing high-quality continuing professional training;
- increase in the investments in continuing professional training;
- scientific provision of continuing professional training.

Further speaking, specific activities, responsible institutions, deadlines and sources of financing have been identified. On the other hand, the activities resulting from the Strategy are constantly being monitored to ensure their quality fulfilment in accord with the set deadlines.

In the context of Bulgaria's EU accession, the government has passed several documents connected with human resource development and all interested parties have taken the responsibility to develop the human resources as far as their competitive power, employability and adaptability are concerned. The question of adult education takes up a central position in these documents. The most significant of them are:

- The 'People are Bulgaria's wealth' document prepared by the government.
- The report on EU Accession in 2007 and the Annual progress report (article 18)
- The new social policy strategy (2002 – 2005), which concentrates on four aspects including continuing professional training and which contains an action plan with all national and regional measures to be taken.
- In August 2003, the MLSP has prepared an operational programme for the development of human resources as an integral part of the Framework of community support for the acquisition of EU Structural Funds.
- The Employment Strategy for 2004 – 2010.
- The Programme for the development of secondary and tertiary education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period of 2004 – 2005 in which the major trends are those connected with:
 - o life long learning
 - o quality of education
 - o equal access to education

- o educational institutions offering vocational training
- o employers' organisations – labour market
- o development of the system of teacher training
- o implementation of ICT in education

7.3. Specific Legislative Framework

No specific legislation on adult education exists in Bulgaria. These issues are regulated by different acts and other statutory documents pertaining to education of adults, among which several laws, the Labour Code and various by-laws on some concrete and specific issues. Among them, the Employment Promotion Act and the Regulations on its Implementation, the Vocational Education and Training Act, the Handicraft Act are particularly important. A number of regulations regarding adult education are to be found in the Public Education Act, Higher Education Act, the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act – and Ordinance # 6 regarding the distribution of study time over grades, stages and levels of education. Thus the latter contains the study plan for the evening high schools, which are a basic form of adult education leading to completion of general secondary education (this plan is presented in Chapter 5). The National Budget Act for the respective year is also important because it determines the amount of money granted by the state for the needs of training, re-training and financial support for the trained adults.

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria

Education of adults is a right granted by to every citizen with the fundamental legislative act of the Republic of Bulgaria – the Constitution.

Art. 6. par. 2 states: “All citizens shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic identity, gender, origin, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal, social or property status”.

Specific provisions on adult education are contained in the texts of art. 53, par. 1: “Everyone shall have the right to education”; art. 53, par. 6: “The state shall promote education ... by providing opportunities for vocational training and retraining”; art. 48, par. 3: “Everyone shall be free to choose an occupation and place of work”.

The Labour Code

The Labour code with its last amendment stipulates the general rules for vocational training for people at employment age. Above all, the Labour Code regulates education of people in employment as well as the obligations on the part of the employer to workers or employees and the conclusion of the respective contracts (LC, art. 169)

Specific terms of education are negotiated in the case of vocational training expansion and retraining depending on the current needs of the industry. This type of education is provided on the discretion of the employer if it corresponds to the industry's aims and provides efficiency.

Public Education Act (adopted in 1991). Being the fundamental legislative act which regulates the system of public education it is characterised by democratic principles of functioning and management. The provisions of the NEA grant citizens the right to education and the right to expand their educational and vocational training – art. 4, par.1.

- Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act

Apart from providing the necessary level of learning, consistency and continuity of education (art. 3, par. 1) the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act expands foreign language learning. The compulsory foreign language training in a given profession is regulated with the Vocational Education and Training Act – art. 27, par. 1 of VETA.

Vocational Education and Training Act

Vocational Education and Training Act has been developed acting upon art. 18, i. 6 of the National Education Act. The ratification of a separate act which regulates the public relations within the system of vocational education and training is of paramount importance both for the development of the economy and the labour market as well as for the perfection of the process of lifelong learning by increasing the possibilities and varying the forms of involvement of the individual in this process. One of the purposes of the act is to grant the right to vocational education in accordance with the personal interests and abilities – art. 1, par. 1, i. 1 of VETA. Considering that education and vocational training acquired at school until 18 years of age does not guarantee employment and vocational development of the individual for a prolonged period of time it is necessary to expand educational services which provide opportunity for everyone to increase continuously the quality of the vocational training as well as to retrain, acquire new skills which may facilitate the adjustment to the changing environment. VETA has its significance in this respect since it grants every citizen the possibilities to be educated not only within the established system of education but to increase his/her vocational competence in an informal way. The structures envisaged in the law, which allow the acquisition of new vocational knowledge, and skills by the individual are the Centres of Vocational Training.

Higher Education Act

The system of higher education in Bulgaria is regulated by the Higher Education Act (HEA) ratified by the National Assembly in 1995. This act provides the mechanisms of interaction between the system of higher education and the state with the purpose of providing appropriate education and training to young people by the system offering at the same time opportunities for continuous improvement of the scientific learning and the acquisition of knowledge in other vocational areas of all who wish so. In this respect the provisions of HEA correspond to the global Lifelong Learning Strategy. The access to the system of higher education is regulated by the provisions of art. 4 of the act.

Employment Promotion Act

- regulates adult education in the part concerning persons over 16 years of age, and covers training of unemployed persons and employed persons under conditions stipulated by the act.

Art. 4, par. 1 stipulates that “State institutions in cooperation with nationally represented organisations of the employers and the workers and employees carry out policies on unemployment protection, employment promotion and occupational training to persons who are at an employable age”, and art. 5 specifies the nature of the activity and the subject of administration with the text: The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy develops, coordinates and conducts the state policy on unemployment protection, employment promotion of the unemployed, vocational training and retraining of the employed and the unemployed and secures the protection of the national labour market.

The Act is supplemented with the Regulations on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Act where the basic norms regarding continuing vocational training organised by virtue of art. 4 and art. 5 are elaborated organisationally and methodically and the specific provisions of chapter VI of the Employment Promotion which stipulates the basic principals and rules related to the organisation and administration of training. After the revocation of section I of chapter VI of the same act, adult education is regulated under the provisions of art. 90-95.

Handicraft Act

The Handicraft Act ratified in 2001 expanded in reality the national legislative frame related to the possibilities for lifelong learning. This act provides for crafts practising, organisation of crafts activities and crafts training pursuant to art. 1. Chapter four of the act stipulates the terms and procedures for training apprentices, journeymen and masters. Acquisition of occupational skills in the process of training facilitates better fulfilment of persons trained within the system of crafts and at the same time encourages the trainees to develop constantly their training through the opportunity to get one after the other a license for apprentices, journeymen or masters.

National Community Centres Act

The possibilities and the potential of community centres activities in the process of civil society building are regulated with the National Community Centres Act. Community centres as cultural and educational institutions respond most adequately to the needs of society. Bulgarian community centres represent established structures of civil society, an open and free territory for civil participation where anyone can express himself or herself; develop their creative and intellectual ability.

Education is provided also for convicted prisoners who have not completed their secondary education (art. 28, par. 3 of NEA).

The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, ministries of different industrial sectors', regional administrative bodies, etc.n participate in effecting adult education. The foundations of expanding the scope of this activity and the cooperation between educational units under Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA) have been laid.

Over the past two years there have been some changes in the major legal documents regulating adult education, i.e. in the Labour Code (in 2004), the Employment Promotion Act, the Regulations on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Act (in 2003 and in 2005). Since the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005 the State Educational Requirements for vocations and subjects have been published.

The most significant changes in the legal framework for the past two years are mostly connected with the functions and legal rights of the bodies responsible for adult training and the financing of adult training (see the introduction of Chapter 7) as well as with the provision of financial support to learners (see section **7.9.**).

Despite the considerable improvement of the legal basis for adult education, it is worth noting that there is still a lack of complete clarity in relation with the rights and responsibilities of the different parties concerned. Besides, not all sides of the problem have been accurately regulated. The number of institutions, which more or less play a direct role in adult development is very big. Apart from the governing bodies presented above there are consultative units at all levels as well as a number of state-owned and private institutions offering various training services to adults. One of the problems here is the insufficient coordination and interaction between them. However, there is an important achievement, namely, the fact that Bulgaria has managed to include all social partners related to the labour market and the problems of education as a result of the clear political directives given by the EU.

7.4. General Objectives

The general aim of adult education is to prepare the citizens for realization in the economy and in other spheres of public life by creating conditions for acquisition of vocational qualification and its constant improvement. Depending on the needs of society and of the individual person, the specific objectives of adult education are related to giving a “second chance” to people who have prematurely dropped out of the education system, facilitating the access to the labour market by acquiring qualifications in those professions for which there are available positions for employment and demand for specialists, supporting the professional realization of the unemployed.

In accordance with the above, the main objectives of the system of adult education are:

- acquisition of vocational qualification;
- gaining legal capacity to practice professions which requires it;
- constant improvement of vocational qualification;
- formation of a system of incentives for realization within a civil society;
- enriching general knowledge on the basis of national and universal values.

7.5. Types of Institution

Centres for vocational training

The basic tasks of vocational education and training, reflected in the provisions of the Vocational Education and Training act are in accord with the policy of creating motivation in people to study throughout their lives and to improve constantly their professional qualification.

Structures, which provide opportunities for acquisition of new personal professional knowledge and skills, are termed Centres of vocational training. These centres have various statuses pursuant to art. 22 of VETA: state, municipal, private, Bulgarian with foreign participation, foreign. This diversity is an important guarantee for the creation of number of opportunities for inclusion of different consumers and groups, which is a key element of promoting the process of access to learning. The provided possibility for granting certificates to people who completed different forms of schooling in these centres is part of the policy of promotion and acknowledgment of other forms of education outside the ones regulated in the established system of education.

A network of centres of vocational training has been built which supplements the possibilities for training offered by the system of public education. The centres offer flexible and adjustable programmes depending on the needs of those requesting education and the learners, combining and building on skills and competences.

The National Agency of Vocational Education and Training is the institution, which licenses the CVTs, keeps a register of CVTs and exercises consistent control.

The procedure of licensing of a Centre of Vocational Education was adopted by the Managing Board (MB) of NAVET with Minutes № 7 dated 21.05.2003. It comprises the following:

- The Centre files 3 application forms and a set of written documents in NAVET.
- NAVET prepares written assessment of the documents.
- If the assessment is positive the MB of NAVET starts the procedure on licensing and appoints experts to evaluate the centre.
- The experts evaluate the presented documents and the conditions for education.
- The head of the experts' team presents to the experts' commission a generalised report on the results of the evaluation.

- The experts' commission prepares a consistent proposal to the MB of NAVET for granting or refusing a licence.
- The Managing Board of NAVET closes the procedure on Centre licensing in one of its meetings by hearing a summary of the report of the chairperson of the Experts' Commission, discusses the motion for licensing, conducts show of hands voting adopts a resolution for granting or refusing a license depending on the results of the voting.
- The president of NAVET issues the license.

The granted license gives the right to conduct vocational training of people over 16 years of age in a given profession or in the elements of a profession.

The above licensing procedure is a basic prerequisite for enhancing the quality of education and requires compulsory licensing on part of the institutions offering training leading to acquiring a state-recognised professional qualification. On completing the procedure, some information about the licensed centres is published on the NAVET website. The licensing procedure introduced by NAVET is the basic prerequisite for high quality of training and requires that all suppliers be licenced so that the vocational training they offer can be officially certified. After the licensing procedure is over, NAVET publishes information about the licenced training centers on its website. The licensing criteria include conformity with the law (also regarding the Vocational Education and Training Act), conformity of the requirements for hygiene and safety, aims and objectives of the center, proof of interest in the courses offered (on part of Labour Bureaus, employers, municipalities) a management system, requirements for the learners, quality assurance mechanisms, resources (teachers, classrooms, laboratories, equipment); a system of monitoring and controlling those who have finished the courses and so on. The stages and duration of the procedures are subject to agreement with the social partners and the ministries, after which they are approved by NAVET. The duration of the procedure depends on the components of verification and evaluation of the conditions for providing quality training as specified in the application documents. According to the information circulated by NAVET the licensing procedure is an open dynamic system whose elements develop in the process of supervision and control.

Over the past couple of years there have been no considerable changes in the ways, structure and types of the licensed institutions. The private organisations, however, which offer such services have achieved progress and enlargement. In recent years, the analyses of the quality of the offered services, the supply and demand, adults' motivation to participate in different training forms have led to identifying both some problems and some positive tendencies.

One of the positive tendencies worth noting is that the procedures for quality assessment introduced by NAVET make those organisations offering high-quality services more conspicuous as leaders on the market of adult education and continuing professional education. This fact, in turn, influences the understanding of the significance of continuous education as well as the increased interest in taking part in various forms of training.

The range of suppliers and those who assign training from the state-owned, the private and the non-governmental sector is growing. Their status is presented below:

Adult education and continuing professional training offered by vocational schools and high schools – these are viewed as suppliers of great potential as they have greater capacity to take into account the needs of the labour market and quality of education when preparing their courses. In the context of making the number of vocational high schools and the demographic crisis in Bulgaria, when vocational high schools start offering adult education and continuing professional training, these schools will be able to attract additional resources to the ones granted by the state. In this respect, the present financial regulations of the Ministry of Finance represent a big problem. The former oblige schools to direct their income generated through paid-for courses and continuing professional training

to the state treasury. This approach does not give school stimuli for diversifying the adult education services they offer. The present practice should be changed with mechanisms, which can motivate vocational schools to offer better quality courses and on the other hand, to create opportunities for adequate monitoring of the spending of own-generated income. The latter should be managed by the schools themselves and invested in equipment, study materials, in-service training of teachers (to train teachers to teach adults), in the additional payment for teaching adults (this will help keep highly qualified teachers at school) The spending of the income can be supervised by the school's board of trustees or another suitable body.

The Vocational Education and Training Act requires that all curricula be prepared in keeping with the State Educational Requirement for the acquisition of a profession developed by NAVET. The Ministry of Education and Science develops the curricula for state and municipal schools. The vocational education centres prepare their study plans and then submits them to NAVET as part of the licencing procedure. However, to meet the needs of adult training, these study plans need to be more flexible and suitable for the offering of training courses. It is also important to include employers in the process of developing study plans, which, in turn, will lead to a better relation to employers' needs and will help integrate the changes at the work place (work organisation, new technologies, and so on) in the newly developed study plans. There have already been a couple of initiatives to develop new study plans taken by PHARE and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Another favourable fact is the opportunity to invest in the infrastructure, which will lead to a multiplying effect, because the facilities can be used by young and adult learners alike. However, the present system of financing, namely, state schools relying on the state budget not being able to invest large sums of money coming from own-generated income restricts these opportunities.

Last but not least, we should mention the role of the school management board for the granting of adult education courses and continuing professional training. Together with the many positive examples there exist school heads, who are not motivated to carry out adult training.

There should also be greater decentralization, which will lead to the balanced supply and demand on a regional and local level as well as the establishment of stable partnerships with local enterprises as an important connection with the world of employment. The process of granting greater responsibilities for school management requires programmes for development of schools' managing staff and diversification of the functions of the schools' boards of trustees. This calls for the active participation of social partners. The vocational upper secondary schools should analyse the needs of development in the school's district in order to plan adult education and continuing professional training courses.

Adult education offered by evening upper secondary schools – evening schools continue being the major form leading to a secondary school diploma for those who work and adults above 16 who have dropped out of schools because of a number of reasons. Unlike vocational schools, evening schools do not give a degree in vocational training and do not offer such training. The study content at these schools amounts to 40% of that at regular schools. Evening schools have to observe the profiles and cultural-educational spheres as described in the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act. At some evening schools there is training.

Adult training offered by tertiary education institutions – there are no age restrictions as to studying at a tertiary institution. That is why the majority of students there belong to different age groups. There has been a growing number of adult students in the past years. There are two groups of adults who seek tertiary education – people holding a secondary education diploma who want to get a tertiary degree (most often they look for forms of distance learning) and people holding a tertiary degree seeking a master's or re-qualification degree or taking part in short-term courses and specializations for developing of existing skills. Adult training is very profitable for universities because it makes up for the loss of students and brings them additional financial resources. Non-university colleges offer adult training as well. At present there is a need for Bulgarian universities to cooperate

with better with foreign universities, other suppliers of training including vocational schools and private suppliers, non-governmental suppliers and enterprises in order to enhance the compatibility of university courses with the present and future needs of the economy and the learners. Speaking further, it is necessary that universities offering initial and in-service training implement adult training on a wider basis in their curriculum.

Adult education and continuing professional training offered by the Bulgarian-German Centres for Vocational Training (established by GOPA, Germany, at present under Bulgarian governance). These centres represent a well-established high quality institution which attracts considerable public attention. As their model is a successful one, it is good for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science to find ways of the best integration of this model in the practice adult education and continuing professional training to ensure its stability.

Adult training offered or assigned by the National Employment Agency and the Labour Bureau departments. - The National Employment Agency and the Labour Bureau departments (LBD) apply active policies at the labour market. The consumers of LBD services are the unemployed, employers and employees who use the new scheme for financial support in cases of adult training and continuing professional training provision. The Labour Bureaus act as intermediaries between these consumer groups and they have to be well-informed about the present and future labour market tendencies, the needs of employers and have to harmonise them with the needs of the unemployed thus offering services including selection of suitable courses. Although the number of courses for the unemployed and the number of participants has risen drastically in recent years, the percentage of the unemployed who have finished training courses remains relatively low, compared to the average number of annually registered unemployed. In order to improve the employability of the unemployed it is necessary to offer a greater number and variety of training courses. Among the most popular courses without any particular vocational basis are those in foreign languages and ICT.

The interest of employers in training their own employees from small enterprises and such which are in a process of restructuring has risen.

Adult training for disadvantaged and risk groups (young people and permanently unemployed, minority people including Roma and disabled people) is financed under different initiatives of the National Employment Agency: initiatives on the labour market under the PHARE programme (2001 – 2004): the Jobs programme and the Beautiful Bulgaria programme, National programme for ICT training for young people (2002 – 2005): a Phare programme for social inclusion.

Adult training and continuing professional training assigned by enterprises – different enterprises are the major suppliers of continuing professional training in Bulgaria as far offering in-service training for their employees is concerned. Out of the 28% of the firms offering continuing professional training for their employers 177 % offer continuing professional training in the form of training courses, 25% invite other firms to carry out continuing professional training; training at the work place – 65% and participation in seminars, conferences (62%), and so on.

According to information circulated by the Ministry of Economy the big national and international companies have very good training and motivational programmes as well as their own modern training facilities. In the majority of cases, however, at the small and middle enterprises (SME) the training is aimed primarily at management staff, while the technical staff and workers rarely become a subject of training. Very often, SME do not have business plans and plans for development of their human resources.

Adult training and continuing professional training offered and assigned by the social partners

– the national syndicates and employers have established training centers mostly for employees and for the unemployed. The National Centre for vocational training at the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been licenced by NAVET to offer training in the following spheres: forestry, textile and shoe-making, leather industry hotel and restaurant management, catering, finances, banking and insurance. An added value is its regional branches, which offer courses to a big number of people. Another advantage of this type of suppliers is their relation with the specific sector, which is connected with strong motivation and current information about training needs and thus provides an opportunity to react quickly and flexibly. The “Podkrepa” Confederation of Labour set up a special unit for syndicate training – the department of syndicate development, which aims at implementing the confederation’s training policy. This is where training events for the Confederation members are held.

Adult training offered by private suppliers including NGO’s - The community centers (chitalishta) network comprises 3,500 community clubs – traditional Bulgarian cultural and training centers (in most cases partially supported by the Ministry of Culture and the municipalities) – deals with various activities. For instance, such a center can organize language courses, computer clubs, music lessons, drama clubs. In spite of the lack of accurate data for the actual number of the currently active community centers, approximately they come up to 2,500 especially in smaller towns and villages where they are the only places with access to libraries, which in itself is an important consideration in the light of the LLL conception.

The ‘Znanie’ network (an association for circulation of knowledge) – is the biggest NGO offering adult training in Bulgaria. It supports suppliers of adult training through institutional building and development of human resources. In all big cities there are branches of the Association with centers, teachers and other specialists who popularise LLL. They offer courses in marketing, finances, initiating your own business. The Association also works under different EU programmes. The main target groups consist of people with low qualifications, permanently unemployed and socially isolated people.

The advantages of these networks lay in their strong motivation and regional accessibility. Usually, they are well-developed but it is necessary to pay more attention to the community clubs networks.

In the **Private sector** there are the following centers: “Veda consult”, Gabrovo – an adult training center; Training Centre at the Novotel, Plovdiv (training for waiters, barmen and similar vocations from the sphere of tourism); “Dančovata kashta” Restoration center in Plovdiv (a centre for continuing professional training in crafts) and many others.

The Bulgarian Human Resources Management and Development Association is the branch organisation of Bulgarian human resource specialists (set up in 2000). It aims at supporting its members in the sphere of management and development of human resources, which also has an impact on the supplying of continuing professional training at different firms (although there are representatives of big enterprises as the smaller ones usually do not employ full time a human resource specialist). The Association organises conferences, symposia. It has also taken part in the preparation of the Operational plan for human resource development.

There are some professional associations such as the **Unions of Science and Technology** (having 28 regional CPD centers, regional unions of engineers). Apart from training for engineers, the

Association provides training for people with lower qualifications, e.g. plumbing courses. The Association has been licenced to provide training in 58 vocations for employed, unemployed and students. The **regional business centers** offer consultancy and training in economic management.

7.6. Geographical Accessibility

The variety of institutions offering training for adults and the different character of educational services (in certain professional fields, specialized courses, education leading to completion of an educational degree and the acquisition of a degree of professional qualification, or not) is a prerequisite for a certain unevenness of their distribution in the different regions of the country and in separate towns and villages. In the capital and in big cities there is much greater variety of the offered services and more opportunities for access than in smaller and less populated living areas.

On the territory of the whole country a network of centres for professional training has been built, supplementing the opportunities offered by the system of national education. The centres offer flexible and adaptable programmes, in accordance with the needs of the claimant of the training and of trainees, combining and building on skills and competencies.

According to the specific needs of separate regions in conducting vocational training for adults, there are different initiatives of state and private organizations and civil associations. For instance, in the Rhodope region, which is less developed in socio-economic aspect and in its provision with specialists with up-to-date qualifications, an Association for Dissemination of Knowledge has been operating for 15 years. It is a kind of school for adults, where any one who wishes can receive information and knowledge, connected with one's profession, can acquire computer literacy and learn foreign languages. On the initiative of the Association electro-technicians are trained to acquire the respective professional qualification degree in order to serve in institutions in the region, and training is provided to unemployed people for acquiring a qualification in accountancy and construction.

The institutional system of adult training in different regions of the country needs further development with respect to the roles of the participating institutions, enhancement of the coordination between the national and regional levels, and the joint efforts of various state and private organisations offering adult training on the territory of the regions.

At the moment the efforts of the two regional employment offices (responsible for the different regions) are directed towards coordination and support for the local Labour Bureaus, which includes ICT support, material supplies and accompanying services for professional consultancy and orientation. Despite being part of the National Employment Agency structure their interrelations and the hierarchy of the national, regional and local branches is to be developed. Consequently, their role in supplying adult education and CPD forms is still unclear.

The Councils of Three-partite cooperation within the regional branches of the Agency supervise the implementation of programmes and employment measures, monitor the observation of regulations of selection of programmes and measures and discuss which of them should have priority in financing.

The constant and temporary employment committees at the District council for regional development determine, organise and control the implementation of the governmental employment policy, vocational and motivational training.

On a local level, the Labour Bureaus are the ones active with regard to adult training and continuing professional training. In recent years they have started to concentrate on individual services for the unemployed and to facilitate integration on the labour market. This includes mediation services for finding a job, informing, consulting and orientation of individuals to find the best employment programme and to offer training on the labour market. This means that they provide help for employers when they seek for future employees.

As far as institutions offering adult training are concerned, the network is expanding in smaller towns and villages, but there is still a certain irregularity among the different regions and the big variety of training services if offered in bigger cities.

The distribution of vocational schools and high schools seems adequate to the number of population on a regional level (except for the North Central Region which has more such schools per capita than the South Central region has fewer schools of this type). The geographical distribution of vocational schools puts them in an advantageous position because their trainees can choose a course nearer their home place.

7.7. Admission Requirements

The admission requirements vary depending on whether training is conducted within the framework of the institutional education system or by private organisations, who the claimant of the training is, how it is funded and to what purpose it is conducted.

The terms and procedure of admission to school for adults within the institutional education system are stipulated by an Ordinance of the Minister of Educational and Science. The admission requirements to the separate schools are as follows:

- Vocational-technical schools (VTS) after basic education for mastering elements of a profession – admission is granted to people between 16 - 29 years of age are trained there, and they have to have completed VI and VII class.
- Upper Secondary Vocational-technical schools (SVTS) – admission is granted to people who have completed 16 years of age.
- Vocational colleges after secondary education for occupational training – the applicants should have completed their secondary education. They sit for an entrance exam or participate in admission competition by documents and pay a fee for their training.
- Upper secondary schools with predominantly evening and extra-mural form of schooling – the admission requirements are for applicants to have completed their basic education and be over 16 years of age.

Schools with state admission plan and non-specialised classes of general secondary schools do not grant admission to students older than 16 or 17 years respectively; adult training for acquiring an educational degree and/or professional qualification is carried out only at the above mentioned schools.

In the system of vocational education and training qualification training is provided to persons older than 16 years at the request of employers or the Labour Bureaus. The different forms of training

(courses with different duration) allow inclusion in the training at different periods of the person's career development.

The terms and procedures of admission of adults to the educating establishments outside the system of education are stipulated by the educating establishment in compliance with the requirements of the Vocational Education and Training Act as well as with other statutory acts which provide for vocational education and training.

The training for professional qualification of unemployed persons is organized by the Labour Bureaus and financed by the Professional Qualification and Unemployment Fund. The unemployed are directed to particular courses in compliance with their preferences, their level of education and qualification, and actual conditions of the labour market.

The admission requirements for employees wishing to continue pursue a higher level of education are negotiated with the employer. Depending on the type of education and the specific circumstances the following types of contract may be concluded:

- contract of occupational training acquisition;
- contract of schooling;
- contract of getting a higher qualification and retraining.

Outside the institutional education system different paid-for courses are organized without any restriction as to admission.

There has been a growing tendency towards a more diversified supply and bigger opportunities to choose from for the trainees according to their specific needs. There are no limitations in the access to all training forms on offer – every person can choose whatever he/she wishes and in the sphere he/she wishes. The only limitation for access to some of the courses is the trainees' own financial status – a great part of the employed in Bulgaria receive a monthly salary coming up to 100 – 200 Euro and this makes their access to some of the more expensive forms of training impossible unless an institution pays for them. There are practically no limitations to the access to training forms leading to finishing primary or secondary education because they are organized for free and in a format convenient for the trainee (evening or distance).

7.8. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

Depending on the organization offering training for adults and on the way of funding the training, there are cases in which applicants pay a fee covering all the costs of the tuition (for example at private establishments for adult education) or covering part of these costs (for example at vocational colleges within the institutional education system), there are also completely free forms of training (when costs are covered by government organizations, funds or through national and international projects).

In state vocational and general secondary schools /high schools with evening and extramural forms of schooling/ offering adult education leading to a completion of secondary education and/or a degree of vocational qualification, trainees do not pay fees.

Tuition fees are paid at vocational colleges and centres for vocational training by legal entities and natural persons.

Tuition costs for the unemployed registered at the , etc) offered by private or government organizations the tuition costs are covered either by the trainees or by their employers if they consider the training to be beneficial for the organization.

In recent years project financing has been widely implemented in the field of adult education – with funds raised through national, regional and international projects and with the financial support of

Bulgarian government and private organizations – state institutions, municipalities, companies, associations, foundations.

External aid represents an important financial source. This means rendering gratuitous help, loans for development and payment on projects. A basic instrument for the accomplishment of this policy lies at the structure funds of the EU: The European social fund, The European Fund for regional development, etc. as well as the pre-accession funds of the candidate-countries: PHARE 2000, ISPA and SAPARD.

A very serious issue, which should be noted, is the direct participation of the state in the form of state subsidies is not dominant. In our country the emphasis is already placed on the use of the target oriented state expenses programmes and indirect funding as well.

Target-oriented programmes are directed to a specific group of consumers and they assume the transfer of public resources for satisfying the particular needs of consumers in this group. Examples of this are the ethnic minorities' literacy programme, funding of external projects on vocational skills of people with low qualifications, training of convicted prisoners, vocational training of people with physical disabilities.

Training at municipal and state schools offering adult education towards getting a primary or secondary (general or vocational) education diploma is free of charge.

Training forms organized by the National Employment Agency are free of charge for participants. During the period of training they use scholarships, free transport (if the training facility is far off) as well as unemployment compensations. There is no habit of awarding special prizes. Instead, the basic stimulus for the successful trainees is the increased opportunity to find an appropriate job or the provision of a work place if there is a single d contract with an employer

The cost of in-service training is covered by the employers. It can be related to career development and increase in wages. The employer can also cover the cost of different courses (connected with the development of a person's qualifications, foreign languages and ICT) if this favourable for the firm and if there are finances for that.

Training forms at tertiary education institutions are paid for by the students or a sponsor (e.g. the organization they work for).

All other forms of adult education, which do not lead to the acquisition of a primary or secondary school diploma are not financed by the NEA or the employer. They are paid for by the trainee him/herself. Every citizen has the right to participate in paid-for training forms according to personal needs and interests. The organisations offering training issue a financial document stating the amount of paid-for tax.

7.9. Financial Support for Learners

Every year the State Budget Act provides money for financing government endorsed measures and training programmes under the active employment policy. The amendments of the act envisage utilizing these funds with priority for training programmes and measures for acquiring professional qualifications, motivational training of both unemployed and employed persons, developing national, industry-specific and regional employment programmes, and training for the acquisition of professional qualification. In addition, part of the funds are intended for advertising and disseminating information

and publishing activities related to employment, unemployment and training for acquiring professional qualification, financing the activities of the centres for vocational training established pursuant to an intergovernment agreement by an act of the Council of Ministers, as well as for covering travel fare, accommodation, and scholarships during adult training.

Persons who are actively looking for a job are entitled to vocational training and a scholarship for a training that leads to acquiring a professional qualification. Employers can receive premiums if they provide training for acquiring professional qualification and/or internships of employees and preferences for preserving or increasing employment

The funds for sponsoring continuing education are granted on the basis of a signed contract between the local branch of the National Employment Agency and the unemployed person, the employer and the training organisation.

The institutions responsible for the development and implementation of employment programmes are: 1. for national programmes – the MLSP and the National Employment Agency; 2. for branch programmes – the respective branch ministries (or units) with branch syndicates, branch chambers, the MLSP and the National Employment Agency; 3. for regional programmes – the employment committees at District councils. The amendments to the law from 2003 and 2005 the Employment Committees at District councils for territorial development propose to the MLSP regional employment, literacy or vocational training programmes. These regional programmes lay out the concrete aims, priorities and instruments for implementation of the state policy.

The employment and training programmes are carried out in three modules: “Literacy” – through courses for teaching reading and writing continuing up to 5 months, each trainee being entitled to a scholarship determined by the National action plan for employment for the respective year; “Professional qualifications” – through training aimed at acquisition of professional qualifications; “Employment” – through forms of unsubsidised employment, subsidised employment and/or direction to independent economic activity. The programmes can be done following each of the modules independently or combining the “Literacy” module with the “Employment” and “Professional qualifications” modules. The carrying out of programmes and measures by a branch of the National Employment Agency is financed by the Agency, the budget for state public insurance – the Unemployment fund, as well as other organisations. When combining part-time employment with following a reading and writing course within a subsidised employment programme the persons get wages for the actual working time in hours and a literacy scholarship whose amount is determined annually by the National action plan for employment.

To take part in a literacy or professional qualifications course organized and financed by the National Employment Agency an unemployed person gets a scholarship on the basis of a document issued by the training organisation in proof of the attendance days. The scholarship for December can be paid during the same month.

The principles followed in the case of professional orientation, of training aimed at acquisition of professional qualifications and of motivational training are as stated below: freedom to choose a vocation, type and form of education, free and equal access to training, training conforming with the economic conditions, the state of the labour market and the people’s personal abilities. The professional information and consultancy organized by the respective National Employment Agency branch consists of purposeful support for people according to their personal profile and individual characteristics when they choose their vocation (subject), suitable training towards acquisition of professional qualifications, and directing towards respective forms of training and training institutions.

To support young people’s employment and continuous development, the employers get a certain sum of money for the period of training for acquiring professional qualification or apprenticeship of each

unemployed person under the age of 29, who has been referred by any of the branches of the National Employment Agency. The period of the financing may not last longer than 6 months.

Employers have the right to carry out training towards acquisition of professional qualifications within part-time employment choosing a training organisation or providing training themselves, within the maximum amount of money for training one person. An employer who provides his or her employees with in-service training can apply for financial support equaling half the amount determined for training of one person. An employer can hire unemployed persons sent by the National Employment Agency to be trained and work at the work place for the period during which the person is trained. An employer is granted a sum of money for a maximum of 6 months for each opened work place for probation and/or apprenticeship, taken by an unemployed person sent by the branches of the National Employment Agency.

The legislative acts regulating adult education read as follows:

- Motivational training is a kind of training, which stimulates and directs persons to training towards the acquisition of professional qualifications, and/or employment through acquiring knowledge and skills to get oriented on the labour market, to seek and choose training or employment.
- Premium for Employer is the sum of money granted to employers who sign contracts for programmes and measures for the maintenance and enhancement of employability under this law.
- Internship is work done at a particular work place in order to get or improve one's qualifications through development of one's skills and experience.
- Apprenticeship is the training at a particular work place alternated with training within the system of education.

The availability of financial support for learners depends on the claimant of the training. It can be expressed in different forms – exemption of tuition fees (acquiring secondary education in the state system is free) or loans, subsidies, stipends.

Persons over 18 years of age undergoing full-time training at the secondary and the secondary special schools are entitled to receive monthly benefits according to the for Rules for Implementation of the Social Benefits Act.

In adult education to financial support is available mostly to the unemployed – during their training in different courses they receive social benefits and health insurance payment is made.

Occupational training of unemployed people organised by the Labour Bureaus and financed by Professional Qualification and Unemployment Fund is done pursuant to the Employment Promotion Act, the Regulations on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Act and in accordance with the established principles of:

- choosing the most appropriate licensed educating establishment through secret bidding for conducting the particular education;
- establishing contractual relations between the subjects participating in the organisation, funding and conduction of education;
- exercising control on the compliance with the methodological requirements and the terms of organisation and funding of the training.

Labour Bureaus organise and finance occupational training with resources from the Professional Qualification and Unemployment Fund whenever there is a written request from the employer for hiring all who completed the course with a contract of employment for not less than 9 months. Such training may be organised and financed without preliminary request (available job position) for occupations

endorsed by the National Council of Occupational Training on the motion of the regional employment agencies in accordance with the social partners.

For employees tuition costs may be covered and financial support may be provided on the initiative of employers if they can afford it /but employers are not obliged by law to do it/. In conducting practical training at enterprises the branch trade unions defend the learners' interests in front of the employers on issues concerning their labour and insurance relations.

Generally, the main sources of adult education funding are:

- state and municipal budgets;
- Professional Qualification and Unemployment Fund;
- Household budgets;
- Internal corporate funds for occupational training;
- External sources.

Funds resources are replenished on the tax principle – from the social security payments and tax levies and are paid for usually by the employers and socially insured in a pre-set proportion. The resourced of the fund are allocated of the principal of bidding between different institutions, which compete to provide training of unemployed financed by the fund.

Two approaches can be outlined in the funding mechanism of education and occupational training – centralised and decentralised. The advantages of the first one are that it can influence the manner of resource allocation and conduct target oriented occupational qualification policy on national level, which is in conformity with the current needs of the labour market. While the second approach (formation of internal cooperative funds for education and occupational training) is usually directed to narrower occupational training and specialisation of highly qualified workers in the company and is not always coordinated with the structure of unemployment, i.e. a mobile work force (just for the needs of particular company or corporation) is prepared. Most often the internal corporate funds are the sources of funding of training of workers hired by the company.

7.10. Main Areas of Specialisation

There is a wide range of areas of specialisation and levels of competencies provided by the training offered in different forms of adult education. They can be grouped in the following way:

- Specialisation in a certain professional field and acquisition of a degree of professional qualification, affirmed by the National Branch Classification. According to the levels of training four degrees of professional qualification can be acquired, requiring different level of competency and giving the right to take on the respective positions – in case of availability of unoccupied places this kind of training provides direct access to the labour market. A degree of professional qualification can be acquired both by persons who have already completed their secondary education and by persons who complete their secondary education simultaneously with the professional qualification.
- Schooling leading to completion of an educational degree (basic, secondary education) – it concerns persons who have prematurely dropped out of the education system. They can acquire general secondary or secondary vocational education.
- Vocational training of unemployed persons, aimed at facilitating their realization at the labour market. This kind of training is provided in professional fields in which there are available job positions and there are contracts with employers.
- Training of employees in different areas – for acquiring higher level of professional qualification, for specialisation in a certain area, retraining for changing the qualification, improving their knowledge of foreign languages and ICT are considered a priority task in adult education. Foreign language competence is a crucial element of “lifelong learning” because it

stimulates the interest in knowing other cultures, and overcoming language barriers. Within the context of “free movement of people and services” acquisition of vocational knowledge and skills should be done parallel to excellent foreign language teaching, which is achieved with Vocational Education and Training Act. Foreign language teaching and computer training are widely implemented in the education of all categories of adults, involved in some kind of training – those completing an educational degree or a degree of professional qualification, employees and unemployed, irrespective of their level of education and qualification. The number of people of different age who attend such courses on their own will have increased considerably.

- Training and provision of employment to adult immigrants – they are entitled to this if they have attained a work permit from the National Employment Service, in case there are no other provisions in intergovernmental agreements. Permit is not required from foreigners permanently residing in the Republic of Bulgaria. Labour and insurance relations, including foreign citizens’ right of education are regulated by Bulgarian legislation. For foreign citizens who are trained in Bulgaria preliminary and parallel instruction in the Bulgarian language is also planned.

In adult education within the institutional education system the following degrees of vocational degrees can be acquired:

- First degree – profession involving routine operations done in unchanging conditions;
- Second degree – professions involving routine operations of complex character done in changing conditions;
- Third degree – professions involving operations of complex character done in changing conditions as well as taking responsibilities for the work of third parties;
- Fourth degree – professions involving a broad range of operations of complex character done in changing conditions as well as taking responsibility for the work of third parties and resources allocation.

Programmes in which adults are trained are as follows:

- Programmes A for initial vocational training for awarding *first-degree* qualification. These programmes last up to 1 year and are about people who have completed at least 6-grade;
- Programmes B for initial vocational training for awarding *second degree* qualification. These programmes last 1 year and are about people who have completed secondary education;
- Programmes C for vocational education for awarding *second or third degree* vocational qualification. These programmes last 4 or 5 years and are about people who have completed secondary education;
- Programmes D for vocational education for awarding *fourth degree vocational qualification*. These programmes last up to 2 years and are about people who have completed secondary education;
- Programmes E for continuing vocational training for acquiring qualification in certain elements of a profession. These programmes’ duration is stipulated with specific documents related to vocational education;
- Programmes F for continuing vocational training for updating or expansion of the acquired qualifications well as for awarding first, second, third degree of vocational qualification. The duration of these programmes is stipulated with specific documents related to vocational education.

Class periods according to degrees are as follows:

- First degree – minimum 300 class periods
 - Second degree – minimum 660 class periods;
 - Third degree – minimum 960 class periods.
- At least 50 per cent of the class periods are designated for practical training.

7.11. Teaching Methods

In adult education within the framework of the institutional education system leading to the acquisition of an educational degree and/or a degree of professional qualification the teaching methods are identical with the ones used at the respective level of school education (see sections **4.11.** and **5.14.**). At vocational schools the teaching methods are specific to the subject taught. In specialised subjects, foreign language teaching and computer instruction classes are divided into small groups – 5-11 learners according to the subject. The teacher is free to some extent to apply methods in accordance with the predominant level of learners – for example to choose more explanatory methods or methods provoking creative thinking.

In adult education, in accordance with learners' level of education and qualification, there is a wide application of modern methods, such as dialogue methods of teaching, training seminars, project drafting, brainstorming, situational methods for generating alternative solutions, businesslike games, role play, different kinds of training – behaviour training, functional training, autogenic training. In short, there has been an increase in the application of interactive methods which activate trainees and lead to better results.

In continuing professional development (CPD), which includes mainly employees some other forms and methods of training are also used:

planned periods of training, briefings or practical training by using the common methods of work directly on the spot or in the working environment; self-education or education on distant courses; attending conferences, lectures, seminars, etc. aimed at refreshing and elaborating on workers' knowledge.

Adult education, like the whole of the educational system, has been invaded by ICT in the past couple of years. The registered lagging behind of Bulgaria in this sphere brought about quick measures to implement ICT in education on a wide basis. There are special measures offered to adult training – apart from the training courses for gaining basic computer literacy on part of mass groups of the population ICT is being used in the presentation of study material, practice and knowledge control.

In 2005 a National Strategy and Action Plan for the implementation of ICT in all Bulgarian schools was accepted. The basic aims and trends in the Strategy are as follows:

- Training of teachers in using ICT, development of teaching skills based on ICT
- Development of European educational services and software
- Quick construction of a unified network serving school, teachers, learners
- Using ICT for in-service training and re-qualification in answer to changed personal needs and changed requirements for education and training brought about by the current situation
- Training oriented towards a higher qualification degree allowing one to take up a more demanding position
- Better cooperation among all concerned parties - teachers, professional organisations, institutions determining the policy with regard to ICT in education on a local, regional, national and international levels
- Equipping schools with computers and internet connection. Reaching a ratio of 12/1 (students/computer) in 2007
- Inclusion of ICT in study programmes and programmes for teacher training
- Changes in the study material and organization of education.

The necessity for ICT training to develop as a means of facilitating LLL in relation to distance education (provided via the internet, email and so on) has been identified.

There are such examples of good practice but they are still not very common. There are certain problems with distance education – for instance, assessment, certification, access to the service by large parts of the population).

Certain vocational schools have tried to implement a modular type of education but this is still far from being common practice.

7.12. Trainers

In the requirements for teachers' training regulated by legislation (chapter 8) no special training is envisaged for acquiring skills for adult teaching. In spite of this, some higher schools providing training to teachers offer in their curricula compulsory and optional courses, connected with learning the methodology and the specific requirements for adult education. Similar specialisations and Masters programmes are also offered. All persons who satisfy the requirements for taking on a teacher's position in a certain subject or professional field (having acquired a certain higher education degree and the professional qualification of "teacher") have the right to teach adults. Teachers at higher schools also have this right. Foreigners' training is performed by full-time and part-time teachers with higher education degree in Bulgarian philology. In adult education outside the institutional education system, lecturers-specialists in the respective field who are not teachers can also be invited to teach.

Trainers teaching adults participate in various forms of postgraduate qualification courses, according to the specific features of the subjects they teach.

We can identify the problem of the majority of teachers still not being specially trained to teach adults. According to the State Educational Requirements for acquiring a teacher's position Andragogy is not a compulsory subject. That is why the training offered to adults by state schools follows the curriculum, syllabus and methodology aimed at young people without taking into account the specific features of adult learners.

Besides, teacher training courses provided by the universities do not include subjects connected with continuing professional training or adult learning. Additionally, teachers can take up courses to improve their qualification during leaves and they have to pay for that themselves. This situation is counter-motivating for teachers to take part in continuing professional training so that can pass the idea of continuing professional training or LLL on to their students, both young and old.

As far as adult vocational training is concerned, knowledge of the latest developments in industry is extremely important. There are some problems in this sphere as well. Since the relation between schools and enterprises has continually been broken by the process of privatization, it is very often the case that teachers are not conversant with the changes in work places, which makes the gap between labour market needs and school training and continuing professional training even bigger. Practices for teachers at workplaces could help overcome this problem.

7.13. Learner Assessment/ Progression

In adult education within the framework of the institutional education system leading to acquiring an educational degree and/or a degree of professional qualification, the assessment of knowledge, the methods used and the way of progression to the next grade are implemented in accordance with the

legislative regulations concerning the general secondary and secondary vocational education (see sections **5.15.** and **5.16.**).

There are differences in the levels of requirements, resulting from the implemented syllabi and curricula, in which the number of school hours in most cases is half the number of school hours that pupils at the respective kind of school and at the respective level of education have (see the curriculum for evening form of instruction in section **5.13.**). This is done in order to facilitate learners because most of them study and work at the same time, and training is arranged mainly in evening and extra-mural forms of study. In the assessment of achievements the specific characteristics of curricula are taken into consideration.

In the case when for some reason learners interrupt their study for a certain period of time, they have the right to continue their education in a higher grade, if their mark is fair (3) minimum in all subjects taught in the previous grade. If there has been a change in the curricula, equating exams should be passed. The system is built in such a way that it enables persons who have dropped out of the education system to resume their study at their own will and in keeping with the respective regulations. Since the syllabi and curricula are constructed in the same way as those for the respective kind of school, but with a reduced number of school hours, learners have the option to choose among compulsory-elective subjects and elective subjects, according to the type of school and the studied professional field. The credit system of assessment is used in the field of higher education (chapter 6).

In various adult courses outside the institutional education system, leading to the issuance of a certificate (for foreign language competency, computer literacy etc), assessment is carried out both during the process of teaching and at the completion of the course, mostly through tests, and the number of points received is equated to the six point marking system. Those who have successfully completed a certain level, can progress to the next one.

In certain forms of adult education which do not lead to acquiring a specific qualification (for example training seminars etc.) assessment is not carried out and those who have completed the training are awarded a document certifying their participation.

7.14. Certification

Adult education leading to the acquisition of an educational degree and/or a degree of professional qualification can be completed by:

- state matriculation exams for completion of secondary education pursuant to the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act and the Public Education Act (these are not compulsory yet, as explained in chapter 5);
- state exams for acquisition of vocational qualification – theory of the profession and practice of the profession;

Vocational training is completed by:

- taking state exams for acquisition of vocational qualification – theory of the profession and practice of the profession;
- taking exams for acquisition of vocational qualification;

The organisation of the exams after completing the programmes for vocational training for awarding first, second, third and fourth degree of vocational qualification is specified according to the state

educational requirements for the system of assessment for acquisition of vocational qualification in a given profession.

The organisation and the content of the programmes for acquisition of qualification in certain elements of the profession as well as for updating and expanding the acquired vocational qualification are specified by the educating establishment after coordination with the representatives of the employers and workers.

The bodies of the examination commissions include representatives of the educating establishment, the employers, workers and employees.

Completed vocational education is certified with:

- diploma for completed secondary education;
- certificate of vocational qualification;
- certificate of legal capacity issued for the practice of professions, which requires it.
- completed vocational education with acquiring vocational qualification degree is certified with:
- certificate of basic education or a document for completed grade of the basic or secondary school
- certificate of vocational qualification;
- legal capacity to practice professions, which requires it.

Certificate of vocational training is issued for acquisition of vocational qualification in certain elements of the profession, for update or expansion of acquired occupational training. The content of the documents is stipulated in accordance with the state educational requirements for documents within the system of public education and for acquisition of vocational qualification.

Schools within the system of vocational education where adult education is conducted as well as the centres of vocational training have the right to issue documents for vocational qualification.

The school leaving documents concerning schools leading to completing an educational degree (general or vocational) – these are Primary school certificates, Secondary school Diploma, Vocational qualification and/or legal capacity certificates. These documents are recognised nationally and give the right to practice a job requiring the respective level of qualification as well as the right to continue one's education into a higher level of education.

The finishing of all training forms acknowledged by the National Employment Agency are certified by a nationally recognised document.

There has been some progress in the sphere of various training forms carried out by different institutions and which do not lead to finishing a level of education in the sense that their documents have started being recognised. This is related to the licencing procedures which leads to the issuing of nationally recognised documents and which guarantee quality services due to the fact that they are issued by licenced suppliers. For example, on the arena of foreign language services offered by private suppliers OPTIMA a national branch of the international organization for quality language services licence private language schools after an inspection, which in turn is written down in the issued certificates for acquiring a respective foreign

However, a great part of the adult training forms (carried out by private and non-governmental organisations) is not related to issuing an officially recognized certificate.

Sometimes, there are discrepancies between the types of courses which have been licenced by NAVET and the ones offered in practice (usually these are short-term courses seeking to meet concrete needs of the labour market). Some of the adult training courses supplied especially by private sector suppliers are characterized by varied and unstable quality of training.

7.15. Education/Employment Links

In most forms of adult training there is a direct link between the system of adult education and employment. It is manifested in the following ways:

- through the legislative framework and state institutions (the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Employment Agency etc – for details see the introduction to chapter 7 and section 7.3.);
- through the existence of close co-operation between the institutions dealing with adult education and employers;
- through the Labour Bureaus – different training courses are in compliance with the available job positions and the demand of the labour market, agreements with employers are signed for providing employment to unemployed persons who have undergone certain kind of training. The unemployed are obliged to attend courses and take on the position offered, in case that it corresponds to their level of education and qualification;
- through intensive practical instruction and vocational training of adults and establishing a contact with manufacturing enterprises which are in a position to employ part of the trainees. Schools also sign contracts for conducting practical training;
- in the training of unemployed persons and employees, when the claimant is a certain employer, and it is aimed at future provision of specialists and at enhancing the competencies of available specialists in certain fields – the employer is obliged by a contract to ensure certain law-regulated conditions for training, and provide appropriate employment after the end of the course. Upon completion of the training for taking on a specific job position, performing particular activity or additional training, a vocational training certificate is issued, valid only for the employer who requested the training.
- in adult education, in which adults participate solely at their own wish (without the existence of agreements for employment) - in most cases foreign language instruction or computer training – training is not directly linked to the labour market but leads to higher mobility, enhances the chances for finding a job or appointment at a job position requiring higher competencies.

Employers' associations have an extremely important role in creating a dialogue between the educating community and enterprises. In the field of vocational training this role is directed to:

- competitiveness;
- capacity for innovation;
- entrepreneurship;
- workers' motivation for development;
- policy on employment.

Participation of employers' associations at regional and separate industry's level is expressed in:

- the joint definition of the functional and occupational training profiles;
- quality assurance through unified criteria for assessment and certification;
- information assurance of the labour market for pupils and schools aiming at a more flexible approach to the needs of education.

Employers' associations at local level encourage the practical dialogue between the enterprises and schools for:

- teacher's information /training;
- practical training as educators;
- giving study material and using school facilities.

The educator (mentor) appointed by the enterprise has a crucial role in on the spot training. The requirements and obligations of the mentor are preliminary agreed between the educating establishments.

With a view to enhancing the quality of adult education and linking it to employment, the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training deals with the policy of open social dialogue with the following partners:

Ministry of Education and Science – approves the national educational standards for acquiring vocational qualification. It endorses a list of occupations for vocational education and training. It also endorses the programmes for qualifications within the system of vocational education and training, etc.;

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – analyses the trends in labour market development and involvement of vocational education and training with the policy of employment, integration and re-integration of work force on the labour market. It participates in the development, coordination and update of national educational standards for acquiring vocational qualification;

Ministry of Health – specifies the chronic diseases and physical disabilities, which are counter-indicative to vocational education and training, specifies the requirements for healthy conditions during the practical vocational training and the hygiene and physiological requirements for weekly class schedules, etc.;

Separate industry's ministries – they participate in the development, coordination and update of the national educational standards for acquiring vocational qualification. It participates in the gathering of up-to-date information about the basic characteristics of particular professions, etc.;

Municipalities – participate in the policy making in the area of vocational education and training on their territories with respect to the need of qualified staff, vocational orientation of unemployed and other persons;

Employers' Association (Bulgarian Industrial Association, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Union for Economic Initiative of Citizens, Bulgarian Union of Private Entrepreneurs "Vazrazhdane") – participate in the development, update and coordination of the List of occupations for vocational education and training. It makes motion for changes in the register in order to satisfy the need for qualified work force, market competitiveness. It participates in the development, coordination and update of the state educational requirements for acquiring vocational qualification. It participates in the organization and administration of exams on acquisition of vocational qualification and suggests representatives for participation in the examination commissions. It appoints representatives to the managing board and the experts' commissions at the National Agency of Vocational Education;

Organisation of workers and employees at a national level – participates in the update of the state educational requirements for acquiring vocational qualification. It participates in the development, update and coordination of the List of occupations for vocational education and training. Appoint representatives to the managing board and the experts' commissions at the National Agency of Vocational Education; Trade Unions (Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria, "Podkrepa" Confederation of Labour, Association of Democratic Trade Unions, "Edinstvo" National Trade Union and the Central Branch of Industrial Sectors' Trade Union in Bulgaria) – they protect the interest of learners related to their labour and social security relations before their employers during the course of the practical training in enterprises. They participate in the organisation and administering of exams on the acquisition of vocational qualification and suggest representatives for participation in the examination commissions. They appoint representatives to the managing board and the experts' commissions at the National Agency for Vocational Education.

7.16. Private Education

The institutions entitled to provide vocational training to adults and give an opportunity for acquiring an educational degree and a degree of professional qualification (vocational schools, vocational upper secondary schools, vocational colleges, centres for vocational training, centres for information and professional guidance) can be state, municipal and private, Bulgarian, with foreign participation and foreign. For the past few years there has been an increase in the number of licensed private institutions having the right to issue certificates recognized by the state.

The activity of private institutions for adult education is subject to state control. The institution entitled to license activities in the system of vocational education and training (encompassing both the education of pupils and adults), to issue and take away licenses is the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training.

Only state and municipal institutions receive subsidies by the state. Private institutions are funded through their own incomes, tuition fees, sponsorship, donations, wills, funds from national and international programmes and projects, contracts for training with state and private institutions, other natural persons or legal entities.

Outside the institutional education system there are private organisations offering adult training and having the right to issue state-recognized certificates only if licensed through the proper channels.

7.17. Statistics

There is still no unified system of statistical data on adult education. However, there is reliable statistics in the following areas:

- licensed centres of vocational training, registered by the National Agency of Vocational Education
- statistics concerning types of schools leading to completion of an educational degree and/or professional qualification as well as their number of students and tutors;
- statistics concerning training at enterprises and Labour Bureaus.

Licensed centres

The total number of centres licensed by NAVET is 317 as at March 2006.

Types of schools and number of students

There are no separate data on the types of adult trainees. The data presented below concerns the types of schools which can train adults towards acquiring an educational degree and/or professional qualification.

Information about educational institutions and students according to the standard classification of education (ised-97)

	2003/04	2004/05
Upper secondary schools (9 th – 13 th) (including institutions offering evening classes)	165	167
Vocational upper secondary schools	457	459
Vocational colleges after secondary education	13	17
Vocational schools not leading to graduation of secondary education	7	5
Independent colleges	9	10
Colleges at universities and specialised higher institutions	41	40
Universities and specialised higher institutions	42	43

Enrolled adult students distributed in levels according to the international standard educational classification

	2005/06
Vocational training for adults - First degree of professional qualification (ISCED-2C)	4 776
Vocational training for adults - Second degree of professional qualification (ISCED-3C)	4 006
Vocational training for adults - Third and fourth degree of professional qualification (ISCED-4C)	1 897
Private education	
Vocational training for adults - First degree of professional qualification (ISCED-2C)	3 733
Vocational training for adults - Second degree of professional qualification (ISCED-3C)	3 604
Vocational training for adults - Third and fourth degree of professional qualification (ISCED-4C)	1 112

There is still no unified system of statistical data concerning adult education. However, there are reliable statistical data in the following areas:

Licensed centres for adult education listed in the NAVET register;

Statistical data concerning the types of schools leading to obtaining an educational degree and/or professional qualification as well as the number of their students and lecturers;

Data concerning the training offered by enterprises and Labour Bureaus.

OTHER DATA

There are other data (from the National Employment Agency) concerning those who have passed successfully their qualification and motivational training distributed in degrees of education and age groups. They are presented in the table below.

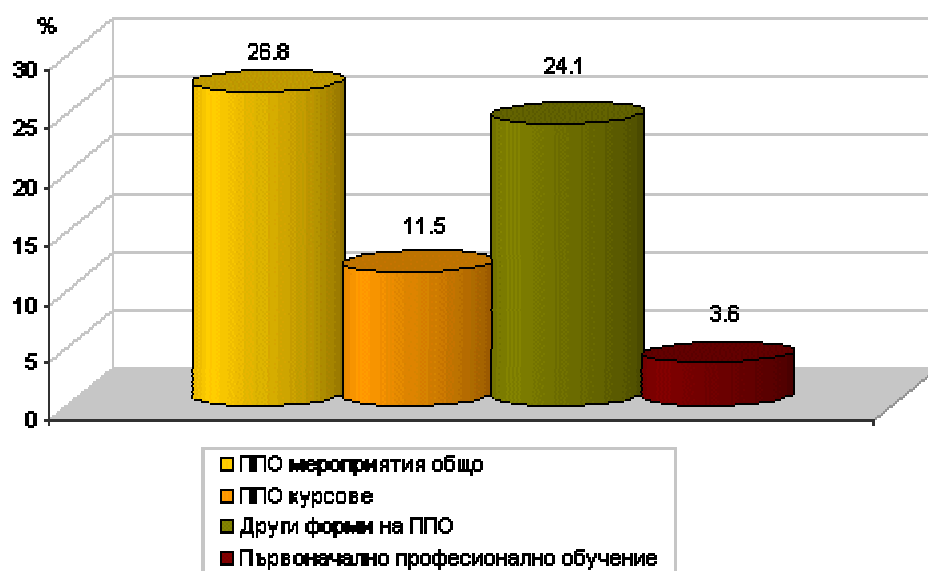


Fig. 1. Enterprises offering different types of vocational training in 2004

Yellow: Continuing professional training in total

Orange: Continuing professional training courses

Green: Other forms of Continuing professional training

Red: Initial vocational training

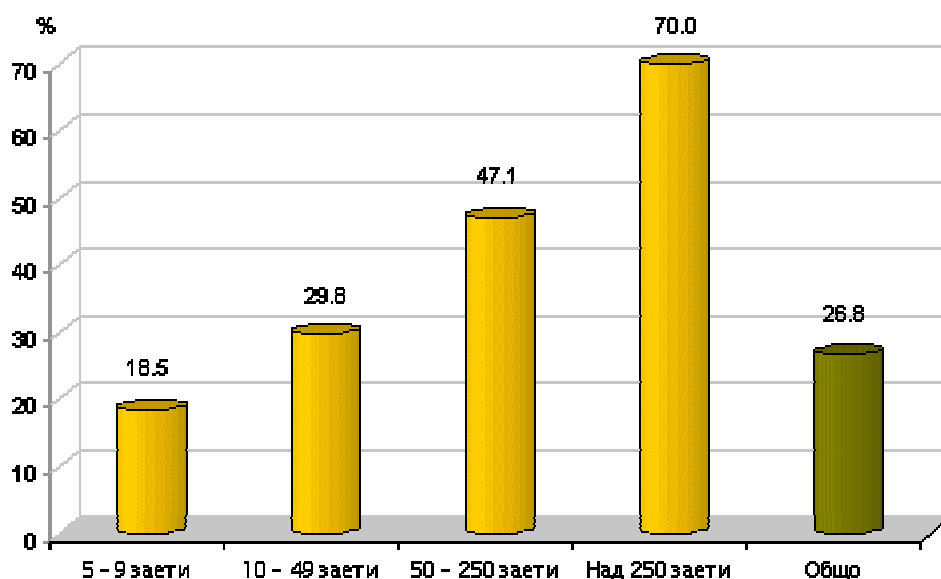


Fig. 2. Enterprises offering training in 2004 distributed in groups of enterprises according to the number of their employees

5 – 9 employed 10 – 49 employed 50 – 250 employed Over 250 employed Total

Distribution of Continuing Professional Training courses across areas of training

Areas of training	Number	Relative share - %
Foreign languages	1 777	6.0
Sales and marketing	4 168	8.7
Accounting and finances	5 534	11.5
Management (including human resource and quality) and administration	4 721	9.8
Work in offices	838	1.7
Personal qualities and labour life	3 055	6.4
Computer use	4 771	9.9
Training in design, use and maintenance of ICT	1 001	2.1
Technology and production	8 846	18.4
Protection of employees' environment, health and security	4 584	9.5
Services (personal, transportation, travel and tourism)	651	1.4
Other subjects of training	8 145	16.9

The development of a unified system of statistical data concerning the sphere of CPT is pending. In its turn, it is believed to effective decision making as far as adult training and education are concerned.

8. Teachers and Education Staff

The initial training and qualification training of teachers is carried out in the framework of higher education. An important advantage is the rising educational level of Bulgarian teachers and education staff – of the total number of the pedagogical staff of all schools in the country for the past years the majority of people have a higher education degree and there are very few teachers with secondary education only. Teacher training is carried out within the system of higher education – at universities and specialised higher education institutions. Teachers working in the system of school education (grades 1-12), teachers in pre-primary education and tutors have to hold a Bachelor's degree, and holding a Master's degree is considered an advantage. The accepted common state requirements for acquiring a teacher's professional qualification are aimed at enhancing the quality and updating the initial training of teachers.

The information on pre-primary teachers and tutors in the following sections related to their initial and in-service training, payment, etc. does not differ from that about school teachers, since they have the same status. Teachers at kindergartens and tutors are trained in the system of higher education and receive a Bachelor's or Master's degree, and requirements for holding the position of teacher or tutor are determined by common state requirements. Their payment and rights are equal to those of school teachers.

As a positive development we can mention the fact that the norms for compulsory teaching activity remain lower than in some other countries (from 648 to 720 hours) which is favourable in terms of the opportunities for self-preparation, qualification and professional growth of teachers.

8.1. Initial Training of Teachers

Teacher's qualification is acquired through the relevant bachelor or master university programmes. Several Bulgarian higher education institutions offer four-year bachelor and five-year master programmes. Before the enforcement of the present Higher Education Act in 1995, there were also pre-university schools that offered teacher's training outside the universities. The largest part of these pre-university schools were transformed into colleges and presently offer training programmes for the educational degree of a specialist.

The legal requirements for acquiring teacher's qualification were approved in 1997. (Official Gazette, issue 34, April 24, 1997).

University diploma is obtained after successfully passed theoretical and practical final exams. The practical exams consist of presentation and defence of a lesson or exercise, prepared by the student, before a panel of the State Examination Commission.

The final qualifications are as follows: bachelor or master degree or specialist degree, as well as a certificate for the professional qualification of a teacher.

Teacher qualification may be acquired after graduating university in any speciality and after successful additional exams in pedagogy, psychology and education methodology.

Teachers at special schools are trained in a defectology programme or undergo additional qualification in this field, specializing according to the category of pupils with special educational needs that they are going to work with (speech therapists, surdopedagogues etc.).

Sports and arts teachers are specialists in the respective sport or art who simultaneously acquire capacity for teaching.

Teachers at pre-primary and primary level of education are trained in the respective programmes of the departments of pre-primary and primary education, while all other teachers complete the respective degree of higher education in a particular speciality and acquire capacity for teaching.

The minimum educational level required for the occupation of the job of a 'teacher' or 'tutor' is a Bachelor degree. There are many teachers working in kinder gardens or schools (I - XII grade) who hold a master's degree. There such who hold a doctoral degree as well. This reflects the tendency of over-satiating the labour market with pedagogical staff under the conditions of relatively lower demand, which increases competition. Most often, people holding a doctoral degree become school teachers because they cannot find a workplace at a tertiary education institution, research institutes or the managerial bodies of the system of education. At present, the preparation of students in Bulgaria is not closely interrelated with the labour market demands for specialists from the different areas; the higher educational degree as well as having a doctoral degree is regarded as an advantage when seeking a more prestigious job.

8.1.1. Historical Overview

Until the early 19th century, teachers at the church and monastery schools were mainly clerics, secular teachers were more of an exception. The first secular teachers, called Hellenist teachers, appeared in the first decade of the 19th century and they founded the first Hellenist-Bulgarian secular schools, similar to secondary schools. Most of these teachers were trained and educated at renowned Greek schools and freely used modern and ancient Greek literature. They created textbooks and raised the education to contemporary level.

In mid-19th century, a network of secular intereducational schools was established and the group of the elementary school teachers started to form. These elementary school teachers had no special training, as they were older students that had passed the first grades - a common practice in the countries of the region at the time. Most of the graduates of the elite intereducational schools (like those in Gabrovo, Shumen etc.) who had successfully learned the subjects, methods, methodology and the techniques of the intereducational teaching, became primary school teachers. These teachers were usually trained in the last grades of the secondary schools and at the preparatory school of Neophyte Rilski. The educational and professional training of the primary school teachers was diverse – most of them had attended Greek or Hellenist - Bulgarian schools, others attended Romanian or Greek schools in Bucharest.

In the beginning of 1840s, a new type of class schools appeared, mostly for general education, humanitarian and nature and science disciplines. The new professional group of the class teachers also formed and they quickly replaced the Hellenist teachers. These class teachers were trained in more developed countries like Greece, Serbia, Moravia, Austria, Italy, the USA or in Constantinople and had different training, depending on the school they attended.

It was in this period when the profession of the teacher was established like a separate occupation. In the mid-19th century, "teacher" and "school" replaced the Greek words "daskal" and "shkolo".

Primary education became compulsory after the re-establishment of the Bulgarian independent state in 1878-79 under the Provisional By-laws of Public Schools. A state-run educational system was

established over a short period and a series of laws were passed to regulate its functioning. Primary education was confirmed compulsory and free of charge under the Education Act of 1921. The system of vocational education also developed successfully. This required an increased number of teachers and improvements in their training as well as regulations for their professional education. As early as the 1880s, primary school teachers were required to have qualification certificates, which could be obtained after successful exams on the subject taught and on pedagogic theory and practices. Under the National Education Act of 1892, unqualified teachers were appointed only temporarily and were obliged to pass exams in short terms. All teachers were obliged to attend the seminars called by the regional education inspectors and the pedagogic courses, held by the National Education Directorate.

According to their experience and assessment marks, teachers were divided into first grade, second grade and third grade teachers. First grade teachers were those who had full pedagogic or other education, had successfully passed final exams and had five years of experience as second grade teachers. Second grade teachers were those who had five years as third grade teachers, and third grade teachers were beginners that had graduated pedagogic school and had passed the final exams. Secondary school teachers were required to pass additional courses and exams. Any university graduate could be appointed a high school teacher.

After September 9, 1944, elementary and primary school teachers were trained at the pre-university institutes and secondary school teachers were trained in universities only. After the 1970s, the number of the university trained teachers in schools and kindergartens increased, and after the opening of speciality Elementary and Pre-school Pedagogy the number of elementary school teachers and kindergarten teachers rose sharply. Currently, 62,998 Bulgarian teachers are university graduates, 13,151 are trained at pre-university schools or colleges and 48% of all teachers have special qualification degree or specialisation.

8.1.2. Ongoing Debates

With the latest amendments of the Higher Education Act from 2004 and 2005 in the coming years there will be changes in the training of teachers, directed mainly to enhancing the quality and unifying the standards with those of other European countries – a system for transfer and accumulation of credits is being introduced in order to provide students with the option to choose subjects, work independently and have higher mobility.

The need for further actions for updating teachers' training and boosting its practical orientation is recognized. It is necessary to introduce on wider scale teachers' training for acquiring skills to use effectively information and communication technologies which are being introduced on a large scale to the school and the management system of education.

As far the teaching profession is concerned, a number of questions related to the qualification, improving teachers' social status, evaluation of teaching etc. are currently under discussion.

8.1.3. Specific Legislative Framework

The requirements towards teachers' education and training are regulated by the education regulation. Under the Higher Education Act, a Regulation on Unified State Requirements for Obtaining Professional Qualification of Teacher was issued, which defines the conditions, the order and the minimum educational level for teachers and the criteria for their assessment.

The National Education Act, the Regulation for its implementation and the Instruction for Appointment of Teachers and Educators regulate the terms and conditions for appointing pedagogic personnel (see section **8.1.6.**).

8.1.4. Institutions, Level and Models of Training

Teachers receive initial training at universities, under the provisions of the Higher Education Act and the regulations of the universities.

Professional teacher's qualification is acquired at universities and other higher education schools that comply with the Higher Education Act. Teacher education and training there are conducted according to the legal requirements for acquiring teacher's qualification.

Teacher's professional qualification can be obtained:

- (concurrent) Simultaneously with the preparation for acquiring the relevant educational and qualification degrees by the students in accordance with the state requirements for the relevant speciality and the requirements for acquiring the professional qualification of a teacher. For the students from the specialities of the professional directions Pedagogy and Pedagogy of Training, it is acquired in accordance with the state requirements for these directions and specialities.
- (consecutive) After graduating the major speciality – immediately following graduation or after some time those who are willing can enroll in such a qualification course – frequently these are specialists in other fields who are willing to teach but have not acquired teacher's qualification.

The education includes a unified educational minimum of theoretical and practical training in case of regular education and 40 percent of it in case of part-time education.

Applicants for a teacher's position should have bachelor or master university degree diploma and a certificate for awarded secondary high school professional qualification of a teacher. A higher educational degree and the availability of acquired qualification level are advantages for the teacher's candidate when employing him/her.

If no qualified applicants for the position are available and an under-qualified person as far as the education and teacher's qualification are concerned, is appointed, his/her salary is specified at a percentage of the starting salary of a qualified teacher of higher education.

After going through the compulsory practical training (see section **8.1.6.**) passing the integrated practical and applied state exam and being awarded the respective higher education diploma (see section **8.1.7.**), graduates can directly be appointed as qualified teachers.

8.1.5. Admission Requirements

University graduates acquire the qualification of a teacher in higher schools after graduation – the candidates are admitted to these courses without entry exams and against payment of a fee.

When the professional qualification of a teacher is acquired simultaneously with the preparation for a specific educational and qualification degree, the general terms for enrolling in a higher school are applied. To enrol a higher school, candidates must successfully pass entrance exams. Each higher

school decides on the number and the type of these exams, which are closely related to their educational specialisations, autonomously.

The requirements for enrolment, depending on the type of higher school and the subject, which the candidate has chosen, include entry exams (one or more), tests (varying in volume and structure for the different higher schools) and require a high school diploma. The autonomy of the higher educational institutions in Bulgaria allows them to define the terms of entry independently and to change these terms every year. The enrolment procedure is valid for a period of one year and is published in the guidebook of the higher school. The qualification of a teacher shall be acquired within the frames of education by taking additional exams, and the education includes a unified educational minimum.

The students candidates for the specialities of Pedagogy and Pedagogy in... are enrolled after a successful examination and graduate the relevant degree of higher education with the professional qualification of a teacher in compliance with the state requirements for these specialities.

The Council of Ministers defines the number of vacancies for student teachers annually. The detailed plan for vacancies in specialities, forms of education and categories (men and women) is approved by the Rector of the relevant higher school.

Prospective students are assessed by their entrance exams results in descending order depending on their preferences for specialty and form (regular and correspondence) and according to the announced vacancies for specialities, forms of education and categories (men and women).

In case the candidate has sufficient grade, the candidate is ranked in the list of state order and does not pay training fee. Successful candidates that do not reach the minimum entry exams results may enlist as paying students, if there are still vacancies offered by the school. In the course of their education and within their respective specialties, other students also may acquire a teacher's qualification, if desired. Except the students from the pedagogic specialities, which graduate with a pedagogical qualification, in the case of the other specialities, students choose it when they want to work as teachers after graduation.

Universities and other higher education institutions organise course for acquiring additional qualification of a "teacher" and "teacher in..." that pay the costs for their training.

8.1.6. Curriculum, Special Skills, Specialisation

The basic job description for a teacher requires candidates to have:

Scientific education and training on the subjects taught:

- Comprehensive knowledge of the required academic level of the subjects to teach;
- Sustainable level of specialised scientific training and education for the relevant subject he/she is teaching by the moment of appointment and in the course of work, maintained through following the novelties in the subject;
- Comprehensive knowledge of the applied and technological aspects of science to which the subject to be taught belong;

Pedagogic and methods training:

- Ability to identify the level, competence, specifics and preferences in the style of learning of a given audience and of the individual students;
- Ability to identify educational and instructive needs;
- Ability to define in observable and measurable form the educational goals with variable degree of commonness (at the level of syllabus, subject section or single lesson);

- Mastering of different methods to plan the educational process and to prepare different educational material and ability to make connections between the goals of the educational process and the results achieved;
- Comprehensive knowledge on educational strategies, methods and practices for teaching, training, studying and motivating students;
- Ability to assess the quality and the appropriateness of the educational and teaching aids, developed to meet different educational needs;
- Mastering of various forms and tools of control and assessment of the achievements pupils and of the results of the education;

The training for acquiring the professional qualification of a teacher is both theoretical and practical.

The theoretical education of teachers consists of compulsory, optional and extra subjects. The minimum number of compulsory subjects and the lessons horarium consists of :

- Pedagogy (theory of education and didactics) - 60 hours;
- Psychology (general course, adult psychology and pedagogical psychology) - 45 hours;
- audio-visual and information technologies in education – 15 hours;
- methods of education – 60 hours;

Lecturers of academic ranks in the relevant area lead all of the compulsory courses and at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of them must be employees of the higher school.

The optional subjects should have a horarium of at least 15 hours for each subject and, depending on the character of each speciality, are divided in two groups:

Group One: pedagogic, psychological and methodological specialities;

Group Two: interdisciplinary and applied and experimental subjects, related to the professional and pedagogical realisation of the teacher;

Students must select at least one or two subjects of each of the groups.

The practical training is carried out through the following forms of training with minimum horarium in lessons:

- Open classes – 30 hours;
- Current pedagogic practice – 45 hours;
- Pre-graduate pedagogic practice – 75 hours;

The open classes represent observation and analysis of lessons and other forms of education, under the immediate supervision of a professor from the higher school.

Current pedagogic practice consists of visits to schools, observation of lessons and other forms of education in preparation for the pre-graduate pedagogic practice;

Pre-graduation pedagogic practice consists of personal participation in the educational instructive process, under the supervision of a teacher and a professor from the high school.

Students must deliver personally between 10 and 22 lessons during the practice.

Higher schools arrange practices for students under a contract with state-run or municipal schools or kindergartens. Schoolteachers who participate in the student practice are paid additionally a percentage of the minimal monthly salary.

Various methods are applied in the course of training students for acquiring the professional qualification of teacher. During the theoretical courses, mainly lectures and dialogues are used as educational methods as well as various methods of self-training: analysis of literature sources, document research, development of topics and projects, etc.

During the practical courses, observation and analysis of lessons, under the supervision of a professor, are used, aiming at obtaining knowledge on the good pedagogic practices and on the process of running the lesson; during the pre-graduation pedagogic practice, students participate on their own in the education process, under the supervision of a school teacher.

Teaching capacity for the different levels of education is discussed in section **8.1.**

8.1.7. Evaluation, Certificates

During their education, students pass exams in all of the compulsory and optional subjects. The training for acquiring the professional qualification of a teacher ends with an integrated practical and applied state exam, which consists of a delivery and defence of a lesson developed by the student. The state exams are carried out in front of a state examination commission, whose members are appointed by an order of the higher school rector. The commission includes the teacher, who supervised the pre-graduation pedagogical practice.

The qualification of a teacher shall be attested by a certificate to the diploma for a graduated degree of higher education.

8.1.8. Alternative Training Pathways

Apart from the two main training paths (concurrent and consecutive), there is no alternative provision for acquiring teacher's qualification.

However, when there is urgent demand for teachers (as for example the demand for primary foreign language teachers at present), teachers in other subjects who already have a teacher's qualification, can undertake a qualification course in the subject for which there are not enough teachers (for example for mastering the methodology of the respective foreign language.)

8.2. Conditions of Service of Teachers

The teacher's job description is an especially important document specifying the working conditions and the duties of the teacher. Described are the functions of the teachers and their competence in the educational process and as a side in a labour contract. The job description is the basis of the teacher's contract and for the regulation of the labour relations between the teacher and his/her employer. According to the specifics of the school, the job description may include other functions and requirements, if they do not contradict any regulations.

Teacher's Job Description lays an emphasis on:

- The requirements to the teacher's special and scientific training;
- The requirements to the pedagogic training of the teacher;
- The functions and roles of the teacher, in connection with mastering and building knowledge, skills and relations of the given area/ subject;
- The functions and roles of the teacher, in connection with the forming of moral, social and personal knowledge, skills, relations and values of students, which have to be formed through training in all areas and subjects.

The specifics of the schoolteacher's profession, its complex and multifaceted nature reflect in the conditions, standards and the remuneration of teachers as well as in the requirements to the applicants, the rights and the obligations of teachers etc.

Teachers are obliged:

- To perform their duties according to the Labour Code, the regulations in the system of national education and their job descriptions;
- To fulfil the minimal horarium, according to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science;
- To perform the decisions of the Pedagogic Council as well as the recommendations of the Regional Inspectorate on Education and of the Ministry of Education and Science;
- To protect the health and the life of the students and children during the education process and in other activities, organised by him/her, in the school or in the kindergarten;
- To improve their professional qualifications.

The norms for mandatory teaching refer to the pedagogic staff and are observed in compliance with the working hours provisions of the Labour Code, and is measured in school hours. The minimum annual horarium of a teacher depends on his/her qualification degree and on the subject and varies between 648 and 720 school hours per school year. The horaria for the different teachers are given in detail in section **8.2.12.**

The minimum horarium of teachers in kindergartens, of educators and pedagogic advisers is calculated in astronomic hours.

On national level, the issues related to the working conditions of teachers are from the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science - Management and Regulation of Labour in the System of Education and Science Directorate. The Directorate's most important functions, related to the pedagogical staff in the field of secondary education, are:

- Participates in the development of regulations for human resources and employment management in the education system, harmonised with the EU standards;
- Participates in the preparation of EU-harmonised regulations on the labour issues in the education system (social and labour legislature, income policy, social partnership, collective labour agreements, pension funding);
- Organises the development and co-ordinates the implementation of the government requirements for specifying rates and payment of labour in the national education system;
- Participates in the preparation of career development regulations for the employed in the education system and to negotiate the salaries of teachers.

Regionally, the Regional Inspectorates of Education have some activities, connected to the teachers' working conditions, mainly aimed at providing methodical assistance, overall organisation of educational process, supporting the contacts between trade unions and employers, assisting teachers' qualification activities, etc. The financial provision for the working conditions is a prerogative of the municipal authorities.

At a school level, headmasters, as employers, are in charge of providing to teachers and other staff favourable working conditions for the performance of the work as per the labour relations:

- The work, which was specified at the time the labour relation was set up;
- Work place and working conditions according to the nature of work;
- Healthy and safe working conditions;
- Brief characteristics or description of work;
- Guidelines for the order and way of fulfilment of labour duties and exercising labour rights, including acquaintance with internal rules and healthy and secure labour conditions.

The headmaster is obliged to instruct periodically on safe and healthy conditions of training, labour and educating in the educational units.

Trade unions are other organs that assist and negotiate better working conditions and payment for teachers and provide representation of the teachers' professional and social interests. Unions of at least 50,000 members are considered representative. The Syndicate of Bulgarian Teachers is the largest teachers' association in Bulgaria, whose members are more than 100,000. According to the Labour Code, trade unions are a party to the collective labour agreements and may negotiate and sign such agreements on behalf of the teachers. The trade unions stand their platforms and place demands on social, economic, labour and legal issues, suggest amendments to laws and regulations, as well as the management decisions, which are unfavourable for the teachers, etc. Unions are also allowed to stage protests and to launch industrial actions if other means of solving disputes prove unsuccessful.

At national level, these are the Labour Code and the Supreme Testimonial Committee. The Labour Code is a main statutory instrument of the Republic of Bulgaria regulating employment relations and social dialogue among the three parties in the labour process: the government, employers and employees/workers. It aims to ensure freedom and protection of labour, fair and worthy working conditions. The Supreme Testimonial Committee exercises control and aligns the criteria for granting academic degrees and ranks and issues certificates for awarding the academic ranks of associate professor and professor.

At higher education level, tasks are assigned to lecturers and controlled by the rector, the academic council and the faculty council of the higher school. The distribution of tasks and responsibilities of the management structures at the various structural levels are specified in the regulations of higher schools.

The academic council is a body managing the day-to-day affairs of the higher school. One of its key functions is related to the formulation and direction of the personnel policy: the criteria and indicators for attesting and promotion of the academic staff. It is the main body, which, on proposal by the faculty council, decides on announcing competitions for attracting young staffers and attainment of academic ranks, inviting of guest-lecturers and awarding of honorary doctor's degrees. It adopts internal rules for setting the working salary and the remuneration of the academic staff and the other employees.

While the academic staff takes the decisions, it is the rector of the higher school who appoints staffers, terminates all contracts of service, authorizes and signs authorizations for leaves.

The faculty council is the body running the academic and research work of the faculty. It sets the faculty's personnel policy: the number of employees and their distribution, the number of courses and the individual research activity of the academic staff; makes proposals to the academic council for the announcement of competitions for lecturers with or without academic ranks as well as part-time lecturers; discusses and endorses the results of the attestation of the academic staff members.

Since there are differences in the conditions of service, the professional status, the salaries and promotion, duties and mobility of school teachers and those of tertiary education teachers, a fourth digit in the numbering of subsections will be introduced, in order to reflect the distinctions.

8.2.1. Historical Overview

During the Bulgarian National Revival (which comprises the period 18th-19th century; because of the specifics of its historical development and the fact that during that period Bulgaria was under Ottoman rule, the Bulgarian National Revival came about two centuries later than the Renaissance in Western European countries), school boards of trustees were the basic public institutions that managed the education system. Recruiting teachers, negotiating their remuneration, providing best possible working conditions and controlling their work were all among the main functions of these boards.

Despite the boards efforts and the search for opportunities to improve the teacher's payment, in most cases teachers were not paid regularly and their rights were not secured. As the management of the education system was not centralised, the social and financial status of the teachers varied. Teachers' salaries depended on the resources of the local municipality, of the board and on the public attitude to education. The popularity and the qualities of the teachers were also of importance. Headmasters and popular teachers were sometimes paid twice higher salaries than the other teachers. Elementary school teachers were often paid badly, and not in time. When the board of trustees was happy with a teacher's work and wanted to keep him/her, they would increase the salary and even grant him land. If the board was not satisfied by the teacher's performance they would either decrease his salary or dismiss the teacher. Usually teachers were appointed under an annual contract. In order to be employed, the applicant had to be presented to the public in the settlement and to apply officially for a teacher.

There were many attempts to regulate the education system through ordinances, regulations, acts and codes. The requirements towards teachers and their qualities, virtues, conduct and ability to communicate with the board of trustees, parents and students' as well as the issues related to the teacher and his family – accommodation, food, land were described in these documents. These documents are of a typical national colours and reflect some typical features of the Bulgarian teacher activities, e.g. to be a clerk at the municipality or a translator from Greek, to organise the Sunday school etc.

Right after the Liberation of Bulgaria (3rd March 1878), issues related to work conditions of teachers began to be regulated by regulative acts. Municipal authorities were obliged to pay the teachers their salaries regularly and teachers were relieved of their additional non-educational duties in the settlement; the size of the teachers' salaries was also regulated and the difference between the salaries of the newly appointed teachers and of the first-degree teachers was significant. The laws also regulated the obligations of the teachers - to perform strictly the school laws and to observe school rules, as well as the orders of the school authorities, to carry out training after the prescribed programmes and instructions, they were banned to get involved in crafts, trade and other activities, which are an obstacle for their main duties; a strict requirements to their moral and behaviour were imposed and heavy disciplinary measures were levied on the offenders. Teachers in elementary schools had to cover a minimum horarium of 30 hours, those in primary schools had to cover 25 hours, and the ones in secondary schools - 16 to 24 hours.

After September 9, 1944, a series of rules, specifying the norms of quality choice of teachers, of improving their training and their working conditions, were promulgated. As remote and under-developed areas of the country were suffering a shortage of teachers, in 1952, the Decree for Improvement of Situation of Teachers and Pedagogic Personnel was issued. The decree targeted to stop the turnover of education personnel from the smaller settlements, especially in the border areas of Bulgaria, by creating favourable conditions for teachers in these areas. The executive committees of the village national councils were obliged to provide free housing, heating and electricity to teachers and the Ministry of Finance was to fund it.

Since the 1960s, the trend to appoint in elementary schools candidates of higher education, pedagogues and specialists in the separate subjects established. Fresh graduates were all provided work across the country. At that time, the organs, which dealt with the appointment of the new

graduates, were the National Education Departments of the district, municipal and the regional authorities. A system of payment depending on the educational and qualification level and length of experience.

In order to observe the scientific organisation of the teachers' work and to improve the quality of the educational process, the number of students in separate classes was set at between 20 and 40, from 35 in ordinary schools to 8 to 15 in special schools and to 25 in remote schools.

The horarium of all teachers was relatively decreased to 18-20 hours in order to provide them more time for preparation, participation in additional qualification courses and improvement. Job descriptions of teachers were made more detailed as far as professional and qualification features were concerned.

8.2.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

Ongoing debates are currently focused on the issues of the social and economic status of teachers, the improvement of the conditions of service and the construction of a modern system of professional and career growth.

The National Programme for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006-2015) takes into consideration the fact that the socio-economic changes from the 90s of the previous century led to a considerable decrease of the economic and the general social status of teachers. Many of the reasons for this process are beyond the educational system – elements of disintegration of society, general crisis of values and regulation systems, lack of direct relationship between education and success in life. The low general social status and the low economic status of teachers in particular led to a large extent to loss of self-esteem and motivation for achievement. This may often lead to insufficient effort to attract and hold pupils' attention, which on its part further decreases teachers' self-esteem. At the same time the wide spreading of Internet as a means of obtaining information and the new information and communication technology are changing the traditional teacher-student relationship. The resulting insufficient authority of the teacher poses a challenge to the educational process at school.

The following measures are envisaged in order to solve the problem:

- Introduction of a system of career development – the introduction of a system of career development and its binding with the system of payment will create conditions for competition among teachers and motivation for dedicated participation in the educational process at school. From the point of view of a contemporary system of career development two basic planes can be distinguished:
 - o On the horizontal plane the opportunities for development are to be provided by introducing ranks for the position of teacher. Five ranks are planned to be established: "junior teacher", "teacher", "senior teacher", "chief teacher" and "teacher-methodologist". Horizontal career growth will be determined by the accumulation of a certain number of years of service, the completion of forms of training and evaluation of results.
 - o On the vertical plane the changes will mostly be related to altering the requirements for taking on administrative positions in the public education system – head of school, deputy head, experts and heads of the Regional Inspectorates of Education, administration of the Ministry of Education and Science.
- Introduction of differentiated payment related to students' achievement – this system is expected to raise the quality of education as a result of the stronger motivation of teachers to constantly extend their knowledge and qualification and make further effort in educating pupils. The differentiated approach in payment presupposes the development of a system of objective indicators and criteria for the evaluation of the quality of teaching. The most important criterion should be students' achievements both in the external evaluation organised

on each stage, and in the exams for determining students' entry and exit levels. Other criteria could be:

- o consistency of students' marks from continuous assessment and their marks from external evaluation;
- o work with students who win prizes in various national and international competitions, contests and olympics;
- o work with children with special educational needs;
- o provision of methodological support to new teachers;
- o work in extra-curricular and out-of-school activities;
- o implementation of modern methods in teaching, teaching foreign languages and knowledge of ICT;
- o students' and parents' evaluation of teachers' work;
- o the number of students enrolled in the class;

the overall evaluation of the quality of education within the school.

- The aim is each teacher's individual salary to be determined by the level of their career development and the results they have achieved in the process of educating students. The mass introduction of the system of delegated budgets will allow for a flexibility in determining teachers' salaries and higher payment when resources are efficiently managed.
- Introduction of a system for rewarding teachers – the purpose is to reward the special contribution of certain teachers in educating students. The awards will have material value too, but their moral value will be of greater importance. Determining nominees publicly and handing awards in an official ceremony will be a further step in increasing the authority of Bulgarian teachers.

8.2.3. Specific Legislative Framework

No significant changes have been effected in the legislation framework regarding the conditions of service of teachers since 2004. There are certain changes in the conditions for retirement of teachers having academic ranks in tertiary education (see section 8.2.16.2.) and in evaluating teachers in tertiary education (see section 8.2.9.2.).

In light of the ongoing debates presented in 8.2.2., changes in currently effective legislation and issuance of new by-laws are expected. Changes may be introduced in:

- Ordinance # 7 on determining the number of pupils and children in classes and groups at schools, kindergartens and servicing units;
- Ordinance # 5 on the hours of compulsory teaching work and the number of personnel in the education system.

Work is under way on drafting new acts referring to the criteria and procedure for evaluating the labour of education staff and the terms and procedure for rewarding teachers.

8.2.3.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

Teachers' work and working conditions for teachers are regulated by the Labour Code, Regulation # 5 on compulsory teaching hours and the number of personnel in the system of public education, Regulation # 7 on the number of pupils and children in classes and groups at schools, kindergartens and servicing units, the type job descriptions for the position of a teacher, Regulation on safe working conditions; Instruction # 2 on the requirements towards candidates for teachers and educators; Regulation on calculating the individual monthly salaries of teachers and other personnel in educational institutions. In general, the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act regulate all aspects of teachers' work.

The Labour Code regulates all labour relations between the teachers and the employers. Amendments and modifications are made in other regulative documents, specific for the relevant professional field, which concerned different categories of staff (including teachers). The Labour Code guarantees the freedom of choice and labour protection and association and the ways for solving labour disputes and envisages a social dialogue as a compulsory tool for resolving any arguments between the state, the employers and the employees. This provision of a principal importance as it gives mandatory character to the dialogue and the consideration of the interest of both parties, which provides for negotiating more favourable conditions for the employees. This agreement is carried out on national level for all sectors.

The norms for compulsory teaching refer to the pedagogical staff and are carried out in compliance with the Labour Code provisions on working hours and is calculated in school hours (see section **8.2.12.**).

8.2.3.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The conditions for work of the lecturers in the higher education institutions are set and regulated by the following statutory instruments:

- Labour Code – main statutory instrument of the Republic of Bulgaria regulating the employment relations and social dialogue among the three parties in the labour process: the government, employers and employees/workers. It aims to ensure freedom and protection of labour, fair and worthy working conditions.
- Social Insurance Code – main law regulating state social security in the event of illness, industrial accident, maternity, retirement and unemployment. It regulates the terms and procedure for retirement, setting and receiving of pensions;
- Higher Education Act – main statutory instrument regulating the structure, functions, management and financing of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria. Chapter six of this law regulates the terms and procedure for appointment and release of employees, granting or revoking academic rank/degree, employment and relations with employer;
- Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act – regulates the terms and procedure for granting and revoking of academic degrees and ranks;
- Ordinance on Pensions and Length of Service – this statutory instrument regulates the terms and procedure for extending pensions;

The higher schools' regulations setting the conditions for work and assessment of the performance of lecturers are complied with the above statutory instruments.

8.2.4. Planning Policy

There is no state system for planning education staff, it is market regulated. There has been an increase of the higher schools offering teachers' training.

The qualification-employment ratio depends to a great extent on the supply and demand for teachers on the labour market. Currently, the number of available teachers for most of the school subjects is much bigger than the actual needs of the education system. This disproportion is additionally fuelled by the increased number of students who are trained for teachers and by the closure of many schools because of the decreasing birth rate. This situation allows for better selection of highly qualified teachers.

8.2.5. Entry to the Profession

The recruitment is open, it is the responsibility of the school and allows teachers to choose the teaching posts for which they wish to apply. Schools play a direct role in the selection process and the choice of teacher for their school in accordance with the legislation basis on this issue.

8.2.5.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

Hiring a teacher depends on several conditions – the availability of a vacancy, announced according to regulations, a candidate who fits the requirements of a completed higher education, with the necessary major and an acquired professional qualification as a “teacher”. If the candidates are more than one, a selection is made, which is in the competence of the principal of the school, and as advantages during the selection are considered a higher qualification and work experience and other abilities. The position of “teacher” can be filled only by people who have no criminal record, no prior convictions and have not been disqualified from practicing the profession and do not have suffer from any illnesses or mental disabilities that may endanger the lives or health of the pupils, specified with an ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science and coordinated with the Minister of Health.

The vacancy for the position of “teacher” is opened when there are classes necessary to fulfil a complete teaching program. A position may be opened, when, for a given subject there are classes which are more than half of the required quota for a complete teaching program or when a given teacher is supplementing with classes in other schools in the area. A position can also be opened when for a given subject the classes are less than half of the annual quota for a complete teaching program and if the area does not have another school.

When selecting teachers, the head of the school must carry out several compulsory activities:

Define the selection criteria – they are defined mainly by the job description and requirements for the position of “teacher”, but according to the specifics of the school and the vision of the principal other criteria can also be applied;

Reviewing the documents, which the applicant for the position of teacher has submitted – a request, CV, higher education diploma and certificate for a professional qualification as a “teacher”, a certificate for the degree of qualification, and a medical certificate. When there are many applicants, a pre-selection can be made on the basis of the submitted documents – for example the candidates with a lower educational degree or without a teaching qualification can be disregarded.

Carrying out an interview with the candidates – used as a main method for selection or in combination with other methods. It includes questions regarding the educational and work experience, the teaching and special scientific knowledge of the candidate and other questions based on the employer's evaluation.

When the selection falls on a certain candidate, a job offer is made. Each separate candidate signs an individual labour contract with the principal, which is a specification of the collective labour contract, signed between the employer and the syndicate. For further information on the contracts which teachers sign see section **8.2.6.**

8.2.5.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

Under the Higher Education Act, higher schools have the right to set and choose their lecturers on their own through the announcement of competitions, according to terms and procedure, set by the Academic Degrees and Ranks Act and the higher schools' internal regulations. The decision on announcing a competition for a certain position is taken by the academic council on proposal by the main structures of the higher school.

Information for the labour contracts signed by tertiary education teachers see section **8.2.6.**

The higher school and the person who has won the competition establish employment relations on the day of naming the winner of this competition. The rector and the successful bidder sign a contract of service on the day of endorsement of the results of the competition.

The conditions of work and obligations of the academic staff members are set in the higher school regulations. The academic staff members are obliged to fulfill their duties in line with their job descriptions, the approved individual plans for their operation, the curriculum and extra-curriculum activities, to adhere to the scientific and professional ethics and the regulations of the respective institution. They are banned from carrying out political or religious activity, unless this is explicitly envisaged in the regulations of the respective higher school.

8.2.6. Professional Status

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.6.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

In the Republic of Bulgaria, teachers are not civil servants, but are employees under labour relations and so they adhere to the regulations of the Labour Code. Determining the monthly remunerations of the teachers is done according to an Ordinance by the minister of education and science and it corresponds to the remuneration of specialists with higher education and those with an educational degree "specialist" – with semi-higher education.

Each separate candidate signs an individual labour contract with the principal, which is a specification of the collective labour contract, signed between the employer and the syndicate. The execution of the

labour contract commences when the teacher begins work. He/She is obliged to begin work within one week after signing the contract, unless otherwise agreed by the parties. The labour contract specifies the location and type of work, the remuneration and other conditions connected to hiring work force. The labour contract can be for an indefinite period of time, for a fixed term /for a period of no more than three years or when substituting an absent teacher/ and a contract for a trial period/ up to six months to review the qualification of the teacher for the respective job, which is most often used with candidates with no previous work experience, or those with no pedagogical experience. A trial period contract can be signed only once. The employer or employee cannot one-sidedly change the content of the labour relations, except in those cases regulated and in the order defined by the law. Amendments can be made when transferring to a more appropriate job, during a business trip longer than one month and during structural changes in the organization.

As far as professional ethics and conduct are concerned, the Trade Union of Bulgarian Teachers works out codes with rules with recommending character. The general rights and responsibilities of teachers, as well as certain ethical norms are regulated in the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act.

8.2.6.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The research and academic staff of higher schools hold the following positions:

- Lecturers with academic rank: associate professors and professors;
- Lecturers without academic rank: assistants, senior assistants and chief assistants;

Academic staff workers without rank, who are assigned only lecturing for non-specialists in language teaching, sports, art and others, hold the positions of lecturers and senior lecturers. The higher schools are entitled to attract part-time lecturers, only according to the terms and procedure of their internal regulations. Besides, they may attract lecturers from abroad for performing research and lecturing for a certain period of time. Guest-lecturers are attracted without a competition procedure.

Lecturers with academic rank are appointed under contracts of service for an indefinite period of time while lecturers without academic rank and part-timers are appointed on term contracts or contracts of service with an indefinite term under conditions and terms, set by the regulations of higher schools.

Research workers, specialists and experts may also be appointed for a definite period of time to assist lecturing and research activities. The terms and procedure for selecting and appointing these people as well as their specific positions are set pursuant to the Academic Degrees and Ranks Act and the higher school regulations.

Statistical data show that the number of lecturers holding academic rank has increased for some years now. In the beginning of the transitional period lecturers with academic rank accounted for 23% of their total number (1990/91), while it was almost 40% in the 2002/03 academic year. Although not so tangible, there is an increase in regards to assistants as well. The opposite tendency is observed among research workers, involved in lecturing, as their share continuously decreases. Today, the share of these lecturers has almost halved compared to 1990/1991, while the decrease was only 6.8%-6.9% in the 1990/1991 period.

8.2.7. Replacement Measures

The temporary replacement of an absent teacher can be internal and external. If the teacher is absent for a short period of time, his/her classes are taken by another teacher specialist the respective subject teaching at the same school /if this is not possible, then by a teacher having the respective second speciality/. A primary teacher who is absent is replaced by another primary teacher or tutor. In cases of short-term absence when it is impossible to find a substitute, as an exception two classes are merged for sessions in the respective subject.

When a teacher is absent for a longer period of time – a school term or a school year, the employer signs with an external candidate a fixed-term labour contract according to art. 68 par. 3 of the Labour Code, which is terminated when the absent teacher returns. A frequent practice is to assign the classes of the absent teacher to an external candidate in the form of lecturer's classes, remunerated by a fee per school hour.

When a teacher from the same school replaces an absent colleague, classes are assigned to him/her as lecturer's classes above the norm of compulsory teaching activity and are additionally paid. There are certain restrictions to the number of lecturer's classes:

- for principal and deputy-principals in the educational and educational-manufacturing activities – up to two school hours a week, or 72 school hours a year with the permission of the Regional Inspectorate of Education;
- for teacher – up to 5 school hours a week or 180 school hours a year, and with the permission of the financing body and the Regional Education Inspectorate – up to half the compulsory norm /for example in the case of objective impossibility for a substitute to be found/;
- the deputy-head in administrative and economic activity can also take lecturer's classes, if he/she satisfies the requirements for taking on a teacher's position.

8.2.8. Supporting Measures for Teachers

The pedagogical adviser has functions connected with providing pedagogical and psychological support to teachers at school – in cases of problems with the discipline, low pupils' performance and different situations in which teachers encounter difficulties in solving the problems. The pedagogical adviser is obliged to inform and support class-teachers and teachers in overcoming occurring problems with separate pupils or groups of pupils – for example in the process of socialisation of pupils from families with difficulties, pupils with chronic diseases and disabilities, and pupils with deviations in their social behaviour. The pedagogical adviser supports teachers and works together with them in recognizing and appropriately directing children exceptionally gifted in a particular field of science, art or sport.

If any difficulties in the teaching activity arise, such as difficulties in the choice of textbooks and learning aids, in presenting certain educational material, or the teacher needs guidance towards certain qualification course, the teacher refers to the expert in the respective subject at the Regional Inspectorate of Education, to a methodologist teacher or at an informal level receives support from more experienced colleagues.

8.2.9. Evaluation of Teachers

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.9.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

All teachers are evaluated according to a common evaluation system in which the evaluating bodies are the head of the school and the inspectors of the Regional Inspectorate of Education.

The evaluation system is not linked to the system of career development and has no impact on teachers' salaries.

8.2.9.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

Tertiary institutions evaluate the contribution of every member of the academic staff to the training, research, artistic, administrative and other activities. They give a testimonial once in every three years to lecturers who do not hold academic ranks and once in every five years to lecturers who hold academic ranks. The evaluation and testimonial are done according to indices and criteria which are determined in the tertiary institution's regulations and which have to include:

- fulfilment of the norm for training activity accepted by the academic staff;
- development of new seminars and workshops, coursebooks and supplementary materials;
- scientific (artistic) production, participation in research contracts with foreign institutions;
- guidance of diploma, doctoral and undergraduate students;
- research into students' opinion: the students assess the overall activity of lecturers: methods and form of teaching, way of communication with students, content of lectures and seminars, etc.

8.2.10. In-service Training

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.10.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

The increase in qualification is a stage of permanent preparation in which, through different forms of postgraduate training, the professional realization of the pedagogical staff is constantly assisted. A higher level of professional competency is the basis for acquiring of professional qualification degrees.

The increase in the qualification of the pedagogical staff serves the purpose to ensure a correspondence between the social practices, the needs of the educational system and to afford the opportunity for satisfying the professional interests and development of the teachers.

The qualification of the teachers is carried out in forms that lead to acquiring professional qualification degrees and in forms, which aim to refresh their knowledge, to acquaint them with the current problems, to prepare them on a new school content, when moving to a new pedagogical position and others. An internal school qualification activity is carried out with the purpose of improving the professional skills of the teachers and changing and developing their professional views and values.

In accordance with the achieved level of professional competency and adhering to the regulated requirements, the pedagogical staff can acquire the following professional qualification degrees:

- fifth professional qualification degree;

- fourth professional qualification degree;
- third professional qualification degree;
- second professional qualification degree;
- first professional qualification degree;

The pedagogical staff that have acquired professional qualification degrees are acknowledged a higher professional level during evaluation and remuneration.

The main forms of increasing the qualification, which do not lead to acquiring professional qualification degrees are: combined courses, thematic courses, instructive courses, specializations in a concrete scientific field, training to increase and improve the professional pedagogical skills, seminars, practices, problem groups, conferences and others – more details in section **8.1.6.**

The increasing of the qualification is carried out on a school, regional and national level.

The question of teachers' qualification and the strive for bringing it up-to-date are being heatedly discussed. A programme for enhancing teachers' professional competences in the following directions is to be developed. They are as follows:

- bringing knowledge up to date periodically;
- acquisition of new teaching methods;
- ICT training;

The fact that contemporary life is so dynamic leads to rapid changes in the development of science. This leads to the necessity to train content subject teachers in acquiring the novelties in their spheres. The integrated approach to studying different sciences leads to additional specific requirements. An important element of teachers' qualification will be their training in the use of new, including interactive, teaching methods aimed at making the process of education more attractive and motivating to students. The emphasis will be placed on the enhancement of the practical side to education and on the innovative classroom management ensuring that the student will be an active participant in the process. Training teachers in ICT is directly related to the acquisition and application of new methods.

In order to carry out effective qualification activity, a system of observation, analysis and evaluation of teachers' development and realisation will be developed. The further development of the National register of teachers containing information about the in-service courses they have taken part in will be part of this system. It will help research and analyse periodically the qualification needs and will lead to the refinement of the model of prognosticating and planning qualification activity. Among the most important conditions for the realisation of this policy is granting teachers equal access to various qualification forms through the creation of a system of information about the qualification activity, the creation of a model for evaluating the efficiency of the qualification services provided by various institutions and a model for quality control of in-service teacher training.

The improvement of qualification will be viewed in relation to the introduction of a system of evaluating the quality of teachers' work, which in turn will be at the basis of the differentiated payment for teachers.

8.2.10.1.1. Historical Overview

In the period before the Liberation of Bulgaria (before 1878), when, despite the development of the educational work, there was no state educational system, and the matters concerning the qualification and improvement of the teachers were not regulated. Nevertheless, the real necessity for coordinating the actions of the teachers from different parts of the country, to exchange experience and for professional improvement lead to the idea of the so called teachers' conventions – these conventions discussed matters concerning the textbooks, the duration of the school year, and the teachers

exchanged experience on the solutions of different problems. The conventions were held on the initiative of the school boards and were managed by the town teachers. The school boards assisted the improvement in the preparation of the teachers, and also established libraries, subscribed the school to newspapers and magazines, and provided the necessary literature.

After the liberation of Bulgaria, some matters regarding the qualification, improvement and career advancement of the teachers were regulated by the law, even though the special institutions for the qualification of the teachers were established much later. These functions were taken on by the regional inspectors and special pedagogical courses were organized, which the teachers were obliged to attend. Special attention was given to the initial preparation of the teachers and the requirement for teaching qualification was introduced and the teachers, who did not pass a theoretical and practical exam within a certain period of time, lost their right to teach.

The career advancement of the teachers is based on their pedagogical experience and the relevant execution of duties. Three degrees were defined for the teachers, which reflected on their remuneration – first degree, second degree and third degree teachers, and passing on to a higher degree was realized after a five-year period. This three-degree structure of career advancement was the same both for primary and secondary education teachers. For the teachers, distinguished with their abilities, the Ministry of Public Education, awarded scholarships for improving their preparation in a higher education institute in the country or abroad, and for secondary education teachers, trips abroad for one or two years to study the innovations in the respective subject field and getting acquainted with the activities of the different educational institutions.

With the act from 1909, with the purpose of broadening the knowledge of the teachers and their further development, the Ministry of Public Education organized temporary courses, teachers' conventions, assisted in the establishment of the school libraries and others. For the preparation of the teachers in the primary schools additional pedagogical courses were organized.

For the first time, a specialized institution dealing with the qualification of the teachers was established in 1953. This was the Institute for Increasing the Qualification of Teachers, which was managed by the Ministry of Public Education. Different departments were created in the institute on separate educational and methodological problems – pre-school upbringing, primary schools, pedagogy and psychology, Bulgarian language and literature, Russian language and literature, history and constitution, mathematics and physics, geography, physical education, singing and painting.

The "Public Education" departments were obliged to open pedagogical rooms at the schools, to carry out detailed research of the know-how and to implement new methods in the school process.

The conditions and order for acquiring a qualification degree by the pedagogical staff were also regulated – the training, examinations, the academic management and the issuance of the certificates were all in the authority of the Institute for Increasing the Qualification of Teachers. The candidates for acquiring a qualification degree should be regular teachers, should have achievements in the educational and educational upbringing work. The candidates for a II degree qualification should have 5 years pedagogical experience and the candidates for I degree qualification – 12 years of pedagogical experience. In 1974, a third degree qualification was also introduced; the qualification degrees are linked to additional remuneration.

In 1976, a decree was issued by the Council of Ministers, to attract lecturers with an academic rank in the institutes for increasing the qualification of the teachers, aimed at increasing the quality of the preparation of the candidates.

In the period after the 1960s and 1970s, the different forms for increasing the qualification of the teachers acquired a widely accessible and mass character.

8.2.10.1.2. Specific Legislative Framework

According to the Public Education Act, the teachers and principals are provided with conditions for increasing their qualification. The specific normative document, which regulates these matters is Ordinance #5 on teaching staff qualification and acquiring vocational qualification 1996 with amendments and addendums of 1999.

The institutions responsible for organizing the qualification activities, the forms of qualifications and the order for acquiring professional qualification degrees and the requirements, which the candidates should fulfil, the cases in which the professional qualification degree is rescinded, are also regulated with a decree.

Since 2004 there have been no changes in Ordinance # 5 regulating the conditions for in-service teacher training as well as in the procedure of awarding the professional qualification levels. In fact, this is the basic legal document regulating the issues related to teachers' in-service qualification.

In relation to the directions for changes, presented in **8.2.10.1.**, it is expected that there will be changes of the legislative framework connected with the preparation of a new document, which will regulate teachers' qualification.

A new development is the establishment on a national level of a National Pedagogical Centre and a National Head Teacher Training Institute, whose activities are regulated through organisational regulations endorsed by the Minister of Education and Science. They are not entitled to award professional and qualification degrees.

8.2.10.1.3. Institutions Organising Qualification Courses

The training for increasing the qualification of the pedagogical staff is carried out in the system of higher education by the Bulgarian higher education institutions, established in the order defined by the Higher Education Act. The right to award professional qualification degrees have only the university departments for increasing the qualification of the teachers. These departments develop annual plans for the training for increasing the qualification of the pedagogical staff, financed by the state and approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

For activities connected to the qualification of the teachers, their organization and coordination depending on the level of management of the system, the responsible bodies are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Regional Inspectorates of Education and the principals of the schools.

Courses for postgraduate training of the teachers, seminars and conferences on specific problems can also be organized by other state, private and international institutions.

In recent years a large number of qualification courses have been conducted in the National Pedagogical Centre. The National Head Teacher Training Institute, opened in 2006, is envisaged to issue certificates for acquired head teacher capacity and conduct continuous training for school head teachers.

8.2.10.1.4. Types of Institutions, Levels of Realizing Qualification Activities

The increasing of the qualification is realized on a school, regional and national level. The organizers and coordinators of the activities, concerning the increasing of the qualification of the pedagogical staff are:

at a school level – the principal of the school, kindergarten or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit). The intra-school qualification activity is carried out in different forms – problem group, seminar, practice, training, lecture, school, scientific practical or methodical conference and others. The right to manage the activities for increasing the qualification in the school have the pedagogical staff, which has acquired professional qualification degrees. If possible, the qualification activity in the school is realized with the cooperation of the higher education institutions, the departments for increasing the qualification of teachers and the regional education inspectorates. The financing is provided within the budget frame of the school;

at a regional level – the activities connected with increasing the qualification of the teachers are organized and coordinated by the regional inspectorates on education and the homes for professional and creative development of the teachers. The regional inspectorates develop annual programs for qualification of the pedagogical staff on a regional level and assign the organization of the respective activities to the homes for professional and creative development of teachers.

at a national level – the Ministry of Education and Science organizes the development of programs for qualification in the public education system and legislatively regulates the realization of the qualification activities.

8.2.10.1.5. Admission Requirements

In the forms for increasing the qualification and for acquiring a professional qualification degree can participate pedagogical staff /teachers, education specialists, pedagogical counsellors, managerial staff/, who work in the public education system.

The conditions for participation in the forms for increasing the qualification /labour relations, financial and others/ are agreed upon between the pedagogical staff and their employers, and the conditions for the training between the applicants /schools, kindergartens, obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units), Regional Inspectorates of Education, municipalities, the Ministry of Education and Science and other legal and physical persons/ and the training institution.

The pedagogical staff is included in organized forms for increasing the qualification based on their personal desire, on the recommendation of the employer or on the recommendation of the experts from the Regional Inspectorates of Education.

The following pedagogical staff is included in the forms for increasing the qualification with a priority:

- Pedagogical staff who teach school subjects or directions for which new state educational requirements have been implemented;
- Pedagogical staff who hold a pedagogical position, which is new to the public education system;
- Pedagogical staff who have transferred to a new pedagogical position;
- Pedagogical staff that take up a teaching position after having discontinued their teaching experience for more than three school years.

The professional qualification degrees are awarded only by the university departments for increasing the qualification of the teachers. The candidates should have at least one-year pedagogical experience after acquiring the previous professional qualification degree, and for the lowest, fifth professional qualification degree – at least four consecutive years of pedagogical experience, without any disciplinary punishments, unless they are erased.

The candidates should submit the following documents:

- a sample request to the director of the respective department for increasing the qualification of teachers;
- a diploma for completed higher education and professional qualification as a “teacher” or a pedagogical qualification;
- transcript of the labour book;
- written reference prepared as follows;
 - o for the pedagogical staff working in the schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) – from the principal and an expert in the Regional Inspectorate of Education;
 - o for principals – from the department head and an expert in the respective Regional Inspectorate on Education;
 - o for experts in the Regional Inspectorate of Education – from the head of the Regional Inspectorate on Education and an expert in the Ministry of Education and Science;
 - o for the employees at the Ministry of Education and Science – from a department director and a deputy minister;
- certificate for previously acquired professional qualification degrees;
- the written work, publication, certificate for completed specialization or diploma for an academic degree or an authors’ summary of a dissertation required, for the respective professional qualification degree.

8.2.10.1.6. Syllabus, Course Duration, Specialisation

The syllabus and duration of the course depends on the respective organizational form in which it is carried out and whether or not it targets the acquiring of a professional qualification degree or is held with another purpose – for example, getting acquainted with current problems, preparation on a new school content, more specific professional duties and functions and others.

The main organizational forms for increasing the qualification of the teachers and other pedagogical staff are:

- comprehensive course – with a duration of attendance lectures of no less than three weeks, with a syllabus, which encompasses the current problems in accordance with the pedagogical position held by the trainees;
- thematic course – duration of two weeks, with a syllabus, which encompasses theoretical and practical preparation on a specific professional pedagogical problem;
- instructive course – duration of one week, with a syllabus, which encompasses the preparation on a new school content, specific professional functions and others.
- professional pedagogical specialization;
- specialization in a concrete scientific field;
- training for acquiring and improving professional pedagogical skills;
- seminar, practice, problem group, conference and others.

With the exception of the professional pedagogical specialization, all the other abovementioned forms for increasing the qualification to not lead to the acquiring of a professional qualification degree.

The successful completion of a professional pedagogical specialization leads to the acquiring of a third professional qualification degree. It is carried out according to a syllabus, in which at least 50 percent of the school hours are for school disciplines concerning the pedagogical, psychological or methodological preparation of the specialists or in management of the education. The attendance classes in the syllabus are no less than 200 school hours.

The other professional qualification degrees are acquired based on exams /fifth and fourth/ and on written works /first and second/. The syllabus for the respective exams and the subject matter of the written works are in one of the following problem fields:

- Teaching methodology;
- theory of upbringing, didactics, age and pedagogical psychology;
- management of education.

8.2.10.1.7. Training Methods

The presence of a highly specialized and methodological preparation and practical experience, such as the teachers have, is beneficial to the utilization of more contemporary methods, when carrying out different forms of qualification. Apart from lectures, the other successful forms are:

- dialogue methods – panel discussions, brainstorming, plenary discussions, discussions and others;
- situational methods for developing alternative solutions – incident, case studies, multiphase situations;
- simulation methods – simulation, role playing, work games;
- different variations of training – behavioural training, functions training, autogenic training;

The development of independent written works and carrying out scientific and applicable research by the teachers is widely used during the training for acquiring professional qualification degrees.

8.2.10.1.8. Evaluation, Diplomas

The successful completion of the forms for increasing the qualification, which do not lead to acquiring a professional qualification degree are certified by a document.

A fifth professional qualification degree is acquired after a successfully passed oral exam /with a grade of no less than very good 4,50/ based on a conspectus. It can be acquired without holding an exam, if the candidate presents awards and prize certificates of his students from competitions at a national and international level, organized by the Ministry of Education and Science in the period of five years before the application date.

The fourth professional qualification degree requires a written exam on a problem from the specific professional field of the candidate, with a grade of no less than very good 4,50. A preliminary condition is that the candidate should already have acquired the fifth professional qualification degree.

The third professional qualification degree can be acquired by persons who have the fourth professional qualification degree and complete a one-year professional pedagogical specialization with an average grade of no less than very good 4,50.

The second professional qualification degree is acquired by pedagogical staff who have acquired the third professional qualification degree and defend a written work based on the analysis of the results from a diagnostic procedure applied by the candidate with a grade of no less than very good 4,50.

In order to acquire the first professional qualification degree, the candidates are required to have acquired the second professional qualification degree and to successfully defend a written work with a research and innovation tendency, based on the pedagogical practice of the candidate, as well as publications on professional pedagogical problems, linked to the theme for development.

The procedures for acquiring each professional qualification degree are determined by committees, appointed with an order by the heads of departments for increasing the qualification of teachers. As chairman of each examination committee is appointed a lecturer with an academic rank or a lecturer with an academic degree in the respective problem field. Holding a professional qualification degree is certified with a document.

8.2.10.1.9. Qualification-Employment Link

Having a professional qualification degree is an advantage but is not a compulsory condition when hiring somebody for a job, as well as when holding a managerial position.

The pedagogical staff, which have acquired professional qualification degrees, are acknowledged a higher professional level when being evaluated and when receiving remuneration for their labour in the decree determined by the Ministry of Education and Science (see section **8.2.11.1.**). They have the right to manage activities for increasing the qualification at a school level.

8.2.10.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The development of a new system for training and retraining of specialists with higher education is one of the purposes of the government programme of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. For achievement of this goal the following long-term and short-term targets have been set:

- Review of the already existing system for training and retraining;
- Bringing up to date the legislation policies which concern the questions of training and retraining;
- Review of the achievements reached by non-profit organisations in the field of the training of teachers for institutions of higher education;
- Defining the exact parameters of co-operation between the Ministry of Education, the general schooling programmes and the training programmes of the non-profit organisations;
- Establishment of a training system of a new kind which will combine the achievements of the traditional forms of education with the present-day requirements;
- Development of national standards for the training courses;
- Formation of a market of training services.

According to the Higher Education Act, institutions of higher education have the right to carry out schooling to raise the level of qualification. The level of qualification of the teachers is raised by:

- schooling seminars and conferences;
- specialisations in the country and abroad;
- courses in foreign languages, computer literacy etc. in the country and abroad.

These activities are financed either through collecting taxes from the participants in the training programmes, or through international or European programmes for academic exchange.

8.2.11. Salaries

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.11.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

The basic salary for the position of a teacher is determined on the basis of the horarium, the personal qualification (the availability of a qualification degree reflects on the remuneration), the length of experience and the ratio on the minimum monthly salary in the country. There are no other ranks for

teachers and no other factors that influence teachers' salary. If the minimum horarium is not reached, the basic salary of a teacher is decreased but not more by five hours weekly or 180 hours a year.

When determining individual salary in school, no agreements that are less favourable than as provided by the law are allowed.

All persons that have been employed by a school during the calendar year are eligible to bonuses, whose concrete amount is determined proportionately to the completed time of and salary and in accordance with all restrictions stipulated by an act by the Council of Ministers and with the internal rules on remuneration.

8.2.11.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The working salary of the university lecturers is set in compliance with three main statutory instruments: Decree of the Council of Ministers on salaries in budget organizations and activities; Higher Education Act; and Regulations on the structure of the salary and remuneration of the academic staff and employees of the higher schools.

Article 3 of the Council of Ministers' Decree stipulates that, according to the Higher Education Act and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Act, the senior staff of the state higher school and the Bulgarian Academy of Science set independently the number of their employees and the gross average monthly salary of each person. While setting the salaries, the senior staff is guided by the following factors:

- The national budget allocation for the respective school;
- The additional funds raised and utilized;
- The value of initial salaries, set by the Council of Ministers in accordance with job descriptions.

The higher school regulations specify the mechanisms and terms for setting the amount of the working salary, for the distribution and forms of extending additional remuneration. The persons, holding academic degrees, get additional remuneration to their salaries set by the Council of Ministers.

8.2.12. Working Time and Holidays

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.12.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

According to the Labour Code, the working week has five working days with normal weekly working hours up to 40 and 8 working hours per day. The norm for compulsory teaching work of the teachers is executed within the frame of the duration of the working hours defined by the Labour Code, by accounting school hours.

The annual horarium of teachers (practice teachers have higher horarium) is between 648 and 720 school hours, depending on the educational degree and the subject.

- Teachers in 1st to 4th grade – 21 hours weekly;

- o Foreign language teachers – 648 hours annually;
- Teachers in 5th to 13th grade:
 - o Bulgarian Language and Literature, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Computer Science, Polytechnic and Special Subjects teachers – 648 hours annually;
 - o Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Astronomy Teachers – 684 hours annually;
 - o History, Geography, Philosophy, Music, Dance, Art, Sports, Choreography teachers – 720 hours annually;
 - o Technical and Technology Teachers (unspecialised) - 792 hours annually;
 - o School and Lab Practice, Driving Course teachers - 864 hours annually;
 - o Production Practice teachers – 18 – 24 hours weekly;
- Teachers Methodologists – 400 – 600 hours annually (depending on subject);
- Teachers at institutions, other than school – 720 hours annually;
- Deputy Head Masters – 216 hours annually;
- Head Masters - 64 – 216 hours annually, depending on the number of classes; for schools of up to 3 classes – same as regular teacher.

In order to improve the working and labour conditions, compared to previous decades, a relatively lower number of pupils per class and children in kindergarten group is set as follows:

- Day care centres, half-day care centres, seasonal kindergartens – 12 –24 children;
- Pre-school preparatory class – 12 – 16 children;
- 1st – 4th grade – 16 – 22 students;
- 5th – 13th grade – 18 – 26 students.

Lower norms are set for the specialised kindergartens and schools.

Apart from the school work, the teachers also carry out consultations with the students and parents, do shifts at the school, review test papers and class works, participate in the preparation of examination materials and other activities in the school.

Each employee who has a length of service of at least 8 months shall acquire the right to an annual paid leave according to the Labour Code and the Ordinance on Working Hours, Leaves and Holidays. When the 8-month length of service is acquired during the first working year of the employee, he shall have the right to a full paid annual leave for the same year. When part of the 8 month length of service is acquired during one calendar year and the remaining part during the next calendar year, the employee shall have the right to a paid annual leave for the first calendar year proportional to his length of service during that year, and shall acquire the right to a full paid annual leave during the next year. A new 8-month length of service is not required in order to use the full paid annual leave for the second and following calendar years.

The pedagogical staff in the schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) – the head teachers, deputy head teachers with a compulsory teaching norm, the teachers, the specialists in educational methods, tutors, pedagogical advisers, heads of branches in the inter-school centres for polytechnic training, speech coaches, psychologists, rehearsal coaches, choreographers, heads of educational computer centres, hearing and speech therapists, have the right to an extended paid annual leave of 48 working days.

The teachers, who have started work after the beginning of the school year and have not acquired an 8-month length of service by the holiday time, have the right to a paid leave of 4 days for every month of service for the given year.

The teachers in the children's musical and ballet schools, acknowledged as educational institutions, have the right to an extended paid annual leave of 36 working days.

The head teachers, deputy head teachers and the teachers in the social-educational and professional schools have the right to an extended paid annual leave of 36 working days.

The teachers and educational specialists in the homes for children and youths with physical disabilities and/or mental disabilities have the right to an extended paid annual leave of 36 working days.

The head teachers, deputy head teachers (responsible for the educational work) and the teachers in permanent active schools, which are not acknowledged as schools, have the right to an extended paid annual leave of 30 working days.

The head teachers of the homes and day care centres for children and youths with physical disabilities and/or mental disabilities have the right to an extended paid annual leave of 30 working days.

8.2.12.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The working time of lecturers and research workers, involved in lecturing, covers curriculum and extra-curriculum activities.

The time, spent on curriculum activities, is set by an ordinance on the annual number of lectures and seminars, the schedule of the academic process and the weekly schedule, adopted by the Academic Council and signed by the rector.

The time, spent on extra-curriculum activities, is set by a decision of the academic council and order of the rector of the higher school.

The duration of one lecture or seminar is 45 minutes.

The duration and type of leaves of university lecturers are specified in the Labour Code and the Higher Education Act.

According to the Labour Code, every university lecturer who has a length of service of at least 8 months is entitled to a paid annual leave. The paid annual leave is not less than 20 working days, given that the higher schools may extend it, depending on the position held. Besides, staffers are entitled to an additional annual leave of 25 working days in the event of studies in a higher school without interrupting the working process as well as a 30-day paid annual leave for preparation and taking a matriculation or state graduation exams, including preparation for defence of graduate paper, project or doctoral thesis. Employees and staffers, working part-time or doctoral students under an independent training are entitled once to a 6-month paid leave for drafting a doctoral thesis and applying for a doctor's degree and to a 12-month leave for a philosophy doctor degree. These leaves are taken with the consent of the employer.

According to article 82, paragraph 1 of the Higher Education Act, every seven years higher school lecturers are entitled to take a leave with the duration of one academic year for creative development. They are not supposed to take courses during that leave. Leaves for post-graduate training outside the respective higher school with a three-month duration are deducted from the leave for creative development. The decision is taken by the faculty council according to rules, approved by the academic council of the higher school.

The provisions of the Labour Code of the Republic of Bulgaria are taken into consideration in regards to issues concerning the amount, forms and terms for extending additional leaves, which are not regulated by the Higher Education Act.

8.2.13. Promotion, Advancement

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.13.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

The professional advancement of the teaching staff can be horizontal or vertical:

The **horizontal advancement** is connected to increasing the professional skills, experience and qualification, while keeping the same job position – it is expressed in the participation in different forms of professional qualification and improvement, acquiring professional qualification degrees, specializing in the country and abroad, taking on additional duties and functions within the school organization, as well as through self-preparation and self-improvement.

With the increasing of the work experience of the teachers, their remuneration also increases. For the teachers, who lack the necessary educational level or teaching qualifications, the horizontal advancement is expressed in acquiring the respective forms of training in the higher education system.

Transferring the teacher to a more prestigious and established school organization can also be considered as horizontal advancement.

Vertical advancement is expressed in moving to a position with higher requirements in the hierarchical structure of the educational system. After acquiring a certain working experience / 3 – 5 – 7 years/ depending on the requirements for the respective managerial position, the teachers, who have the necessary educational level and qualification, may apply for advancement. At a school level, the managerial positions are principal, deputy principal, at a regional level – experts in the respective subjects, organizational experts, heads of Regional Inspectorates on Education, at a national level – specialized administration at the Ministry of Education and Science, heads of departments, directors offices and so on. Taking up most of the managerial positions in the public education system is realized on the basis of a successfully passed competition.

8.2.13.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act regulates issues related to the career of the academic staff of higher schools. The Supreme Testimonial Commission is the body setting the areas in which doctoral theses can be defended and academic ranks awarded. Besides, it exercises control over the research councils with the higher schools and the research institutes aligning the criteria for awarding academic degrees and ranks. The Supreme Testimonial Commission consists of a presidium and research commissions in the separate scientific areas and majors. The line up is set by the Council of Ministers.

The “doctor” and “philosophy doctor” degrees are awarded to persons with university education who have defended doctoral theses. The doctoral thesis defence is preceded by passing certain compulsory exams.

The “assistant” and “research associate” ranks are granted to persons with university education who are not older than 35 years. In order to be awarded the rank of “senior research worker” and “associate professor”, person should have a “doctor’s” degree, published papers, original research achievements and minimum pedagogical practice. According to article 12 of the Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act, the rank of “associate professor” and “senior research associate, class II” may be granted to persons, who do not hold academic degrees but are highly-qualified experts or are lecturers or research workers of long standing. In this case the applicant should submit a habilitation paper.

The “professor” and “senior research associate” ranks are granted to persons, who have university education, major original research papers published or original research achievements and minimum pedagogical practice. If the applicant does not hold an academic rank, he/she submits a habilitation paper.

The following rules are applicable to the career development of lecturers:

- Persons, holding the rank of “associate professors” or “senior research associates, class II,” can be elected as professors;
- Persons, holding the rank of “assistants” or “research associates” or a “doctoral” degree in the respective area, can be elected as associate professors.

The process of continuous reform in higher education entails enhancing of the possibilities for women’s career development. Statistics shows that the share of women has increased from 13% to 27.8% of the whole senior academic staff /professors and associate professors/ in 2002/2003. An upward tendency has been observed also in regards to the number of women, appointed as lecturers without academic ranks. They relative share has increased by some 10%. The opposite is the tendency in regards to the share of women among functional lecturers and research workers, where a fluctuating reduction of their number has been observed.

The education and scientific degree of a doctor is acquired after doctoral training and successful defence of a dissertation. An assistant or a senior assistant has the right to be made chief assistant after the acquisition of a doctoral degree. When a person has the required number of publications, developed courses, has already acquired a doctoral degree, he or she can acquire a second doctoral degree. The Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act makes only one exception – when a person who has not acquired a doctoral degree but has deposited research work qualifying for an associate professor degree and meets all the other requirements this person can be awarded the second doctoral degree.

The academic degree of philosophy doctor can be awarded to doctors, associate professors and professors after defending a dissertation qualifying for a doctor of sciences. The requirements for the research work qualifying for a doctor of sciences are significantly higher than the ones for the acquisition of a doctoral degree. Having it is an advantage when applying for professorship and is reflected in the person’s salary.

8.2.14. Transfers

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.14.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

There are no legislatively regulated requirements concerning the transfer and mobility in the work of the teachers developed within the public education system. In the school practice, they are partially applied as a means to broadening the skills used by the teachers, as a diversification of the work and as an opportunity for additional training. Both horizontal mobility – connected with improving the working skills at one and the same hierarchical level, and vertical mobility – aimed at developing the skills and opportunities for professional advancement, are used. The horizontal mobility is most often expressed in the periodical change in the classes a given teacher teaches and through the participation in different forms of intra-school qualification activities and the vertical mobility is realized by participation in the management of the school and the work of different committees.

With the availability of vacant teaching positions, the teachers are free to choose the school where they would like to work, as well as to apply for other positions in the public education system.

8.2.14.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

The terms and procedure for the transfer of lecturers and research associates from one establishment to another are set in the Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act. Under article 39 research associates can be transferred from one research structure to another within the same area of operation and with the same rank after the holding of a competition by the research council of the receiving structure. The following transfers can be made:

- Appointment of research associates as assistants and vice versa;
- Appointment of associate professors as senior research associates, class II and vice versa;
- Appointment of professors as senior research associates, class I and vice versa.
- Research associates, holding academic ranks, retain them even after they no longer hold research positions.

8.2.15. Dismissal

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.15.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

The labour contract may be terminated with or without notice by both parties under labour relations – the employer or employee. The most frequent cases are those of mutual consent between the teacher and the employer; with a notice from one of the parties; when the substituted teacher returns – under a contract for a fixed period of time; when the school is closed down or when there are layoffs; when acquiring the right to pension or when the position has to be vacated in order to reinstate an illegally dismissed employee – these conditions for termination of the contract do not concern the professional qualities of the teacher, but other circumstances.

The labour contract may also be terminated in the case when the teacher does not possess the necessary education or professional qualification for the position and when he lacks qualities to effectively carry out his duties.

Disciplinary dismissal is required in the following cases:

- three delays or three times leaving work prematurely in a calendar month, each of no less than one hour;
- not showing up for work for two consecutive working days;
- systematically disrupting the work discipline;
- abusing the trust of the employer or spreading confidential information about him;
- other severe violations of the work discipline;

The employer is obliged to hear out the employee in advance or to accept his written explanations. There are certain conditions, accepted for protection, when dismissing a specific category of employees – vocational rehabilitation, employees who suffer from certain illnesses, pregnant women or mothers with children of up to three years of age, members of syndicate managements.

Often, the change of work place is done when the teacher transfers to another job in the management bodies of the educational system or to another field or has won a competition in a higher education institute.

8.2.15.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

According to article 58 of the Higher Education Act, academic staff members are released by order of the rector. This is implemented, according to the following terms:

- On request of the lecturer;
- Upon impossibility to organize the courses, which the respective lecturer is supposed to take, or the lack of possibilities for transfer or re-training in a similar field;
- Upon established plagiarism of research papers;
- Upon revoking of the academic rank or degree;
- Upon subsequent negative attestations;
- Breaches of discipline;
- Upon conviction and imprisonment for the commitment of premeditated murder.

The rector issues an order for release of duties on the lecturer's wish or impossibility to organize the courses, which he is supposed to take, as well as in the event of established plagiarism or negative attestation following a decision of the council of the main body of the respective educational establishment.

Upon impossibility to organize the courses, which the respective lecture is supposed to take, he is released of his duties and receives compensation equivalent to his remuneration by the time of the expiry of his contract of service but for a period, not longer than 12 month of his release.

The Higher Education Act and the higher school regulation also specify the violations that are deemed breaches of discipline. Upon the establishment of violations, the monitoring council and the academic ethics commission submit evidence about the violation with the academic council.

8.2.16. Retirement and Pensions

Please see the following subsections.

8.2.16.1. Teachers in Pre-primary and School Education

The matters concerning the retirement of the teachers are regulated according to the Labour Code and the Social Insurance Code. The teacher shall acquire the right to pension, when he/she has the necessary practice and has reached the required age. In this case, the employer may terminate their labour contract without waiting for a definite period of time after the acquiring the right to pension – up to 2001, before the amendments to the Labour Code, this period of time was three years.

An important factor is that the employer has the right, but is not obliged, to dismiss employees who have acquired the right to pension based on insurance practice and age, if his/her assessment of their professional qualities, efficiency and the quality of the work done by them is positive and in the interest of the school or kindergarten.

8.2.16.2. Teachers in Tertiary Education

According to the Labour Code professors, associate professors, senior research associates class I and II, and philosophy doctors are entitled to a pension after the age of 65. According to the 2005 amendments of the Higher Education Act if the department's council and the council of the basic unit and/or affiliated unit make a decision to this effect, persons holding an academic rank can continue working there after the age of 65 for a year more (but not more than three consecutive years) if the person is a professor and for a year more (but not more than two consecutive years) if the person is an associate professor.

8.3. School Administrative and/or Management Staff

The staff of school administration and management includes the following members: head teacher, deputy head teachers in the educational, administrative-economic, and educational-manufacturing activities. The sole managing body and employer is the head teacher, the deputy head teachers help the principal in performing his/her obligations.

The functions and responsibilities of principals are presented in detail in chapter 2, see section **2.6.4.**

The administrative staff includes a cashier, an accountant, and a secretary.

8.3.1. Requirements for Appointment as a School Head

Heads of schools are appointed on the basis of competition according to the framework rules for conducting competitions for taking on the position of principal of a state or municipal school or obsluzhvashto zveno (servicing unit).

Applicants for head teacher's position should answer the following requirements:

- to be Bulgarian citizens;
- not to have been convicted prisoners
- to have had no disciplinary sanctions, except for cancelled ones;
- to have a Bachelor's or Master's higher education degree and a teacher's professional qualification or pedagogical capacity, allowing them to fulfill the norm for compulsory teaching activity at the school for which they are applying;
- to have no less than three years of teaching experience.

The competition is conducted through a written examination and interview with a five-member commission comprising experts from the Ministry of Education and Science, head of department and/or senior experts at the Regional Inspectorate of Education of the respective region, a representative of the financing body.

The variants of the tasks for the written exam are prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The exam consists of solving test problems and cases connected with the implementation of the legislative regulations in the system of public education. The paper is assessed through a total number of points – 50 maximum.

The interview is conducted in accordance with two criteria – competency in the normative provision and legal regulation of school education/the legislative acts and compulsory documentation at schools; management functions and authority; specific rights and responsibilities/ and communication skills.

The final result of the competition for each applicant is measured as the sum of the results from the written examination and from the interview. The maximum number of points is 100. The applicant who wins the first place in the competition is appointed head teacher starting from the day he/she has received the message about the result.

The National Programme for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006-2015) envisages many changes both in the conditions for appointing school heads and in their status as follows:

- Introducing mandates for the post of school heads without restricting the number of mandates – this measure is expected to stimulate head teachers to fulfil their duties better and more responsibly. It will also grant greater control over their activity – the school heads will have to prove the efficiency of their programmes for the development of the school, to account for what has been done and to appeal to parents', teachers' and students' trust.
- Creation of a National Head Teacher Training Institute (functioning since the autumn of 2006) – the main task of the institute will be to conduct training for school heads in order to improve their organisational, managerial and financial competence. The institute will carry out two types of training: initial training for those who wish to become school heads ending with a national exam for the acquisition of the right to be appointed school head; and periodical in-service training school heads aimed at the development and improvement of their knowledge and qualification.
- Development of models for the testimonial of school heads – it is necessary to develop a system of criteria and indices for periodical evaluation of the work and qualities of school head. Such obligatory testimonials would, together with the introduction of mandates, stimulate and discipline school heads.

8.3.2. Conditions of Service

With a view to the variety of functions the heads of schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) have

to perform, the norms for compulsory teaching activity of principal are lower than those for teachers – they are determined according to the number of classes and groups and the type of school, kindergarten or servicing unit.

Head of...	group/ class	annual norm according to number of classes and groups					
		from 1 to 3	from 4 to 6	from 7 to 10	from 11 to 22	from 23 to 45	over 45
Kindergarten/united children's home, children's home for children of pre-school age;	group	Teacher's norm	216	144	108	72	
Primary schools /I – IV grade/	class	Teacher's norm	192	128	96	64	
Secondary general school, upper secondary school, lower secondary school, basic school, sports school;	class	Teacher's norm	216	144	108	72	72
Special schools							
Remedial and hospital schools;	class	Teacher's norm	216	144	108	72	
For mentally disabled pupils, pupils with speech impediments, hard of hearing, visally challenged or with multiple disabilities;	class	Teacher's norm	216	144	108	72	
educational Boarding schools and social pedagogical boarding school;	Class	72	72	72	72	72	
Vocational schools, vocational upper secondary schools, vocational colleges;	class	180	180	108	108	72	72
Inter-school centre for labour polytechnic training;	group	180	180	108	108	72	72
Hostel and home for bringing up children deprived of parental care	group	Teacher's norm	216	144	108	72	
Non-school pedagogical establishment	group	Teacher's norm	Teacher's norm	300	220	120	72

The basic salary of principals is determined according to the category of the school (schools are divided into categories according to the number classes, the principal of first-category schools receive the highest salary), higher personal qualification /having a qualification or scientific degree/, the length of service and the quotient to the minimal working salary.

The conditions of service of head teachers are regulated by the same normative basis as those of teachers, for further details see the relevant subsections in section **8.2.**

The rules for taking leaves are presented in section **8.2.12.**

8.4. Staff involved in Monitoring Educational Quality

The officials who carry out the methodology management and control over the activity of teachers' and school heads' work as well as the whole activity of the schools are the experts of the Ministry of

Education and Science and its regional structures – the Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE). They are civil servants and so the positions they occupy and the requirements for that are regulated in the Unified Classifier of administrative positions and in the ordinance on its implementation. Depending on the professional obligations and the professional qualification, educational degree and professional experience required for the position, there are four types of expert positions:

- State expert – the position is used only in the central administration – the MES (but not in the regional structures). The requirements include having a master's degree and at least 5 years of professional experience.
- Chief Expert – it is used both in state administration and in the regional structures (MES and RIE respectively). The requirements include having a bachelor's degree and at least 4 years of professional experience.
- Senior expert - the requirements include having a bachelor's degree and at least 2 years of professional experience.
- Junior expert – he/she has subsidiary functions in the administration. The requirements include having a specialist's degree and no professional experience. The junior experts in the system of education do not have control functions.

Each Regional Education Inspectorate is managed and represented by a head, who is a government official and is appointed by competition by the Minister of Education and Science. The employees at the inspectorate are civil servants and persons employed on the grounds of labor relations. Depending on the distribution of activities, the administration of the Regional Inspectorates is general and specialized and is organized in departments:

The general administration is organized in the Office of Administrative-legal, Financial-economic and Information Services – its main activities are legal, activities related to providing the human resources required, registration, financial-economic, information, etc.

The specialized administration is organized in the Office of Inspection and Organizational-methodological Activities which includes experts in individual subjects and in primary education, who provide methodological support and control teachers, and organizational experts who ensure the methodological provision of the schools' managing activity and the correct keeping of school documentation. The most important functions and obligations of experts in the general education subjects according to their job-description are:

- to plan and carry out their activity in accordance with the main tasks of the Ministry of Education and Science, connected with the general education subjects and the specific objectives and tasks of the Regional Education Inspectorates.
- to plan and perform their functions in accordance with the main objectives of the Ministry of Education and Science related to general education subjects as well as the specific goals and objectives of RIE;
- to manage the implementation and control the observance of the State Education Requirements, concerning the respective subject;
- to control and evaluate the results of the educational process in the respective subject and the keeping of the school documentation on it.
- to control and evaluate the professional fitness of teachers in the respective subject and direct them to the appropriate qualification course.
- to conduct checkups of the quality and efficacy of the educational process,
- to make expert evaluation on the results of teachers' educational work.
- to reply to letters and complaints of teachers, parents, etc.

The experts in organization of secondary education at the Regional Inspectorates of Education have the following major functions and tasks:

- to control and support schools in the implementation of laws, and other legislative documents
- to control the management and administrative activities of head teachers and deputy head teachers;
- to take part in the making decisions for opening, closing or transforming schools and kindergartens;
- to participate in working groups for developing projects and legislative acts.

8.4.1. Requirements for Appointment as an Inspector

According to the Public Education Act, the appointment of experts is made on the basis of competition, conducted according to rules predetermined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Applicants should have a relevant higher education degree and a teacher's qualification (see section **8.1.**), as well as the respective professional experience required by the rules set by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Unified Classifier of administrative positions.

8.4.2. Conditions of Service

As civil servants the experts and heads of the Regional Inspectorates of Education are subject to the regulations of the Civil Servant Act and the State Administration Act in terms of salaries, procedures for professional growth and promotion, holidays etc. On the basis of conducted assessment, experts can acquire the following ranks – expert, senior expert, chief expert, as well as qualification degrees according to the five-degree scale described in section **8.2.10.**

8.5. Educational Staff responsible for Support and Guidance

In schools of over 500 pupils, a pedagogical adviser is appointed to examine the problems of the pupils and help them in surmounting any difficulties encountered. Special attention is paid by the adviser to pupils who are likely to drop out of school, pupils with poor achievements or with deviant behavior, and he/she duly informs the class teachers about any problems met and assist them in resolving such problems.

The adviser carries out information and consulting activities with pupils and parents to help them in selecting a profession or further education and if needed, he/she refers them to specialized diagnostics.

He/she is a member of the Pedagogical Council and participates in the work of the school committee for preventing antisocial activities of underage children and minors.

The position of a “pedagogical adviser” requires a diploma in higher education, with a bachelor’s or master’s degree awarded, in the specialties of “Psychology”, “Pedagogy”, or higher education with awarded professional qualifications of a “teacher” or with a teacher’s certificate.

Tutors in Bulgarian school organize and carry out educational activities with pupils outside the compulsory school hours. Their main function is to assist pupils in their preparation and self-study, in their acquiring and mastering skills at working independently, in attaining the educational objectives, etc. The tutor is responsible for protecting the life and health of pupils while carrying out the respective activities.

The position of a “tutor” requires a diploma in higher education with a bachelor’s or master’s degree or an educational and qualification degree of a “specialist”.

There is no position in Bulgarian schools for the time being, but some consideration has been given to the matter of possible introduction in the near future of assistant teachers in schools located in regions with predominant minority population, with a view to assist children in their learning the official Bulgarian language.

8.6. Other Educational Staff or Staff working with Schools

Apart from the teaching staff, the standards for the number of employees in the schools, the kindergartens and the service units include also non-teaching staff: social and health care servants (a doctor and a nurse), and a librarian), auxiliary staff (persons responsible for the hygiene, cooks, etc.). Staff responsible for the maintenance of the sport facilities and the children’s catering is included in the standards for the number of the non-teaching staff in the sport schools. The standards envisage more people employed as non-teaching staff in vocational schools.

A librarian is in charge of the school library. The main functions of the librarian are related to the preservation and enrichment of book-stock, distribution of printed matter, assisting pupils with their selection of teaching and belletristic literature, maintaining contacts with the school Board of Trustees and other partners existing in the social environment, with the purpose of fundraising for purchasing literature and providing donations to the library.

For the storage and enrichment of the museum collections at school, teachers in the respective subjects (e.g., biology, history, geology) are most frequently in charge.

If necessary, the financing body provides additional non-teaching staff to professional schools, professional high-schools and professional colleges for securing their schooling and production activities as well as for maintenance of the necessary equipment.

The structure of every higher educational institution includes main and auxiliary units. As auxiliary units are regarded the laboratories, administration, sports grounds, university libraries and publishing houses, information departments, groups engaged in cultural activities, research services etc. Individuals who do not have academic status are:

- administrative and administration-supporting staff;
- auxiliary staff;

- teachers who are engaged in schooling of non-specialists in languages, sport, arts etc.;
- researchers.

According to article 53 of the Higher Education Act, institutions of higher education have the right to hire specialists and experts to contribute to their schooling and scientific research activities.

Administrative and administration-supporting staff, as well as the auxiliary staff are recruited in line with the generally applied practices under the provisions and conditions of the Labour Code. The staff with non-academic status is hired under labour contracts or under contracts of services depending on the position occupied or the nature of the service.

Teachers are selected and hired according to the provisions and the conditions of the Academic Degrees and Academic Ranks Act and the regulations of the institutions of higher education. They may be hired under fixed-term contracts or under termless labour contracts according to the provisions and conditions of the regulations of the institutions of higher education.

8.7. Statistics

Number of teachers according to the standard international educational classification (isced-97)

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
TOTAL	122 986	122 002	122 339
Pre-school education (ISCED-0)	18 675	18 893	19 254
Primary education (I-IV grade, ISCED-1)	19 089	18 182	17 668
Lower secondary education (V-VIII grade, ISCED-2A) ¹	28 356	27 601	26 844
Upper secondary education (IX-XIII grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	34 135	34 475	34 372
Vocational training after secondary education (ISCED-4C)	199	230	268
Tertiary education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	22 532	22 621	23 933
Colleges (ISCED-5B)	2 314	2 476	2 399
Universities and specialised tertiary education institutions (ISCED-5A)	20 218	20 145	21 534
Total – private education	4 741	5 342	5 197
Pre-school education (ISCED-0)	96	120	121
Primary education (I-IV grade, ISCED-1)	181	213	208
Lower secondary education (V-VIII grade, ISCED-2A)	300	340	393
Upper secondary education (IX-XIII grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	1 200	1 222	899
Vocational training after secondary education (ISCED-4C)	162	211	568
Tertiary education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	2 802	3 236	3 008
Colleges (ISCED-5B)	281	389	417
Universities and specialised tertiary education institutions (ISCED-5A)	2 521	2 847	2 591

The total number of teachers holding professional and qualification degrees is 19,101:

- First professional qualification degree – 1,223;
- Second professional qualification degree - 13,090;

- Third professional qualification degree – 1,648;
- Fourth professional qualification degree – 601;
- Fifth professional qualification degree – 2,539;
- Academic degree – 252

By completed educational degree:

- Master or Bachelor – 68,201 educational staff total; 62,998 teachers total;
- Specialist– 13,226 educational staff total; 13,151 teachers total;
- Secondary education – 965 educational staff total; 965 teachers – no head teachers or deputy head teachers with secondary education only;

By gender:

- Women – 65,829 educational staff total; 62,324 teachers total;
- Men – 16,563 educational staff total; 14,790 teachers total;

By age:

- Under 25 – 1,787 educational staff total и 1,782 teachers total;
- 25 – 29 years old – 7,693 educational staff total; 7,597 teachers total;
- 30 – 34 years old – 11,446 educational staff total; 11,058 teachers total;
- 35 – 39 years old – 12,964 educational staff total; 12,201 teachers total;
- 40 – 44 years old – 14,926 educational staff total; 13,730 teachers total;
- 45 – 49 years old – 14,851 educational staff total; 13,643 teachers total;
- 50 – 54 years old – 11,660 educational staff total; 10,668 teachers total;
- 55 – 59 years old – 5,735 educational staff total; 5,236 teachers total;
- 60 – 64 years old – 1,224 educational staff total; 1,102 teachers total;
- 65 and over – 106 educational staff total; 97 teachers total.

Distribution of lecturers in tertiary education by academic position held

Academic position	90/91		93/94		97/98		00/01		S		02/03	
	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women
Prof.	6.0	2.1	7.4	2.22	9.5	3.6	9.3	4.0	9.0	3.7	9.2	3.8
Assoc. Prof.	18.7	10.9	21.8	13.8	25.3	17.7	27.2	21.3	28.0	20.6	31.4	24
Assistant lecturer	43.6	47.3	46.4	50.1	46.7	52.9	44.9	49.9	46.5	51.7	47.8	55.4
Research associate	26.4	31.5	21.2	31.2	18.1	25.4	22.2	22.2	15.6	21.7	11.3	16.5
	6.9	8.2	3.2	2.6	0.5	0.4	2.6	2.6	1.0	1.0	0.2	0.1

Source: National Statistical Institute

9. Evaluation of Educational Institutions and the Education System

The national institutions responsible for the evaluating activities in the system of school education up to 2005, apart from the Ministry of Education and Science with the experts of its structural units, were the National Unit for Evaluation of Secondary Education and the National Institute for Education.

After the closing down of the National Unit for Evaluation of Secondary Education and the National Institute for Education, another institution was established – the Centre for control and evaluation of the quality of education (CCEQE). This centre is responsible for preparing tests for every school subject, the later application of these tests at schools, processing of the data collected through these tests, for evaluating vocational and higher education.

At regional level, the evaluation of the education system is performed by the experts of the Regional Inspectorates of Education. They supervise and evaluate the work of schools as a whole, the managing activity of principals, the educational work of teachers and the activity and results of pupils' education.

Evaluation in the field of higher education is performed by a specialized state body: the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, whose main aim is to evaluate the quality of education and the compliance of the activity of higher schools with the Higher Education Act and the State requirements. Obtained positive accreditation gives higher schools the right to perform their activities, and to issue higher education diplomas in certain specialities at particular educational and qualification levels.

9.1. Historical Overview

With the first law on public education in 1878 started the creation of a state system for evaluation of teachers and of the overall activity of schools. New legislative decrees appeared, regulating the ways of evaluating the system, among which there was an instruction for regional inspectors and a document about establishing an inspection for national schools. For each five provinces in the Principality of Bulgaria a regional inspector was appointed, and since 1879 there was a regional inspector for each educational region (the total number being 15). Inspectors controlled the whole educational process, teachers' work, the keeping of school documentation and the condition of facilities.

With the Public Education Act of 1891 a centralised model of the education system was established. The control over schools was undertaken by the Ministry of Education and school inspectors became its implementers.

All schools and additional courses were controlled by the Ministry of education through the regional school inspectors and their assistants. There was a special emphasis on gathering comprehensive information on the development of the activity of education in the respective regions and on sending the information regularly to the ministry, as well as on linking the control and methodology functions of inspectors.

In the period 1934-1935 the areas of evaluation of the system were more clearly specified:

- supervision of education;
- hygiene and cleanliness of the pupils and the buildings of the schools;
- pupils' behaviour in and outside school;
- administrative checkup of the head teacher or principal;

- the condition of the pupils' and teachers' library, of training aids and furniture;
- supervision of the funds for supporting poor pupils.

A compulsory discussion with the teacher after the end of a supervision session was also introduced.

After 9 September 1944 there were significant changes in the education system, which had an impact on the evaluation system. The measures for eradicating illiteracy, the introduction of the principle of compulsory education for all, the expansion of the school network and the large-scale construction of new schools led to a considerable increase in the number of teachers, and the number of managing staff respectively, as well as to higher requirements to their training and their level of education. Along with that, the functions of the managing staff at all levels of the system were specified in detail. The criteria for evaluation were also further developed.

The centralized model of the education system was retained – the evaluation of its quality and effectiveness was carried out by the Ministry of Education and the immediate control over schools and educational institutions as well as the institutions for training and improvement of teaching staff was undertaken by the Education Departments at Regional Public Councils.

In the 1990s, some positive changes appeared in the system of evaluation, such as recognizing the need for decentralization of certain levels of the system, boosting schools' autonomy and the democratization of pedagogical control. However, along with that, there were a number of problems and controversies – inconsistency in the monitoring activities, increased subjectivism, lack of clear evaluation criteria, distancing the monitoring bodies at national and regional level from the school, frequent changes in the managing educational bodies and in the legislative framework, etc.

In 1995, the legislative framework regulating the evaluation system was considerably renovated – a new set of rules for the structure and activity of regional inspectorates and new job descriptions for the experts were introduced. At the beginning of the same year Instruction #1 was accepted, concerning the supervision activity within the system of public education.

9.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

In the direction of reforms of the education system there has been an emphasis on the evaluation of its quality and effectiveness. It is recognized that significant changes should be made both in the overall evaluation of the system, and in particular fields, such as the evaluation of teachers, pupils, the quality of the educational content and the applicability of the State Education Requirements.

With the aim to raise the quality of education, more effective systems for evaluation of the overall activity of schools and of teachers' work are being sought, and in the sphere of higher education – new systems for improving the procedures for accreditation of higher schools.

The questions of evaluating the quality of the system of education are especially topical subject to discussion at present moment.

In the sphere of higher education, the measures aimed at creating and establishing an internal system of quality control at separate higher education institutions and an external system of evaluation are still under way. The latter is carried out by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency of higher education institutions, which also executes post-accreditation observation.

The National programme for the development of school education and pre-school upbringing and education (2006 – 2015) pays special attention to the question of quality. It states that the development of a modern, effective and objective quality control system is one of the conditions for the

development of the system of school education. No quality of education can be provided unless there are reliable mechanisms to measure the achievements of the process of education. It also points out that quality control is important in several ways:

- *It is important to society* – through it society can be informed about the current state of affairs of the system of education and it can pose new requirements to the system;
- *It is important to the state* – through comparison of the achievements of one and the same year students at different schools and as well through comparison of student results from different years, it is possible to establish the current state of affairs of school education and to trace the tendencies in its development. Thus control can play a corrective role in the pursued educational policy.
- *It is important to teachers* – student results will be an important criterion for the formation of their payment.
- *It is important to students and their parents* – it will give them a realistic idea of the level of preparation and it will create equal conditions for study.

The system of quality evaluation and control will be changed in two major ways – development of the system of internal evaluation and creation of a system of external evaluation. (The specific measures are presented in chapters 4 and 5.)

It should be noted, however, that the current suggestions for reforming evaluation and of quality in education as they are stated in the programme for development of school and pre-school education are not entirely new to the Bulgarian system of education. Over the past few years significant scientific and practical advancement has been realised, but the accumulated experience is not used well enough.

9.3. Administrative and Legislative Framework

At the present moment the evaluation of the education system is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Public Education Act, the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act, the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act, the Vocational Education and Training Act, Instruction No. 1/1995 on the control activities and Ordinance No. 3/2003.

The evaluation of schools and of the education system as a whole is carried out at national, regional and school level. Since the evaluation system is decentralised, the policy connected with evaluation is defined at national level by the Ministry of Education and Science and is implemented by its structural units. The legislative regulations and prescriptions of the Ministry of Education and Science are compulsory for schools of all types and stages, as well as for the individual participants in the education process and the staff working in the system of public education.

The educational fields and vocational education experts at the Ministry of Education and Science check and evaluate:

- the adherence to the State Educational Requirements regarding the school subject or direction;
- the results from the school activities in the schools for the respective subject or direction;
- the work of the experts for the respective subject or direction in the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science
- the results of the experimental work on the subject or direction;
- the execution of the State Educational Requirements for knowledge, for skills, for evaluation, for extracurricular activities, the effectiveness of the applied educational technologies;
- the scientific and methodological qualification of the experts from the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science for the separate school subjects or directions.

The experts on the secondary education organization at the Ministry of Education and Science review and evaluate:

the activity of the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science, the schools and supporting units on the execution of the laws and other regulatory legislation and departmental documentation regarding secondary education;

the organizational, managerial and administrative work of the department heads and experts in the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science and the principals of the schools;

the activity of the principals according to the requirement of the Labour Code and other legislative acts, when signing, amending and terminating labour contracts with the teaching and non-teaching personnel;

the correct keeping and preserving of school documentation.

The control activities of the experts and departments heads in the system of public education is periodically evaluated by permanent acting expert committees for the control activities, determined by an order from the minister of education and science.

The committees determine the conditions and order for attesting the principals of the schools and supporting units in accordance with art. 37, paragraph 7 of the Public Education Act and propose changes in the labour relations to the minister.

The Ministry of Education and Science, through its territorial structures carries out control over the activities of the private schools and kindergartens in accordance with the normative requirements.

With the adoption of the Higher Education Act in 1995, in Bulgaria a process of creation of quality management systems of higher education has begun firstly at national level, and later at university level. In accordance with the amendments of the Higher Education Act, in July 1999 a specialized state authority - the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency - was established with the main task to assess the quality of education and the compliance of the activities of higher schools with the Higher Education Act and the state requirements. A higher school which has been given positive accreditation has the right to carry out its activities and issue diplomas for higher education in certain specialities and at certain educational and qualification levels.

At present, accreditation in our country is institutional and program-based. With the institutional accreditation, the bodies of management, legal compliance and purposefulness of the decisions and mechanisms, which assure the quality of the complex activities, are assessed. While the program-based accreditation evaluates the potential of a given speciality and the result from tuition aiming at establishing its level and improving the quality of training. The Higher Education Act provides for the institutional accreditation to precede all other types of accreditation which means that without a positive result and accreditation, no institution of higher education can apply for assessment and accreditation of its separate programmes.

A specific feature of the accreditation in Bulgaria is that the higher schools on their initiative refer to the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for opening a procedure and pay on their own the cost of accreditation as per tariffs for every type of procedure approved by the Ministry of Finance.

Public and private higher schools in Bulgaria are subject to one and the same regime of accreditation.

Since the school year of 2005/2006 there have been a few changes in Ordinance №3 on the system of evaluation. They regard students' internal and external evaluation and are presented under **9.4.1.** and **9.4.2.** respectively.

A few specifications have been made related to the quality and quantity of marks. On the basis of the established results of on-going evaluation and examinations pupils are given a mark with a qualitative and a quantitative index, while first graders and pupils of special educational needs who are educated under individual programmes are given marks with a qualitative index only. It is possible to give the following marks: excellent 6, very good 5, good 4, satisfactory 3 and poor 2.

According to this ordinance the quantitative index can be determined as a decimal fraction as follows:

- for a quantitative index ranging from 2,00 to 2,99 the qualitative index is poor;
- for a quantitative index ranging from 3,00 to 3,49 the qualitative index is satisfactory;
- for a quantitative index ranging from 3,50 to 4,49 the qualitative index is good;
- for a quantitative index ranging from 4,50 to 5,49 the qualitative index is very good;
- for a quantitative index ranging from 5,50 to 6,00 the qualitative index is excellent;

The final marks at graduating secondary education are formed by calculating them precisely to 0,01 as an average mark derived from the marks for the school years in the subjects defined as compulsory and optional during upper secondary.

Another change connected with evaluation is the types of examinations – evaluation can be carried out through

- on-going examinations;
- exams;
- examinations aimed at establishing the level of acquisition of the study content in a school subject for a particular grade;
- examinations aimed at establishing the level of achieving the State Educational Requirements for study content in a particular subject for a completed level of the degree of education or the State Educational Requirements for the acquisition of professional qualification for one or more grades

9.4. Evaluation of Schools/Institutions

The overall activity of schools, kindergartens and servicing units throughout the country is monitored in accordance with the common legislative framework for this field with the leading role of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The evaluation of schools is carried out at national level by the Ministry of Education and Science (for details see section **9.3.**), at regional level by the Regional Inspectorates of Education and at school level by the heads of schools.

The immediate control over the overall activity of schools, the managing activity of principals, the teachers' work and pupils' achievement is carried out at regional level by the Regional Inspectorates of Education– territorial administration units directly subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science. The obtained information is sent to the Ministry of Education and Science, where it is systematized and thus an overall view and comparability of the quality of education and the achievements and problems in the different regions of the country are provided. The activity of the education system at regional level is accomplished by the experts of the Regional Inspectorates of Education.

The head of the Regional Inspectorates of Education reviews and evaluates: the work of the experts from the Regional Inspectorates of Education, the principals of schools and servicing units on the territory of the region with regard to the execution of the normative documents and keeping the documentation in the secondary education in order. He/she also evaluates the work of the schools on the execution of compulsory education (Instruction No. 1/1995, art. 10).

The experts in general education subjects working for the Regional Inspectorates of Education review and evaluate the management activities of the principals and deputy principals of the schools and servicing units on the execution of the school legislation, the normative documents, the Labour Code and keeping the school documentation in order (Instruction No. 1/1995 art. 6).

The experts in the general educational subjects and in vocational education subjects working for the Regional Inspectorate of Education review and evaluate the execution of the State Educational Requirements for kindergartens, schools and servicing units, the results of the tuition in the respective subjects or education and cultural areas through exams, tests, surveys, case studies, etc., the organization of the educational process, the holding and the results of the entry level and matriculation exams, state and qualification exams, competitions and others in the respective subjects, the work concerning teacher qualification carried out at the schools, keeping the school documentation and the necessary facilities (Instruction No. 1/1995, art. 5). For further information see section 8.4.

The experts in finance and economics working for the Regional Inspectorate review and evaluate (art. 7) the financial and economic condition of education in the region, the schools, their relationship with the municipalities, the keeping of the financial documentation and others.

The information experts at the Regional Inspectorate of Education review and evaluate the flow of information in the region, the terms, the accuracy and authenticity of the information, Sample List No. 1 (in the part concerning statistical information and others (art. 8).

At local level, the municipal bodies on the management of the education and the municipal administration review and evaluate the work of the schools in accordance with their functions under art. 36 (Para 1, items 1 thru 6 of the State Education Act).

As regards institutions of higher education, the policies in higher education are determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Otherwise, higher education institutions are autonomous and subject mostly to internal self-evaluation. An external body for evaluation and licensing of their activity is the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation.

Generally the evaluation of schools/institutions is internal (see section 9.4.1.) and external (9.4.2.).

9.4.1. Internal Evaluation

At school level the evaluation of the overall activity of the schools is carried out in two forms with their own specific objectives:

- evaluation of a mandatory nature performed by principals and deputy-principals of schools, based on the mandatory prescriptions of legislative documents – its major objective is to ensure the normal performance of the overall activity of the school and the timely elimination of deviations. With the performed evaluation the principal provides information and cooperates with monitoring bodies at the subsequent levels of management;
- internal evaluation, which is not formal, and is carried out with a view to evaluate own work – in order to develop strong points and overcome weaknesses. In the present system such form of evaluation is not regulated as mandatory and is implemented mostly experimentally at

certain schools (for example schools working on national and international projects in this field). This process of evaluation can also involve other evaluators having no formal authority for evaluation – such as pupils, parents, the board of trustees, representatives of the local public.

The legislative framework regulates the monitoring functions of individual persons at school level as follows:

Heads of kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units monitors) monitor:

- the fulfillment and implementation of the State Educational Requirements and the normative acts related to basic and secondary education;
- the observation of bylaws;
- the fulfillment of the requirements for labor discipline and the weekly schedule;
- the organization of the educative work by subject through visits in class;
- the implementation of the recommendations for the work of teachers given by experts of Regional Inspectorates of Education and the Ministry of Education and Science;
- the activities of the deputy heads and the administrative and support staff;
- the correct keeping of school documentation.

The deputy head responsible for the educational activity monitors: the organization of the educative work of teachers and tutors in school hours; the conducting of examinations (state, matriculation, qualifying, supplementary, makeup); the additional work of teachers with pupils with specific educational needs; the observation of bylaws; the correct keeping and storing of school documentation.

The deputy head responsible for administrative activity monitors the activities of the maintenance and support staff, the keeping of documentation related to labor and legal relations with the staff, the provision of school documentation, training and technical aids, equipment, repairs, etc.

The deputy head responsible for school manufacturing monitors: the school-manufacturing, manufacturing and laboratory-practical activities, the work of employees and maintenance personnel, the school workshops and laboratories, the observation of safety measures, protection of labor and fire precautions by pupils and personnel in manufacturing units, school workshops, laboratories, etc.

The head and deputy heads record the results from their monitoring activities in the Control Book. At the end of the school year, the head submits a report-analysis of the control activities to the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The amendments of the Higher Education Act of 1999 oblige every higher school to implement and develop a system of assessment and maintenance of the quality of education and academic personnel. The most popular type of structure for maintenance and distribution of quality within an institution is a Commission on Quality. In some institutions this commission is headed by a deputy rector, and in others – by a specially appointed person having experience in management. There are various forms of its “embedding” in the existing organs of management of the higher school. In recent years, many higher schools have successfully cooperated in an attempt to improve the established

systems of quality management by creating common criteria and patterns for assessment and control of quality.

The internal systems of quality of the Bulgarian higher schools is characterised by the fact that assessment is made on the basis of criteria and indicators related to the output and the process, and not to the input of the system.

9.4.2. External Evaluation

External evaluation in the field of basic and secondary education is exercised by the Minister of Education and Science, the experts from the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education, and the heads of schools and deputy heads responsible for education.

The Minister of Education and Science exercises control over the activities of all types of kindergartens, schools, obsluzhvashtite zvena (servicing units) and levels of education (Public Education Act, Art. 35, par. 1).

Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE) are the local subdivisions of the Ministry of Education and Science in the management and monitoring of the public education system (Public Education Act, Art. 35, par. 2).

The Ministry of Education and Science implements the state policy by ‘... exercising control over the activities of RIEs, kindergartens, schools and servicing units’ (Regulations on Implementation of the Public Education Act, Art. 142, par. 3).

RIE monitor the implementation and fulfillment of the state educational requirements by state-maintained, municipal and private kindergartens and schools and by municipal servicing units and socially oriented state municipal units, i.e., homes for upbringing and educating children deprived of parental care (Regulations on Implementation of the Public Education Act, Art. 144, par. 2, par. 3).

The head, as a governing body of the kindergarten, school or servicing unit ... organizes, controls and is responsible for the overall activity (Regulations on Implementation of the Public Education Act, Art. 147, par. 1, item 1).

Instruction No. 1/1995 on carrying out control activities in the public education system is a basic legal document, which regulates the object and the subject of control, the forms, organization; the decisions related to findings resulted from inspections, etc.

Object of control are: (Section I of the Instruction)

- Activities of teachers, tutors and deputy heads in kindergartens, schools and servicing units providing educational services;
- Activities of heads of kindergartens, schools and servicing units;

- Activities of experts and heads of RIEs;
- Activities of experts and heads of MES;
- The correct keeping and storing of school documentation;
- The structure and effectiveness of the network of kindergartens, schools and servicing units;
- The guidance and teaching activity of teachers and tutors in particular subjects and vocational divisions;
- The application and implementation of the legislation applicable to secondary education;
- The provision of personnel, logistics and information supply to kindergartens, schools and servicing units.

Main forms of control are: thorough, topical and running inspections, observation, analysis, correction and evaluation of activities in the educational system.

Controlling bodies and specialists have the following major functions:

The experts in organizing secondary education in RIE monitor:

- The management and administrative activities of heads and deputy heads of schools and servicing units with respect to implementation of the laws and other legal acts and documents concerning secondary education;
- The activities of the heads subject to the provisions of the Labor Code and other legal regulations related to the conclusion, modification and abrogation of the employment contracts with teaching and non-teaching staff;
- The development and implementation of Sample List No.1 for allotment and approval of teaching and other activities of the staff at kindergartens, schools and servicing units (together with the experts in finances and economics);
- The keeping and storing of school documentation.

The experts in finances and economics in RIE monitor:

- The activities related to making the general analyses and statements of the economic and financial state of education in the respective region;
- The financial and economic relations between schools and municipalities as provided for in the legislation in force;
- The application of the Public Education Act and the Regulations on of its Implementation - especially the provisions related to resource supply and funding of secondary education and other legal regulations and orders of the Ministry of Education and Science;
- The implementation of the Labor Code and other legal regulations related to labor and wages and salaries;
- The fulfillment of the state educational requirements under items 16, 21 & 22 of Art 16. of the Public Education Act;
- The Fulfillment of the requirements for drawing up Sample List No. 1 pursuant to Ordinance No. 5 of 1994 for specifying the number of pupils and children in the classes and groups of schools, kindergartens and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) and the standards for compulsory teaching work in schools and educative establishments;
- The drawing up and carrying out of the budgets, the legality and expediency of the funds spent by the schools;
- The organization, funding and allocation of revenues from school manufacturing;
- The implementation of Ordinance # 6 of 1994 for the specific economic rules for the activities of the units in the public education system;

- The preparation of orders for free textbooks;
- The proper keeping of school documentation, which is within their competence;

At least once in three years, the experts in finances and economics exercise control over the financial and economic state of schools, kindergartens and servicing units in the respective region.

Inspections end with a statement, which is drawn up in 4 copies, i.e., for the school, the Regional Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Municipality, instructions, compulsory recommendations and eventual proposals for sanctions made to the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Financial Control, the Ministry of Finance and the district governors.

As a result of their control activities, the experts make an annual evaluation, analysis and recommendations for expedient changes.

The control activities of the experts in finances and economics are evaluated by an expert committee at the Central Department of Finances and Economics.

The experts in information at RIE monitor:

- The observation by the educational establishments and servicing units of the times specified in the schedules for movement of information flows in the region in accordance with the flows at the national level within the system of MES;
- The observation of the times and the reliability of information provided by the educational establishments and servicing units to meet the needs of the national statistics;
- The format and reliability of data furnished through documents or magnetic carriers by the educational establishments and servicing units within the system of MES;
- The drawing up of Sample List No. 1, especially the part related to statistical information about the educational establishment;
- The information supply related to the admission of pupils and children to the educational establishments.

The control activities of the experts in RIE are documented by inspection certificates in the inspected school and statements in 4 copies – one copy for each of the following: the school, the Regional Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Municipality, drawn up within a week from the date of inspection.

At the end of the year – by 30 July (by 31 December for the experts in finances), the RIEs experts draw up a report-analysis and submit it to the head of the Regional Education Inspectorate and the respective departments in the Ministry of Education and Science.

The heads of RIEs monitor:

- The activities of the RIEs experts and the heads of schools and obsluzhvasthi zvena (servicing units) on the territory of the region with respect to the implementation of the laws and other legal regulations and bylaws related to secondary education;
- The drawing up and implementation of Sample List No. 1 for allotment and approval of the teaching and other activities of staff in kindergartens, schools and servicing units;

- The admission of pupils and children to kindergartens, schools and servicing units;
- The activities of schools related to the provision of compulsory education;
- The implementation of the recommendations to teachers and tutors made by the RIE experts.

By 31 August of the current year, the heads of RIE submit to the Ministry of Education and Science a report-analysis about the RIE control activities.

The experts in organizing secondary education at the Ministry of Education and Science monitor:

- The activities of RIE, schools and servicing units with respect to the implementation of the laws and other legal regulations and bylaws related to secondary education;
- The organizational, management and administrative activities of the RIE heads and experts and the heads of educational establishments;
- The activities of the heads according to the provisions of the Labour Code and other legal regulations related to the conclusion, modification and abrogation of the employment contracts with teaching and non-teaching staff;
- The proper keeping and storing of school documentation.

By the end of October of the current year, all experts in MES draw up a report-analysis and submit it to the respective head of departments in MES.

Control activities of the experts and heads in the public education system are evaluated at regular intervals by standing expert committees on control activities, which are specified on in an order of the Minister of Education and Science. These committees specify the conditions and procedures for certification of the heads of schools and servicing units and propose to the Minister of Education and Science changes in the labor and legal relations.

Through its territorial structures, the Ministry of Education and Science also exercises control over private schools and kindergartens in accordance with the normative acts.

The latest changes in Ordinance №3 regarding the system of evaluation and more precisely, external evaluation are presented here. The changes have to do with evaluators – the persons who can be external evaluators are as follows:

- a school committee, appointed by the school head;
- officials or committees, appointed by the Minister of Education and Science, by the Chief of a Regional inspectorate of Education or by the directors of the controlling and evaluating bodies servicing the system of education.

The state exercises its functions related to the control over the management bodies in the higher education through the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency.

The Ministry of Education and Science exercises control over higher schools with respect to the observance of the Higher Education Act and of the state requirements, and the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency is the specialised state body to control the higher schools in the development and implementation of systems for evaluation and maintenance of quality of training and of the academic staff, which includes also study of students' opinion. (For more detail see Chapter 6.)

9.5. Evaluation of the Education System

The performance of systematic overall control over the operation of the education system has not yet been entirely regulated by the law and is not wholly implemented in practice. In recent years, however, a number of measures have been taken in this direction.

In recent years the Ministry of Education and Science has been conducting tests in certain school subjects with representative samples of pupils from all regions of the country – the information has been used for evaluating the overall level of knowledge and skills and with a view to improving the existing State Educational Requirements and syllabi.

Periodical analyses and research are systematically carried out, related to the evaluation of the quality of the education system – for example, the development of a draft Strategy for the Development of Secondary Education in 2004 regarding the following five-year period, was based exactly on systematic analyses of the weaknesses and achievements of the education system. The same could be said about the National Programme for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006 – 2015).

UNESCO member states prepare national reports on the development of education which are presented at international conferences on current educational problems organised by UNESCO's international bureau in Geneva. These reports are used for international comparative analyses.

9.6. Research into Education linked to Evaluation of the Education System

Research connected with the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the education system as a whole, or of some of its aspects (especially in cases of forthcoming reforms in education and different changes in the legislative basis) is conducted periodically on the initiative of the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science and other involved state institutions. According to the nature of research, its performance is assigned to different teams of specialists and researchers.

Currently, research on education is not centred in one institution. Some partial research is carried out at the request of the Ministry of Education and Science and its units. Additionally, individual research is done on the initiative of higher education lecturers and practitioners.

9.7. Statistics

Ratio of Teachers – Experts from Specialized Administration –Organizational and Methodological Activity and Control Department for the whole country – 77114 : 424.

Respectively one expert per 181,8 teachers

Source: Organisational Regulations of the Regional Inspectorates of Education

10. Special Educational Support

Children with special educational needs – hard of hearing, visually impaired, with mental disabilities, with language and speech impediments, chronic diseases, physical disabilities – are educated at special schools when all possibilities to educate them at mainstream state and municipal schools have been exhausted. Special schools and kindergartens are state-maintained. Special schools offer general education. Some of them provide also vocational training for pupils.

The general objectives of the activity of special schools are aimed at ensuring consultative, diagnostic, corrective, educational, rehabilitating and prophylactic support with a view to correcting and compensating the respective disabilities and impairments and stimulating children's and pupils' development.

In order to achieve these objectives, special schools and kindergartens provide appropriate social and living conditions and special educational and technical facilities and equipment.

The instruction of children and pupils with special educational needs at special schools and kindergartens is carried out according to special curricula, with the help of special textbooks and learning aids and following individual programmes.

In spite of the existing network of different types of special schools, in recent years the trend for integrating these children within mainstream schools has been increasing – however, this model is still in a process of implementation, efforts are being made to provide schools with the respective specialist teachers, to adapt the architectural environment and to train mainstream teachers to work with children with special educational needs.

Currently mostly children with light disabilities are integrated into mainstream schools.

10.1. Historical Overview

The care about these children as well as the attitude to their problems was different in the different historical periods. The special schools opened for such children in certain European countries at the end of the 18th century influenced the Bulgarian educational system as well. The first schools for children with special educational needs were opened in Bulgaria by private persons and charity associations. A private school for deaf-and-dumb children was set up in Sofia in 1898 and in 1906 it was transformed into a state one. A school for visually-challenged children was established in 1905. Two classes for children with mental disabilities and one class for children needing special pedagogical support were opened on the initiative of the Medical Pedagogical Society in Sofia in 1922. An auxiliary school was set up in 1937 on the initiative and with the assistance of the Society for Protection of Mentally Disabled Children, established at that time. This process continued developing. At a later stage, the finding, selection, certification and accommodation of children with physical and mental disabilities at special schools was made, according to the provisions of Instruction # 6 as of March 18, 1977. Now, pedagogical and medical experts take part in finding children with mental and physical disabilities and this interaction continues through the process of their education. Currently, the operation of special schools is regulated by Ordinance # 6 on the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases as of 19.08.2002. There are a high number of special schools in this country. The tendency is towards closer integration of such children. Several higher schools – the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, the South-western University of Blagoevgrad,

etc. - train the following expert defectologists for work with these children: surdopedagogues, tiflopedagogues, oligophrenopedagogues and logopaedists.

10.2. Ongoing Debates and future developments

In recent years there has been a stronger trend towards increased integration of pupils with special needs to mainstream schools and kindergartens. To this purpose, certain amendments were introduced to the Public Education Act (in 2002) – children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases are enrolled in kindergartens according to their parents' or guardians' wish and choice. Kindergartens are obliged to grant admission to this category of children.

The process of stronger integration requires certain changes in the legislative basis of the education system, mainly concerning mainstream schools, in order to provide accessible education for children with disabilities. Measures have been taken in this direction for more intensive work with healthy children, so that they show compassion and support in communicating with children with disabilities. In this aspect certain difficulties arise – according to conducted empirical surveys children feel worried to go to a mainstream school, they are afraid of not being able to manage. Teachers at special schools also lack sufficient motivation to encourage this process, because they are afraid they might lose their jobs. Nevertheless, everybody is persuaded that this is the right direction, that it complies with European standards and it is necessary to promote it.

In 2003 the government of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted a National Strategy for Protection and Social Integration of Disabled Children (2003- 2005), which aims to change the model of looking after these children: from their accommodation in specialised institutions, to foster family care, access to quality education at school, medical and social rehabilitation.

The major trend in the changes from the sphere of special education is related to the further development and establishment of the practice of integrated education and the access to quality education for students who have special educational needs, creation of a supportive educational environment and architectural adaptation of kindergartens and schools, provision of resource teachers and additional helping staff, preparation of individual programmes according to the specific features of the ailment of the child. Special attention is being paid to the qualification of teaching and other staff in this sphere – it has been admitted that the lack of skills to work with such kids on part of 'regular' school teachers is an important impediment to the successful integration of such children.

Apart from the children with special educational needs, the socially disadvantaged, abandoned children, the children who have fallen victims to different crimes and the children from ethnic minorities enjoy special attention on part of the state. In the past few years a number of strategic documents, offering various measures and approaches regarding the different groups of children in danger, were adopted. Here are some of the more important ones:

- the National Child Strategy (2004 - 2006),
- the yearly programmes for protection of children,
- the Plan for decreasing the number of children at specialised institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria,
- the National Strategy and Action Plan for protecting children's rights in the streets,
- the National Action Plan against sexual exploitation of children with a commercial aim,
- the Strategy for educational integration of children from ethnic minorities,
- the National strategy for equal opportunities for disabled people.

The main aims of these documents are connected to:

- Decreasing the number of children raised at specialised institutions and improving the living conditions at these institutions – some of the most important points are the improvement of the facilities and equipment, creation of conditions resembling those of a family environment, determining the optimum standards for the number of the personnel necessary to carry out the activities delegated by the state, the development of a programme aimed at teaching the kids from such institutions life skills, help in providing the youths, who leave the specialised institutions, with homes and workplaces. The leading tendency is that of developing alternative forms of care and social services – development of foster care as an alternative to the institutionalised on a nation-wide basis, needs analysis and activity at a regional level, creation of a system of trainer training for foster care candidates.
- protection, rehabilitation and reintegration for kids who have fallen victims to violence;
- social inclusion and reintegration of children and students from Roma origin within schools and kindergartens, overcoming the problem of segregated schools, development of new framework programmes for mother tongue instruction within the compulsory school subjects and teaching the culture and history of ethnic minorities.

10.3. Definition and Diagnosis of the Target Group(s)

According to the legislative framework children and pupils with special educational needs suffer from diseases requiring both special conditions and methodologies of education and appropriate rehabilitation, which cannot be supplied through the mainstream education system:

- with sensory disorders – hard of hearing, visually impaired;
- with language and speech impediments;
- mentally disabled;
- with physical disabilities;
- with chronic diseases;
- with multiple disabilities;
- with autism;
- with children's cerebral paralysis.

Apart from pupils suffering from the diseases mentioned above, another category of pupils subject to special educational provision on the part of the state is the category of highly gifted children. It creates the conditions for their artistic activity, stimulates their achievements and supports them financially.

Other categories, subject to special care are

- Abandoned children;
- Children deprived of parental care;
- Socially disadvantaged children;
- Parts of the children from ethnic minorities;
- Children involved in begging, prostitution and crime;
- Children on the streets, the majority of whom are left unattended and are exposed to risks of all kinds;
- Children dropping out of school and youths lacking professional qualification who have unfavourable chances to establish themselves in life;
- Children who have fallen victim to different crimes;
- Children using drugs.

10.4. Financial Support for Pupils' Families

According to the Regulations on the Implementation of the Social Assistance Act, social benefits are envisaged for families of children with disabilities, according to the monthly income of the family: the amount of the allowance is calculated by multiplying the guaranteed minimum income by the respective ratio. For children with heavy physical or mental disabilities the ratio is 1.2.

Children with disabilities and their companions have the right to travel twice a year free of charge (return ticket with public railway and bus services in the country). They are also entitled to discounts on public city transport fares. Children aged between 7 and 16 with heavy physical or mental disabilities are also eligible for monthly social benefit for transport service, amounting to 15% of the guaranteed minimum income. Children and their companions are eligible for a free voucher for treatment at sanatoriums, for a period of up to 20 days.

Social benefits for children can be provided also by covering partially or fully the fees for child care institutions, covering the costs of meals at pupils' canteens and public messes, or by supplying food, clothes, shoes, learning materials, etc.

If it is impossible for parents to take care of children with disabilities or children of disadvantaged social background, the state undertakes the care for their upbringing and education at social service homes – for children with physical and mental disabilities, at children's settlements, and social pedagogic establishments.

10.5. Special Provision within Mainstream Education

Nowadays the majority of children with disabilities in Bulgaria are raised at social institutions affiliated to different ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health). The educational system includes a network of special schools of various types that meet the needs of children with special education requirements. They have gathered considerable experience and established traditions in their operation but their work is somewhat specific, closed and isolated. An increasingly persistent tendency of integration of these students into the mainstream schools and kindergartens has been observed. Amendments to the Public Education Act were adopted for this purpose (2002). According to article 21 of the Public Education Act, children with special education needs and/or chronic diseases are enrolled in kindergartens on the desire and choice of the parents or trustees. Special kindergartens and servicing units may also be established for such children. They are enrolled in special kindergartens, if all other possibilities for education in the state and municipal kindergartens are exhausted and upon the desire of parents or trustees expressed in writing (article 21, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Public Education Act).

The same texts apply to students of special schools (article 27, paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4). These schools are designed only for children with a high degree of disability, which prevents them from coping with the requirements of the mainstream school.

The process of integration has been intensified for some years now. However, in the majority of mainstream schools there are still no special conditions and appropriate and accessible architectural environment for children with special educational needs, and not enough appropriately trained teachers and qualified pedagogical and medical staff.

10.5.1. Specific Legislative Framework

Special provision within mainstream education within the legislative framework on separate provision – see section 10.6.1.

10.5.2. General Objectives

The general state objectives of the education of children with special educational needs are the same for the integrated and separate provision – see section 10.6.2.

The special provision within mainstream schools facilitates the attainment of aims which are difficult to attain at special schools, i.e. full integration and social inclusion of kids having special educational needs as well as overcoming their social isolation.

10.5.3. Specific Support Measures

Specific measures for support and facilitation of the integration of children with disabilities in mainstream and special schools are discussed in sections 10.2. and 10.5.

10.6. Separate Special Provision

Separate special provision for children with special educational needs is offered at special kindergartens and schools.

Special kindergartens admit only children for whom all opportunities for training and education at regular kindergartens have been exhausted, and at the explicit will of their parents. Children with multiple disabilities are trained under individual programmes for development. Prior to admittance to a special kindergarten, children go through a psychological examination of their mind and psychic processes. A complex psychological and pedagogic examination is also performed by a specially appointed diagnostic team.

Special kindergartens are of several types: for mentally disabled children, logopaedic kindergartens, kindergartens for children with impaired hearing, health kindergartens.

At special kindergartens, education, training and preparation of children for school is carried out under special programmes. Convalescent kindergartens are intended for children with chronic diseases (cardiovascular, pulmonary, neurological, endocrinological, etc who cannot attend mainstream kindergartens). Children are admitted there after they go through a special medical jury. They are trained under individual programs depending on the degree and complexity of the disease.

The special schools are one of the types of schools under the Public Education Act (article 26, paragraph 1, section 11). These special schools are designed only for children, needing special care,

assistance and protection by the state or society (article 66, paragraph 1) of the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act.

Special schools are for pupils: (Regulations for the Implementation of the Public Education Act, article 66, paragraph 2)

- with chronic diseases – convalescent, sanatorium and hospital establishments;
- with sensory impairment – aurally or visually challenged;
- with articulation difficulties – logopaedic;
- with mental disabilities – auxiliary;
- with multiple disabilities;
- with asocial behaviour – reformatory schools: reformatory boarding schools and social-pedagogical boarding schools.

There are two kinds of special schools for children with chronic diseases - convalescent and hospital establishments. Convalescent establishments offer boarding facilities. They are designed for 1st to 12th-grade pupils, suffering from diseases of the respiratory, cardio-vascular, digestive and urogenital, musculoskeletal and/or nervous systems and/or the endocrine glands and endocrine exchange.

Hospital educational establishments operate at hospitals. They are designed for 1st to 12th grade pupils, who are supposed to stay in hospital not less than 30 days.

Special schools for children with sensory impairment are aimed at aurally or visually challenged 1st to 12th-grade pupils and offer boarding facilities.

Logopaedic schools provide training for children from 1st to 4th grade and offer boarding facilities. Logopaedic consulting rooms can be set up to diagnose and correct articulation defects of children in pre-school age and 1st to 12th grade pupils.

Logopaedic consulting rooms and consulting rooms for rehabilitation of hearing, articulation and eyesight can be opened at kindergartens and schools in coordination with the financing bodies, according to the terms and procedure set in an order of the Minister of Education and Science, the Head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education or the municipality mayor (article 70, paragraph 3 of Regulations on the Implementation of the National Education Act).

Currently there are functioning logopaedic and resource centres which help children with special educational needs enrolled in mainstream schools.

The special schools for educating 1st to 8th grade pupils with mental disability are auxiliary and offer semi-boardings or boarding facilities. They may provide vocational training in a professional field or profession for acquiring first degree of the respective professional qualification.

Special schools for children with multiple disabilities provide education to 1st to 7th-grade children and include boarding facilities.

Reformatory schools are for 1st to 12th grade pupils with asocial behaviour who have performed anti-social actions. These schools provide vocational training and/or education.

Social and pedagogical schools are designed for 1st to 12th grade pupils, who have no adequate living conditions in their families, are deprived of parental care and supervision and demonstrate or are susceptible to acquiring anti-social behaviour. They can provide vocational training.

Special schools are run by a headmaster, having powers and responsibilities equivalent to the ones given to headmasters of mainstream schools. Pedagogical councils and boards of trustees are set up at these schools and their functions are stipulated in the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act.

10.6.1. Specific Legislative Framework

Work with children with special educational needs who receive training at special schools is regulated by a number of statutory instruments and is complied with the adopted international instruments. It is aligned to the UN Charter on Human Rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the protocol to it (1966). The Republic of Bulgaria is a party on both covenants and was one of the first countries to ratify them by Parliament Decree # 1199 as of June 23, 1970. Schools and teachers conform their activity to article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, providing that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

The educational and pedagogical work in these schools is based on the universal right to education of each Bulgarian citizen stipulated in article 53 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Child Protection Act (2000) based on the principles of respect for the child's personality, providing best possibilities for the development of his/her interests and special protection for children at risk or for gifted children, plays a key role to this end. One of the measures for protecting children with specific education needs is to accommodate him/her in a specialized institution as well as to provide him/her with assistance and services in a family environment (article 4). The State Agency for Child Protection is the national body managing these activities in this field. Child protection departments operate at the municipal social assistance directorates. Under this law each child is entitled to protection with view of his physical, mental, moral and social development and the protection of his rights and interests (article 10/1).

The Child Protection Act contains measures for assistance and raising of children in a family environment, related to:

- Ensuring pedagogical, psychological and legal assistance for parents and persons, authorized with parental functions, on problems, pertaining to children's raising, upbringing and education;
- Referral to the social rehabilitation and integration centres;
- Providing the child with consultations and information depending on the stage of his development;

- Studying the child's individual abilities and interests and referring him/her to the most appropriate educational establishment;
- Choosing appropriate forms of extra-school activities for the child during his/her leisure time.

The Child Protection Act specifies the respective specialized institutions for raising and education of children that operate at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy or the Ministry of Interior. Under this law a child at risk is one that suffers from mental or physical disabilities or serious diseases.

The Public Education Act (1991) plays a key role in the educational system. It guarantees every Bulgarian citizen the right to education (article 4, paragraph 1), without any privileges with regard to his race, nationality, gender, ethnic or social background (article 4, paragraph 2). Admission and raising of children with specific education needs at kindergartens is regulated in article 21 and, at schools – in article 27. Under this article state and municipal schools are obliged to admit children within special education needs and/or chronic diseases an integrated education scheme (article 1 and 2). Special schools and obshchinska zena (servicing units) are also established for such children, if all other possibilities for education and training in the state and municipal schools are exhausted and upon the desire of parents or trustees expressed in writing (article 27, paragraph 3 and 4). The special schools for children with specific education needs and/or chronic diseases include boarding or semi-boarding facilities (article 28).

Children are admitted to the special schools, according to terms, set by the Ministry of Education and Science in coordination with the competent state bodies and municipal councils (article 28, paragraph 2). These issues are regulated by Ordinance # 6 as of 18.03.2002. It specifies the terms for admission, accommodation, education, raising and development of children with special educational needs as well as the organization of work at special schools.

The Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act stipulate the terms for enrollment of children with special educational needs in school. If they are over the age of six but have not achieved the level of development needed to enrol in the first grade, the enrolment is postponed for the next year by a decision of a medical and pedagogical commission with the Municipal Council (article 28, paragraph 1). Children with mental disabilities who are certified by a medical and pedagogical commission, are subject to mandatory education after the age of seven (paragraph 4). Education and raising of children, aged 3 to 16, suffering from serious ailments or chronic diseases who, at the same time, are treated at children's medical or prophylactic establishments, excluding children with serious mental retardation, up to the level of oligophreny, is organized, according to a special programme (article 6).

The number of children in the educational groups and classes is set by Ordinance # 7 (*Official Gazette*, issue 4/2001), which envisages minimum number of children for the groups in the special schools (8 to 12 children). Teachers' job is regulated by Ordinance No 5 as of May 14, 2002. The pedagogical staff of special schools includes a logopaedist and a psychologist (article 17, paragraph 1).

Issues, related to providing of assistance and protection of children with special educational needs, are also regulated by the Social Assistance Act. Welfare benefits, cash and/or in kind, complement or substitute personal incomes up to an amount, according to the living standards. These benefits can be

monthly, target or one-time. The law further provides for social services, organized for children in need, if they meet certain requirements.

The centres for special rehabilitation and integration also provide social services in the habitual family environment

The statutory framework: the Public Education Act, the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act, the Vocation Education and Training Act etc. regulate also issues pertaining to acquiring educational degrees and professional qualification by disabled children and the operation of establishments: boarding and semi-boarding schools.

Although a comparatively good legal and statutory framework for the operation of the special schools is in place, it is currently being improved and further changes so as to ensure its optimization and successful implementation are pending.

10.6.2. General Objectives

The general objectives of special educational provision entail carrying out consultancy, diagnostic, reformatory, educational, training, rehabilitation and prophylactic activity in view of correcting and compensating for the respective disability and impairment and stimulation of the development of children and pupils.

The general education objectives, specified in the legislative framework (the Public Education Act – 1991, article 15; Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act - article 1; and the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act - article 9) apply also to the education and training of children with special educational needs, (see section **4.4.**), but here the emphasis is on providing optimal opportunities and for accomplishment and inclusion in society. According to the nature and the extent of the disability, the objectives of the education of children with special educational needs are specified – in cases of heavy disabilities, especially mental retardation, the main objective is for children to acquire certain working and social skills, allowing them to be employed in certain professional fields which do not require elaborate skills and training. In the education of physically disabled children with normal intellectual abilities the striving is to provide them with an equal opportunity and career growth corresponding to their skills and abilities, as well as equal opportunity to continue their education. With pupils of asocial behaviour advantage is given to reformatory measures and to pupils' reintegration to socially permissible behaviour complying with the norms and values of society.

10.6.3. Geographical Accessibility

Due to the existing variety of types of schools for children with special educational needs and the comparatively low number of pupils attending them, the geographical distribution of special schools is uneven. For the convenience of children and parents most of these schools have boarding house provision in case they are located at a remote place. Pupils use discounts on travel fares – see section **10.4.**

The tendency of utilizing the school network has affected special schools. Their decreasing number is going to be compensated for by further development of integrated education and creation of conditions at mainstream schools suitable for pupils with special educational needs.

10.6.4. Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Children are admitted to special schools and kindergartens in accordance with their specific educational needs and the extent of the disability.

Finding, examining, diagnosing, referral and admission of children and pupils with special education needs and/or chronic diseases to special schools is made, according to the terms set in chapter two of Ordinance No # as of 19.08.2002 (*Official Gazette*, issue 83 as of 30.08.2002):

Children and students with impaired hearing or eyesight, mental disabilities, multiple disabilities, autism or cerebral paralysis are found and referred to special kindergartens, schools and servicing units or other kindergartens, schools and servicing units following a complex psychological and pedagogical examination.

The psychological examination of the intellect, mental processes and the personality is performed by a psychologist, according to quantity and quality indicators, through formal and informal procedures. The purpose of the complex psychological and pedagogical examination is to identify the special education needs and possibilities for training up to various plans and programmes.

The complex psychological and pedagogical examination is carried out by:

- a diagnostic team, operating at the special kindergarten or school;
- a diagnostic commission at the Regional Inspectorate of Education;
- Central diagnostic commission with the Ministry of Education and Science.

The diagnostic team with the special kindergarten and school is appointed by order of the headmaster as of September 1 for a term of one school year.

The diagnostic teams at a special kindergarten and school operate all the year round in line with a schedule, adopted by the pedagogical council and approved by the headmaster.

The diagnostic team consists of: chairman – the headmaster of the special kindergarten or school, and members: a psychologist, a logopaedist, a teacher in special pedagogy for the respective type of special kindergarten or school, a teacher in pre-school pedagogy or a primary teacher, a physician (ophthalmologist, children's psychiatrist (psychiatrist), children's neurologist (neurologist), audiologist, otorhinolaryngologist, etc., depending on the type of special kindergarten or school).

The expert at The Inspectorate of Education who is in charge of special schools chairs the diagnostic team during the psychological and pedagogical examination and the admission of students to an auxiliary school. He is appointed by order of the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education. The diagnostic team includes obligatorily the parent/trustee of the respective child (student) as a member of the team. A representative, authorized by the parents and possessing qualification may participate

in the diagnostic team meetings as its member. The expert physician joins the diagnostic team on proposal by the regional healthcare centre with the Ministry of Health.

The diagnostic team at the special kindergarten or school performs the following functions:

- to ensure the didactic materials and tests needed for the psychological and pedagogical examination and specially equipped facilities for this purpose;
- to consider the documents of the children, subject to examination and admission; to determine and require additional documents, if needed;
- to carry out the examination given that each member of the diagnostic team works in separate premises on an individual basis and drafts a written report for each child which is submitted to the diagnostic team chairperson within a three-day term of performing the examination;
- to state his/her position at a joint meeting of all team members and to draft a protocol for each child (see annex No 2); the written reports of the diagnostic team members are enclosed to the protocol;
- to draft an individual educational programme for the development of the child or pupil for the respective school year along with the teacher of the respective group of the kindergarten, the class teacher, the group supervisor, the psychologist, the rehabilitator, the logopaedist and the parent/trustee at the beginning of the school year; it contains a description of the current development of the child (student); goals of education, training and development that include concrete tasks within the curricula in compliance with the state educational requirements; special pedagogical means and methods to attain these goals; criteria for diagnosis of the development of the child (student);
- to draft an individual programme on the development of children and students pursuant to article 8 jointly with the teacher of the respective kindergarten group, the class teacher, the group supervisor, the psychologist, the rehabilitator, the logopaedist and the parent/trustee at the beginning of the school year;
- to follow the dynamics of the development of the child (student) and the fulfillment of the individual educational programme or the individual development programme by the end of every term and to draft a written report;
- at the end of every school year, to come up with a written opinion on referring children and pupils from special kindergartens and schools that could continue their education and training in other (mainstream) establishments;
- to propose to the diagnostic committee at the Inspectorate of Education to re-direct children and students, who do not meet the requirements for enrollment in the respective special kindergarten or school;
- to present a list of children and students admitted for the respective school year and a report on its operation by the end of every term before the diagnostic commission with the Inspectorate of Education;
- to provide consultations to parents/trustees.

The diagnostic committee with RIE consists of: chairperson – the RIE expert for special schools, and members: a psychologist, a logopaedist, a teacher in special pedagogy, a primary teacher, a children's psychiatrist (psychiatrist), a children's neurologist (neurologist). The RIE diagnostic commission may also include other experts upon judgment of the chairperson.

The RIE diagnostic committee has the following functions:

- to draft a schedule of its annual activities, approved by the RIoE chief, coordinated with the Regional Healthcare Centre and RIE and made known to all municipalities in the region.

- by the end of every term, to require lists of students within the mandatory school age who drop out of school from the school headmasters and municipal education departments; to examine the reasons for dropping out so as to assist integrated education with resources or to refer students to special schools;
- to require lists of children and students within the mandatory school age from orphanages at the Ministry of Education and Science, welfare establishments with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the medical and social care establishments with the Health Ministry, so as to assist integrated education or refer students to special schools;
- to examine children in mandatory school age from the establishment, specified in section 3, along with representatives of the regional structures of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, so as to assist integrated education or refer students to special schools;
- to search for children and students with special education needs pursuant to article 2, paragraph 1, integrated into kindergartens or schools, with the purpose of rendering assistance by ensuring competent teachers;
- to come up with proposals for assistance by ensuring competent teachers for integrated children and students to the respective municipality mayor and head of RIE;
- to consider documents for referral of children and students, filed with RIE by the diagnostic teams, headmasters of kindergartens and schools, municipal education departments, healthcare establishments, social establishments, regional structures of the unions of visually-challenged, aurally-challenged and invalids, parents/trustees;
- to issue certificates for each child (pupil) for referral to the respective diagnostic team that would examine it;
- to assist in the provision of textbooks and teaching aids, needed for the education of children and students from special kindergartens and schools as well as aurally or visually-challenged children and students, integrated into other kindergartens and schools;
- to provide consultations to parents/trustees;
- to provide methodological assistance to the diagnostic teams;
- to coordinate and control the operation of the diagnostic teams in the special kindergartens and schools;
- to carry out additional examinations of children and students with mental disabilities after the examinations of the diagnostic teams at the auxiliary kindergartens and schools as well as upon established violations of the diagnostic teams' operation and to issue a protocol for each child (pupil); a copy of the protocol is kept with RIE for a term of 10 years;
- to consider the documents of children and students with chronic diseases following a selection by a medical consultative commission and to refer them to rehabilitation kindergartens and schools;
- to consider and settle problematic and disputable cases;
- to submit written reports on its operation to the Ministry of Education and Science by the end of every school term;
- to submit summarized information about children and students with special education needs who are integrated into kindergartens and schools to the Ministry of Education and Science by October 30 and about the results of integrated education by July 30.

The head teacher of the kindergarten or school and the members of the diagnostic team and the diagnostic commission carry the administrative responsibility for the admission of the children and students.

The central diagnostic committee is appointed by order of the Education and Science Minister and includes the following members: Education and Science Ministry experts, a psychologist, a logopaedist, a child's psychiatrist and other experts, if necessary.

The participation of expert physicians in the central diagnostic committee is coordinated with the Ministry of Health.

The central diagnostic committee exercises control over the operation of the diagnostic committee at the Regional Inspectorate of Education and the diagnostic teams.

10.6.5. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

The special schools and kindergartens are state-owned. They provide general education. Some of them provide also vocational training for the students. Students from different grades and educational levels study at them. Special schools cover the same stages and levels of education, regulated by the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act, as those of mainstream schools – basic education including primary and lower-secondary stage, and secondary education.

Types of Special Schools for Pupils

Types of special schools for students:	Provide education to the following students:
1. With chronic diseases:	
- convalescent establishments	1 st to 12 th grade
- hospital establishments	1 st to 12 th grade
2. With sensory impairment:	
- aurally challenged	1 st to 12 th grade
- visually challenged	1 st to 12 th grade
3. With articulation difficulties:	
- logopaedic	1 st to 4 th grade
4. With mental disabilities:	
- auxiliary	1 st to 8 th grade with vocational training
5. With multiple disabilities	1 st to 8 th grade with vocational training
6 With asocial behaviour	
- educational schools: reformatory boarding schools	1 st to 8 th grade with vocational training
- social-pedagogical boarding schools	1 st to 8 th grade with vocational training

Pupils are accommodated at the respective types of schools and in respective classes in accordance with the nature and extent of disability. Classes consist of pupils of the same age group, in case of low number of pupils is permitted the composition of mixed classes (with pupils belonging to different grades and age-groups).

The number of pupils in one class is smaller than the one in mainstream schools:

Types of special schools	class	Minimum number of pupils	Maximum number of pupils
Special schools for pupils with chronic diseases (rehabilitation schools)			
Convalescent schools	Class, boarding-house group	12	16
Sanatorium schools	Class, boarding-house group	8	12
schools for pupils with children's cerebral paralysis and/or multiple disabilities	Class, boarding-house group	4	6
Hospital schools	Class	8	10
Special schools for the hard of hearing, visually challenged and mentally disabled	Class, boarding-house group	8	12
schools for pupils with multiple disabilities	Class, boarding-house group	4	6
schools for deaf-blind pupils	Class, boarding-house group	2	3
Social and pedagogical schools	Class, boarding-house group	14	20
Reformatory schools	Class, boarding-house group	7	12
Reformatory schools – boarding houses for mentally disabled pupils	Class, boarding-house group	6	8
Initial literacy class at reformatory schools	Class, boarding-house group	6	11
Logopaedic schools (I to IV grade)	Class, boarding-house group	10	14

10.6.6. Organisation of the School Year

The organization of the school year for the schools of all types and stages is regulated by Ordinance#6 of 2001 on the distribution of school time over different grades, stages and levels of education and in accordance with the Public Education Act and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Public Education Act– for further information see sections **4.9.** and **5.12.**.

There are small differences in the duration of school hours:

The duration of lessons in special schools is as follows:

- Classes at special kindergartens – 30 minutes
- 1st-4th grade – 35 minutes
- 5th-8th grade – 40 minutes
- Vocational training classes – 45 minutes.

Breaks between lessons are not shorter than 10 minutes and not longer than 30 minutes.

10.6.7. Curriculum, Subjects

Children and pupils with special education needs are trained in special kindergartens, schools and servicing unit, according to special curricula, textbooks and teaching aids, approved by the Minister of Education and Science and individual programmes.

Groups and classes of children with multiple defects may be set up with the special kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units).

Children and pupils with multiple disabilities, moderate and heavy mental disabilities or autism are trained, according to individual development programmes (Ordinance # 6/2002, article 8, paragraph 1).

The individual programmes include the following sections: general motorial development, fine motorics, self-servicing, cognitive abilities, linguistic abilities: articulation and communications, social abilities, creative works, labour, studies.

The individual programmes are drafted by the diagnostic teams of the kindergartens and schools (pursuant to article 19 of the above ordinance), adopted by the pedagogical council and approved by the school headmaster.

They are developed for each academic year taking into consideration the dynamics of the development of children and students. The individual programmes' items are entered into the book of courses taken or the register of every class.

Training at special schools is carried out in compliance with established state educational requirements, special programmes, textbooks and supplementary materials approved by the Minister of Education and Science, curricula and syllabi for vocational training and education consistent with the Vocational Education and Training Act.

The various types of schools work under special curricula. Their content is included in the following sections: A. Compulsory subjects; B. Compulsory elective subjects; and C. Free Elective subjects, of the curricula of the general education state and municipal schools, with the exception of the curricula of auxiliary schools for mentally disabled children. The curricula of the other special schools are specific because they include additional subjects, related to the peculiarities of the disease of the children, studying in the respective school. For example, the curriculum of the special schools for aurally-challenged children includes the subject, Speech Development, due to which students are subjected to special general and individual training for the development of their speech in the course of one lesson (30 min.) daily. The curriculum of special schools for visually challenged children includes subjects, such as, Useful Skills and Orientation and Mobility.

The special curriculum of the special auxiliary schools envisages less workload than the curriculum of ordinary schools. It includes subjects, studied in the general education state and municipal schools, except for: informatics and information technologies, foreign languages and physics.

The envisaged weekly number of lessons within the compulsory training and compulsory electives at the special auxiliary schools are:

- 1st and 2nd grade – 22 school hours
- 3rd and 4th grade – 24 school hours
- 5th-8th grade – 28 - 29 schools hours

The curriculum of the special auxiliary school does not include free elective subjects.

10.6.8. Teaching Methods and Materials

Training at special kindergartens, schools and obsluzhvashti zvena (servicing units) is carried out both through the main educational methods: narration (telling a lesson), explanation, demonstration (visualization, using various teaching aids), dialogue (discussion), games, etc., and through special methods and means, consistent with the type of disablement and the special education needs of the students, the specific content of the material studied and the students' age. If available, audio-visual means and computer programmes intended for the education of children with specific needs are used.

Pupils' are educated with the help of special textbooks and learning aids approved by the Minister of Education and Science and in accordance with individual educational and development programmes.

At Logopaedic boarding schools designed for 1st to 4th grade pupils with communication impediments (general failure to develop speaking skills, stammering, disarthria, rhinolalia, alexia-dislexia and agrafia-disgrafia) groups for logopaedic work are composed in accordance with the type of communication impediment and the age of pupils.

Visually-challenged children and students are trained in compliance with:

- State Educational Requirements for the study content;
- Programmes for education of visually-challenged students in a preparatory class;
- Syllabi for special subjects;
- Individual educational programmes or individual development programmes;
- Adapted textbooks and teaching aids with Braille and enlarged flat-printed letters;
- Vocational training and educational programmes in line with the Vocational Education and Training Act.

Education and training of aurally-challenged children and students is carried out in compliance with (article 54, paragraph 1, sections 1-6):

- State Educational Requirements for content of the material studied;
- Programmes for aurally-challenged children at pre-school age and preparatory class pupils;
- Adapted school curricula and syllabi, approved by the Minister of Education and Science;
- Syllabi for special subjects;
- Special teaching aids; special textbooks and teaching aids for the special subjects, approved by the Minister of education and Science;
- Vocational training and educational programmes in line with the Vocational Education and Training Act.

Education in convalescent kindergartens and schools is carried out in compliance with SER for the content of the material studied and the Vocational Education and Training Act.

Education and training in hospital educational establishments is organized in line with SER for the content of the material studied and the educational plans and curricula for children and pupils with special education needs.

The textbooks and teaching aids are developed by specialists in the respective area and approved in a competition by a jury from the Ministry of Education and Science. Pupils whose parents' income is

lower than the minimum and pupils from disadvantaged social background are supplied with free textbooks. For further information on the financial support of pupils with special educational needs, see section **10.4.**

10.6.9. Progression of Pupils

Progression to the next class follows after the successful completion of the previous grade and upon achieving the minimum requirements according to the educational content envisaged. The marks are given based on students' current performance, term tests and current tests, according to the level of learning of the material, envisaged in the special educational plans and curricula or the individual programmes, according to which training is carried out. At hospital schools pupils are not given written term tests and current tests if to their doctor's discretion their condition does not allow it.

The marks are given, according to a six-grade marking system, used by the whole educational system. The criteria, however, are complied with the type of disability and the type of school.

Pupils trained under individual programmes are granted only certificates for acquiring specific knowledge and skills, envisaged in their individual programmes. The certificate for completed grade entitles them to progress to the next grade.

Pupils attending auxiliary schools (for mentally disabled children) do not repeat class. Pupils who have completed the respective grade of an auxiliary school or of a class for mentally-disabled children at other kinds of schools school, are granted a certificate for completed class entitling them to continue their education in a higher grade of the auxiliary school. Pupils can be transferred from an auxiliary school to another type of school after passing an exam for setting the general education minimum mastered by them, so as to define the respective grade, stage or level of education they have reached, according to terms, set by the receiving school. Pupils having completed 8th grade of an auxiliary school, are entitled to continue their education after passing an exam for setting the general education minimum mastered by them, so as to recognize the respective level of education they have reached according to terms set by the receiving school.

The new emphasis in it is the fact that Ordinance # 3 on the system of evaluation includes a text dealing with internal evaluation of students of special educational needs – i.e. the minimum number of the marks from on-going evaluation during a term for students with impeded movement of upper limbs as a result of child cerebral palsy, physical disability and/or malformation is:

- for a school subject which, according to the curriculum, is taught during three or more teaching hours – four marks from oral examinations;
- for a school subject which, according to the curriculum, is taught during two teaching hours – three marks from oral examinations.

10.6.10. Educational/ Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links

A large part of the pupils trained at special schools complete only basic education (1st-8th grade) and cannot continue their studies at high school due to the specific nature of their diseases. Those who complete secondary education hold higher chances to find employment and integrate into society. Some of them enroll in universities. Students, who acquire lower educational degrees, find jobs in spheres, which are accessible to them and do not require high education. All people with disabilities receive care and support by the state and are entitled to welfare benefits, if they meet certain requirements. They get particular support and assistance by the respective unions in this country: of visually-challenged, of aurally-challenged, etc. These unions have been set up so as to withstand and

protect the interests and needs of people with various disabilities. They follow their individual programmes and often demand changes in the legislation and the statutory framework with view of their alignment to European standards.

National Agency for Social Assistance, the social assistance directorates at regional and municipal level and the social welfare and social care services play an important role in supporting the education, life and employment of pupils with special educational needs.

People with disabilities who have completed a certain level of education receive respective support from the Labour Offices – social benefits (if they are still unemployed), consultations, enrolling in specialized training courses free of charge for facilitating their professional realization, offering appropriate employment. Employers of people with disabilities are also entitled to certain privileges. Financial support for renting a home is provided in order to facilitate their inclusion in society.

Pupils with various disabilities are also supported by a high number of non-governmental organizations: foundations, associations, alliances, etc., which help them in their every-day lives, education, searching for jobs and career realisation.

10.6.11. Certification

Pupils who have completed successfully a certain grade or their basic education – 1st - 8th grade – at a special school are granted a certificate of completed grade or completed basic education.

The certificate of completed basic education entitles them to continue their studies for acquiring a higher educational degree: at a high school, general special school or vocational school.

Pupils who have completed 8th grade of an auxiliary school receive certificates of completed 8th grade.

Pupils who have completed classes for vocational training after 8th form of an auxiliary school are granted vocational training certificates or professional qualification certificates.

Pupils who have successfully completed their secondary education at special schools are entitled to apply for a higher school.

For information on the methods of assessment, see section **10.6.9.**

10.6.12. Private Education

There are no officially registered private schools for pupils with special educational needs, but within some general and vocational private schools there is provision for integrated education of children with disabilities, ensuring the appropriate conditions, methodologies, specialists and facilities. The procedures of assessment, certification and the requirements to the curricula and syllabi are carried out in compliance with the legislative framework and are subject to government control. Details concerning the organization and financing of private education are discussed in sections **4.16.** and **5.19.**

10.7. Special Measures for Children/Pupils of Immigrants

The children of immigrants legally residing in the country and the children of minority groups (Roma, Turks, Jews, Armenians, etc.) who have been living in Bulgaria for decades share the same rights of education and free use of the school facilities as Bulgarian pupils.

Some of them experience specific problems such as harder adjustment, unsatisfactory mastering of the educational material because of insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian, shortage of qualified teachers proficient in these pupils' mother tongue. Most serious are the problems with Roma children, who have the biggest number of dropouts from school, and of pupils enrolled in auxiliary schools mostly for social reasons, without having disabilities.

A number of measures have been taken for integrating these children, giving them equal opportunity and providing them with optimal conditions for acquiring quality education – additional arrangements for studying Bulgarian language, right to study their mother tongue, social benefits for children of poor families. Schools where the majority of pupils belong to an ethnic minority have the opportunity to participate in various projects (regional, national, international) aimed at integrating children and enhancing their chances for quality education, as well as providing these schools with resources for additional funding and supplying them with modern technology and equipment.

10.8. Statistics

Special Schools by type

Year	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Total	136	132	127	127	126
Convalescent schools	23	23	22	23	23
Schools for mentally disabled children	76	75	73	72	72
Reformatory boarding schools	8	7	6	6	6
Social-pedagogical boarding schools	20	19	18	18	17
Schools for children with impaired hearing	4	4	4	4	4
Schools for visually challenged children	2	2	2	2	2
Logopaedic schools	3	2	2	2	2

Teaching Staff in special schools by type

Year	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Total	2,333	2,229	2,079	2,001	2,083
Convalescent schools	359	335	330	334	344
Schools for mentally disabled children	1,370	1,307	1,256	1,184	1,247
Reformatory boarding schools	130	126	99	94	94
Social-pedagogical boarding schools	218	203	196	165	141
Schools for children with impaired hearing	146	168	107	124	158
Schools for visually challenged children	83	76	77	88	88
Logopaedic schools	27	14	14	12	11

Pupils in special schools by type

Year	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Total	15,631	15,252	14,366	13,269	11,875
Convalescent schools	2,371	2,606	2,508	2,420	2,312
Schools for mentally disabled children	9,489	9,193	8,655	7,996	7,355
Reformatory boarding schools	449	446	422	419	346
Social-pedagogical boarding schools	2,300	2,057	1,842	1,544	994
Schools for children with impaired hearing	561	553	548	497	486
Schools for visually challenged children	284	285	299	300	300
Logopaedic schools	177	93	92	93	82

Pupils in special schools by grade groups and gender

YEAR	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
TOTAL	15,631	15,252	14,366	13,269	11,875
1 st – 4 th grade	7,653	7,131	6,530	5,725	4,922
5 th – 8 th grade	7,540	7,579	7,345	7,083	6,508
9 th – 12/13 th grade	438	542	491	461	445
MALE	9,670	9,450	8,857	8,215	7,298
1 st – 4 th grade	4,700	4,313	3,909	3,360	2,904
5 th – 8 th grade	4,746	4,829	4,649	4,571	4,119
9 th – 12/13 th grade	224	308	299	284	275
FEMALE	5,961	5,802	5,509	5,054	4,577
1 st – 4 th grade	2,953	2,818	2,621	2,365	2,018
5 th – 8 th grade	2,794	2,750	2,696	2,512	2,389
9 th – 12/13 th grade	214	234	192	177	170

11. The European and International Dimension in Education

As a newly acceded EU member-state, Bulgaria is actively participating in the building up of the European space of education. Actually, Bulgaria takes part in different European initiatives in the areas of education, training and youth, thus giving the country the unique chance to gain a better understanding of common educational policies and to gather experience in the respective areas.

11.1. Historical Overview

From a historical point of view, Bulgaria has always maintained close relations with the countries from the region in the field of education. Within that context, different bilateral agreements have always been operative. These agreements have had a dynamic effect especially in supporting cultural and educational diversification in the region. Cooperation across national and ethnic borders in the field of education and training can support the overall process of regional reconstruction and development by strengthening the establishment of civil society in given countries. Recently, Bulgaria has also been engaged in encouraging exchange of information and experience, studies and research, teacher training (educational projects of regional importance in particular) at a regional level.

As to the different international programmes and projects, like these of Council of Europe, UNESCO, ERI-SEE and other organisations, Bulgaria has been successfully supporting their activities and projects for years.

11.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments

Bulgaria was among the first 29 countries that signed the Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education on June 19, 1999. As outlined in the Declaration, the planned activities will have a substantial impact on the higher education system in each country. The ongoing changes in the social environment, coupled with the demands of the market economy, require a more flexible way to study the systems of higher education. The Bulgarian approach in meeting the Bologna process objectives is characterized by taking legal initiatives directed at aligning the national legal framework with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, as well as by setting new priorities for the development of higher education along with developing metrics to assess their practical implementation. The main concerns are to: 1) ensure that the education system is adaptable to new challenges, and 2) to guarantee sustainable development of the education system in compliance with the objectives of the European Higher Education Area.

11.3. National Policy Guidelines/Specific Legislative Framework

The state policy in the area of international cooperation is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science, and refers to:

- Development of national educational and scientific policy;
- Preparation of the interstate and inter-departmental agreements;
- Providing information on the foreign educational and scientific systems;
- Organization of the recognition of educational degrees and legalization of documents for education and qualification

Bulgaria is a party on a number of agreements in the area of higher education, and with a view to these commitments the Bulgarian state and higher schools has undertaken active steps for integration of the Bulgarian higher education in the European educational area. In 1997 the Bulgarian delegation in Lisbon signed the Convention of the Council of Europe and UNESCO for acknowledgment of qualifications.

The academic community in Bulgaria actively participates in different European activities and programmes that are progressively opening up to the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Having started with PHARE and TEMPUS, whose objectives are to promote quality of education and to support institutional development, Bulgaria expanded its presence in the European academic world by actively participating in SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI. Taking part in these programmes was a crucial step for Bulgaria, as it marked the beginning of different European initiatives in the areas of education and training, thus giving the country the unique chance to gain a better understanding of common education policies and to gather valuable experience.

In compliance with the European priorities Bulgaria is developing lifelong learning (LLL). Thus conditions for greater diversification of educational specialities have been created together with full-flesh compatibility of the educational programs with customers' needs. A variety of forms of education have been offered to those wishing to continue their education. Lifelong learning is considered from a national perspective as one of the major factors in improving the professional activity of people and in provoking active citizenship.

The policy of the Bulgarian government concerning human resources is a component of the overall social policy directed towards building up of a society of learning and knowledge, towards broadening the European cooperation in education, research, culture and technology, in free movement of workers. This policy is stipulated in the:

- National plan for economic development 2001, Part IV – Human Resources Development, sector on labour market, employment and professional qualification of adults – employed and unemployed;
- National action plan on employment 2001;
- National strategy on human resources development 2006;
- National and regional projects and programmes on employment and professional qualification.

Within the system of higher education LLL is regulated through the Higher Education Act. The Act regulates the tuition of highly qualified specialists with secondary education acquired, the independence of higher education with respect to ideological, religious and political doctrines.

The last developments in the area of higher education in Bulgaria prior to the country's accession to the EU were related to the legal basis. The Act on the Amendments to the Higher Education Act was passed in 2005. This amendment provides for admission and training of EU member states citizens in Bulgarian higher education institutions under the existing regulations for Bulgarian citizens. Another amendment to the law revokes the discriminative regime that used to prevent citizens and institutions of the EU member states and the European Economic Area from establishing free provision of services on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria; this means that higher schools from EU and the

European Economic Area are now free to open their branches in Bulgaria under the procedure outlined in the Bulgarian Higher Education Act.

According to the Bologna-oriented amendments to the Higher Education Act, Bachelor's degree studies provide for basic comprehensive training, thus giving holders direct access to the labour market. Curricula content stresses comprehensive theoretical knowledge while developing practical skills to increase the adaptability as well as the mobility of graduates. As to the Master's degree training, it is oriented towards extended knowledge provided by profile-oriented studies in a given interdisciplinary field. The purpose is to achieve better comparability between the education level and the research level, and to meet the specific needs of the labour market. The legislative base was re-organized in 2002 to better define the different specialities and to make them more comparable, as recommended by the Bologna declaration. An Ordinance on the State Requirements for Acquisition of Higher Education on *Bachelor*, *Master*, and *Specialist in Degrees* was adopted on July 23rd 2002 by Decree № 162 of the Council of Ministers, (last amendments Official Gazette issue 79/5.09.2003). It defines the learning objectives for each level, and clarifies related legislative aspects.

- The promotion and encouragement of a higher-quality education are also among the priorities of the national education development plan. Since quality has direct impact on matters related to mutual recognition of qualifications, special attention is devoted to establishing reliable systems for quality evaluation. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) established in 1995 is the national body for evaluation, accreditation and quality control of the higher education institutions in Bulgaria. Its main functions are:
- Evaluating and awarding accreditation to legally established higher education institutions. It is in the Agency's power to require that courses or study programmes that do not correspond to the state requirements be cancelled. Furthermore, the Agency has the power to propose changes in the legal status of institutions following a negative accreditation assessment.
- Evaluating the curricula and syllabi provided by the higher education institutions in a given area of science. The Agency has the power to discontinue state recognition for programmes that do not satisfy the requirements in terms of curricula, academic staff, infrastructure, etc.
- Providing post-accreditation monitoring (since 2004).

After the amendments and supplements to the Higher Education Act were passed in 2004, NEAA changed the focus of its activity to improving the quality of higher education. The agency introduced new criteria for evaluation and accreditation at institutional and programme levels, as well as new criteria and recommendations for post-accreditation monitoring and control. These criteria and recommendations are developed in line with the Higher Education Act and, for the most part, with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area.

A requirement for higher education institutions to have quality assurance at institutional level is stated in the amendments and supplements to the Higher Education Act passed in 2004 and is part of NEAA's criteria for evaluation and accreditation. The internal quality assurance process, partially based on student evaluations, monitors the teaching processes and methods as well as faculty qualifications. A great emphasis is placed on transparent qualifications, study courses, and curricula due to the concern of higher education institutions and state authorities with the quality of education in certain specialities and institutions. 50 of 51 higher education institutions have already developed internal systems for quality assurance, with 13 of them are certified by ISO 9001:2000; one is in its development stage.

Another important step towards Bologna objectives implementation was the official introduction of the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, which support mobility and assist recognition in Europe. Both documents were incorporated in the legal system with the adoption of the Higher Education Act by the Bulgarian Parliament on June 4 2004 (Official Gazette issue 48/04.06.2004). The secondary legislation was updated accordingly to provide a legal framework for their practical implementation. The secondary legislation update consists of the Ordinance on the State Requirements, which outlines the content of the basic documents issued by the higher education institutions, adopted with Council of Ministers Decree N 215 as of 12.08.2004. In addition, the Diploma Supplement has been promoted by

different means. As of 2005, graduates receive the Diploma Supplement automatically issued in both English and Bulgarian. One could also mention the Ordinance N 21 for the implementation of a system for credit accumulation and transfer within the higher education institutions (Official Gazette issue N 89/12.10.2004)

11.4. National Programmes and Initiatives

Please see the following sub-sections.

11.4.1. Bilateral Programmes and Initiatives

The bilateral agreements in the field of education, science and culture constitute the policy framework of different scholarship schemes development, students' admission facilities improvement, co-operation between educational institutions, mutual recognition of qualifications and study periods undertaken abroad. The existing bilateral cooperation is often complemented by multilateral initiatives, thus reaching both European dimension and context. An emphasis is put on project and research development.

Within that context Bulgaria is developing a wide range of activities covering education in all its levels and forms. A completely new approach concerning teaching, teaching means and methodologies in subject areas covering regional features is in the process of its implementation. Such activities, which in practical terms mean organisation of working seminars, experts meetings, bilateral co-operations, textbook reviews, etc., will undoubtedly assist the development of both regional and international contacts.

11.4.2. Multilateral Programmes and Initiatives

Please see the following sub-sections.

11.4.2.1. CEEPUS Program

For more than 13 years the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS) has been operating in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. The participating countries: Austria, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro are looking forward to welcoming other countries from the region. Several university networks are effectively operating within the established Central European University Network.

One of the priorities of the second phase of the program is the development of joint degrees. Even though CEEPUS II is a regional program it should also be perceived as part of the Bologna Process because of the shared objectives and priorities. In light of the potential for joint degrees to act as a useful tool to promote the main Bologna action lines, the Central CEEPUS Office undertook a survey

on the development of joint degrees and their role in the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, with particular focus on the CEEPUS II countries and their regional input.

Using the CEEPUS experience, more structural forms of cooperation between the universities, often in the form of informal networks and embracing several forms of collaboration such as student and staff exchanges, research cooperation, joint curriculum development courses, etc., are also developed. To achieve their full impact, these activities involve each higher education as a whole and in turn the institutions are developing appropriate academic and administrative infrastructures for meeting this challenge.

11.4.2.2. Enhanced Graz Process- Educational Reform Initiative in South-East Europe /ERI-SEE/

The Enhanced Graz Process is entrusted to develop a strategy for educational cooperation in the region of South-East Europe. It's a well-understood necessity for Bulgaria to actively support the ongoing regional educational activities within the framework of the Stability Pact. Bulgaria actively participates in different initiatives oriented towards the democratic stability and progress through education in the region.

Within the period 2000-2002 the Enhanced Graz Process initiated the Quick Start Projects initiative. The projects focused on six priority areas: Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training; General Education, Policy Development, and System Improvement; History and History Teaching; Education for Democratic Citizenship/Management of Diversity. In total 44 projects in the field of education and youth contributed to the overall aims of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to "secure lasting peace, prosperity and stability for South Eastern Europe, foster effective regional co-operation and give firm European anchorage to the region".

In December 2002 was established the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe /ERI-SEE/ aimed at supporting education reform implementation in the region, taking into account both country-specific needs and last developments oriented toward the establishment of the European Area of Education. While stabilisation and reconciliation in South Eastern Europe was at the centre of the discussions some 5 years ago, actually the focus is clearly on the European perspective of the Western Balkan Countries. The countries of the region fully share the objectives of economic and political union and look forward to joining the EU.

In June 2003 the ministers of education of the South East European countries signed the Memorandum of Understanding. Bulgaria was among the signing countries, thus demonstrating its commitment to the ERI-SEE agenda.

Actually Bulgaria actively participates in the initiatives of the Governing Board of the ERI-SEE by drafting framework documents, working programs and action plans.

In compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding the Secretariat of the ERI SEE included in its 2005 working programme activities for developing capacity building for effective participation of the SEE countries in the new generation of Community programmes. The knowledge transfer capacity of our country has been taken into account by the ERI SEE Secretariat and the country's know-how in this area is fully used for regional purposes.

11.4.3. Other National Programmes and Initiatives

Since 2002 Bulgaria has been implementing the Communication Strategy for Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU. The purpose of that initiative was to raise the public awareness of the accession of the country. Under the Communication Strategy different projects oriented towards a large variety of target groups are implemented at national level. As of January 1st 2007 with the accession of Bulgaria to the EU the Communication Strategy has a new dimension – provision of knowledge for the EU.

11.5. European/ International Dimension through the National Curriculum

One of the priorities in the field of secondary education all over Europe is the provision of equal opportunities and equal access, which could also be interpreted as building up of civic awareness, sense of equality and tolerance. These basic principles are implemented through education in a multicultural environment. The successful integration of the students belonging to ethnic minorities is a way and guarantee for the practical implementation of the idea of multicultural education, and thence, for the integration of our country into the economic and political structures of united Europe.

Strategic changes have been carried out within the systems of single structure and upper secondary education, in view of the harmonization of Bulgarian education to the standards of European countries. The Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act and State Educational Requirements for Study Content were adopted within the educational reform that began in 2000 with phased introduction of the new curriculum and the syllabi of the compulsory subjects and the compulsory elective subjects.

The introduction of a new cultural and educational field Social Sciences, Civic Education and Religion in the curricula of the Bulgarian school is an important component of this reform. It seeks broadening and focusing knowledge on important contemporary problems. This new area has an integral and interdisciplinary nature. The subjects covered by it are compliant with the general ideas of inseparability of civic awareness from the personality and of the formation of civic attitude and the skills of young people from the independent and responsible behavior as well as with the fundamental civic mission of education.

The major goal of education, pursuant to article 15, paragraph 1 of the Public Education Act, is “the establishment of free, moral and enterprising personality respecting the law, others’ rights, their culture, lifestyle and religion.” This implies that all subjects, studied in Bulgaria, entail more or less civic education, but Homeland, Surrounding World, Man and Society, Literature, History and Civilization, Geography and Economics, Psychology and Logic, Ethics and Law, Philosophy and World and Personality have a leading role to this end. It is namely through them that the idea of multicultural education as an irrevocable and integral part of civic education is being realized.

11.5.1. Single Structure Education

For the primary stage of single structure education, see 11.5.1.1. For the lower secondary stage of single structure education, see 11.5.1.2.

11.5.1.1. Primary Education

At this stage the multicultural aspect is tangibly present in the state educational requirements for the study content in Civic Education and Bulgarian Language and Literature. These requirements specify the expected results of education in the primary stage obtained through the study of Homeland (1st grade), Surrounding World (2nd grade), Man and Society (3rd and 4th grade), Bulgarian Language and Literature (1-4th grade). Multiculturalism could even find a wider application due to the fact that civic education is a nucleus serving as a basis for integration of other subjects as well.

Modern curricula offer possibilities to successfully link subjects with other cultural and educational fields; to involve activities related to the formation of a tolerant attitude towards the “different” pupils into the educational process; to make use of interactive educational methods and techniques oriented towards enhancing pupils’ involvement and performance in the educational process. The development of the new curricula makes it possible for the issue of multiculturalism to cover all aspects ensuring integrity and efficiency of the educational process. In the context of the various subjects and depending on their specific nature in the 3rd and 4th grade, this issue finds different expressions: independently or integrated in other structural components.

The issue of minorities’ culture finds most concrete expression in the syllabi of Man and Society, which covers ethnic festivities, and traditions, legends and myths of different minorities. In the 2nd grade pupils are familiarized with the traditions and customs of the ethnic groups and in the 4th grade they have general knowledge about “Bulgarian Society: Unity of Diversity”.

Multiculturalism is present in all structural aspects of the syllabi for the subject of Bulgarian Language and Literature and it finds the following concrete expression:

√ In the purposes of education

Establishing a sense of tolerance and respect for cultural differences, getting closer to all-human values and building up awareness of national identity.

√ In the *anticipated results* from the study of literature at curriculum level

- The pupil discovers the main signs of their national identity through the literary works studied;
- The pupil gets to know cultural differences and shows tolerance and respect for Bulgarian citizens from other ethnic groups

√ In the anticipated results, according to the topic discussed

- The pupil, with his/her teacher's assistance, participates in the discussion on literary and popular science works, that have been studied or that he/she has read on his/her own, and thus he/she becomes aware of what cultural difference, cultural pluralism and multi-ethnicity are;
- The pupil takes part in the discussion of literary works that he/she has read on his/her own or that have been studied given they contain peculiarities typical of the Bulgarian national

identity, thus promoting the formation of national self-awareness of Bulgarian citizens from different ethnic origin;

- The pupil can practically draw parallels among literary and folk works of various cultural and ethnic groups by identifying their common features and differences, mouth-to-mouth-spread fragments of fairy tales and human values.

√ In context and activities:

- The pupils are given the opportunity to read, discuss and compare folk and literary works through which they get acquainted with cultures of various ethnic groups.
- Pupils are stimulated to search for additional popular scientific information about traditions, customs and values of Bulgarian citizens of different ethnic origin.

√ Through the possibility to link subjects, common features with Man and Society subject are found and all pupils get acquainted with the lifestyle and culture of Roma, Turks, Jews, Armenians, Tatars, Vlachs, Karakachans, etc.

The subject of Practical and Technical Training is of particular importance for ensuring maximum possibilities for children from minorities to show their creativeness. This is why the methods applied in developing the syllabi for this subject are involving the provision of knowledge about the folklore and traditions of ethnic groups.

√ The principle of cultural, ethnic and religious tolerance is included in the general presentation of the curriculum and its concrete application can be found in certain topics, related to food and festivities.

√ The anticipated results under the different topics include:

- making cards, martenitsas [twinned red-and-white threads, symbolizing spring and health], ornaments, related to holidays and customs, including those of student's own ethnic group;
- gathering various recipes, including those of different ethnic and religious groups.

Even the syllabus for Man and Nature which is of interdisciplinary nature and at first glance its specific characteristics do not seem to be associated with minority values and culture makes reference to certain differences, for example, in the cuisine of various ethnic groups.

√ This component is stressed already in the *general presentation* of the syllabus, which, apart from recommending broadening students' ecological culture and positive interpersonal relations with the surrounding environment, also notes the need of taking into consideration their ethnic and religious diversity.

We would not quote examples of Music, Drawing and Physical Education curricula but, however, the specific nature of these subjects imply expression of the individuality and creative potential of all children. The culture of the various ethnic groups find fullest expression and exert highest influence namely in these classes because the first positive attitudes are thus being formed and interpersonal and interethnic relations are being promoted.

11.5.1.2. Lower Secondary Education

At this stage the idea of multiculturalism is realized mostly through the state educational requirements for the study content in Bulgarian Language and Literature. These standards find concrete expression in the curriculum structure and specify the anticipated results from the study of the subject.

√ The *introduction* to the Literature curriculum for 5th grade students, and particularly the *Social and Cultural Competence* section, focuses on inclusion of texts related to the beliefs, festivities and folk heritage of various ethnic communities so as to establish an attitude of tolerance and respect to cultural differences, adherence to the all-human values and clear awareness of the national identity.

√ The anticipated results at syllabus level are as follows:

- The students should realize the main values of the various ethnic communities;
- They should analyze their presence in the literary works studied; and
- Compare them to their personal experience and to that of the society.

√ At the level of anticipated results, according to topics studied, the students are expected to acquire knowledge of the main holidays on the Bulgarian national calendar and, in general, of the holidays of the other ethnic groups living in this country.

√ The texts included in the curriculum include excerpts of Armenian, Roma, Turkish and Jewish literary and folk works.

√ The texts included in the Literature syllabi for the 6th grade aim at:

- Interpreting various types of relations between the man and the world: fantasy, reality, “the other”, “one’s own and the alien”;
- Deepening and broadening the initial knowledge of ethnic, aesthetic, emotional, psychological and multicultural problems.

The syllabi for the 7th and the 8th grade pupils focus mostly on the Bulgarian literature but the literary texts, apart from affirming the national values and the national identity, serve as a basis for retrospectively reproducing individual, hereditary, ethnic and universal values and interpreting them from a new perspective. Awareness of these values has been already acquired during the previous grades.

11.5.2. Upper Secondary Education

At this stage the idea of multiculturalism finds an expression mostly in the Social sciences, Civic education and Religion.

The training in History and Civilization, being directly related to the notion of multiculturalism, is mostly practice-oriented and complies with one of the principal missions of education: to train persons with active civic attitude, respecting human rights, ethnic and cultural identity and showing tolerance to one’s religious affiliation. The students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of the main documents, protecting minorities’ human rights, freedoms and interests and of the fight against racial and religious intolerance.

The problems of multiculturalism are tangibly presented in subjects of the Philosophy area: Psychology and Logic, Ethics and Law and Philosophy that meet state educational requirements for civil education. These requirements involve motivation and promotion of the idea of social co-existence and of the place, importance and role of democracy, the state governed by the rule of law, power and state institutions.

The study of Philosophy is related to civic education and allows students to:

- Differentiate between the principal social groups and communities and comment on their interests and problems;
- Explain the role of language, religion and traditions in social links and differences in society;
- Identify the sources of contradiction between the ethnic and religious communities;
- Set their place and make forecasts about their future in the economic relations;

- Demonstrate readiness to protect their own rights and responsibilities as well as those of other people.

The subject World and Personality (12th grade), which completes students' training in the area of Social Sciences, Civic Education and Religion, is also integrative and allows students to apply their knowledge of themselves, the society and the world, hone their abilities to build up a future based on respect of human rights and the institutions of the democratic society, form an independent position and motivate their personal involvement in social life in the conditions of cultural diversity and globalization.

The problems of multiculturalism find expression in the education in Religion. The main purpose of this subject is to help the student to:

- Identify his/her affiliation to a given community based on language and religious peculiarities;
- Establish differences in the lifestyle, religious beliefs and understandings of the values of various ethnic groups and communities;
- Explain the role of language, religion and traditions for the social links and differences in society.

√ Apart from acquiring knowledge of the Eastern Orthodox religion, traditional for this country, the education within the World Religions module, allows students to:

- Identify their own viewpoints and values;
- Be able to protect themselves against the invasion of sects, new religious cults and destructive groups;
- Show tolerance to other Christian confessions and religions.

The problems of multiculturalism are most clearly treated in the training in Philosophy of Interculturalism, within the Philosophy module. Its major goal is to employ the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the role of philosophy in the understanding of cultural realities.

√ The anticipated results at syllabus level involve understanding of cultural differences and becoming aware of cultural identity on the part of the students.

√ The anticipated results, according to the topics studied, include the following:

- The student should be familiar with the complex nature of cultural identity;
- The student should be able to compare identity to cultural pluralism;
- The student should understand and appreciate the reasons for cultural and culturally different behavior;
- The student should be able to identify the specific civic approach to intercultural relations;
- The student should know the key mechanisms of the civil society for protection and promotion of cultural pluralism;
- He/she should be aware of the need to harmonize cultural identity with civic involvement;
- He/she should be familiar with the public's capacities to regulate intercultural relations.

√ Key new notions in the different topics are “identity”, “tolerance”, “multiculturalism” and “intercultural communication”.

The subjects within the other cultural and educational fields are also important for attainment of the goals of civic education through the potentials of the textbook content and through the application of the main principles of this type of education: pluralism and tolerance, respect of human dignity and equal, irrevocable human rights, practical orientation, personal relations, motivation and persuasiveness, creative and critical thinking, access to the main achievements of world culture and interdisciplinary nature.

The practical orientation of civic education is of particular importance for attainment of the goals of multicultural education. This orientation involves:

- Studying various forms of social experience;
- Analyzing official documents of national and world importance, which regulate the relations among citizens in the society and its institutions;
- Establishing relations with the governing bodies of national and local government institutions and carrying out various social initiatives;
- Participation in an intercultural dialogue with representatives of different ethnic groups.

Therefore, civic education covers the life of the school community and the social environment, promotes the development of social culture and students' socialization, the active citizen involvement and democratization of the society.

The new syllabi contain a new educational philosophy and entail concrete settlement of certain problems related to the education of minorities.

A number of these problems are settled due to the working principles used as a basis for defining textbook contents.

- The reduction of the share of theory in education (in mathematics, for example, through reduction of algebra propaedeutics and the volume of the geometry material) presupposes resolving of the problem that existed until recently in the pedagogical practice: *the* existence of high requirements already in basic school and the problem with children who cannot rely on parental support.
- The reduction of the volume or level of difficulty in the syllabi is combined with enhancement of the efficiency of study through replacement of passive with active learning and accounting for innovation and creativity. This is obviously a prerequisite for the establishing a suitable environment for training of “different” children and students and giving them a chance to demonstrate their knowledge.
- Familiarizing all students with techniques for mental work and with rational methods of study is a way to curtail inequality, related to the cultural heritage.
- The introduction of knowledge related to the changes in the society provides an opportunity to include topics, pertaining to minorities' culture and to influence negative phenomena, related to the alienation of children and students from the educational process.
- The practical implementation of the curricula requires cooperation on the part of the teachers as well as close contacts among teachers, students, parents and external partners so as to overcome hindrances in communication generated by cultural differences.

11.6. Mobility and Exchange

The educational community in Bulgaria is actively participating in different European activities and programmes progressively opened up to the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Starting with PHARE and TEMPUS, whose objective is to promote education quality and support institutional development, Bulgaria is actually fully participating in different programs such as SOCRATES, CEEPUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI. As a result, the cooperation between the Bulgarian and foreign education institutions is being promoted, thus encouraging the motivation for innovative changes. Concerning the Socrates program, substantial increase of the interest for participation, expressed by the Bulgarian education institutions, was registered. That interest could be measured by the growth (in %) in the number of the 2006 submitted projects, compared to the 2005 ones, as follows: Comenius 1 – 27%, Comenius 2.2. – 28%, Grundtwig – 35%. Here are some data concerning the adoption of funds (in %) for 2004: Comenius – 91%, Grundtwig – 99% and Erasmus – 98%. For the 2004/05 academic year there is a substantial increase (80%) in the incoming mobility under the Erasmus program compared to the previous academic year.

As to the Leonardo da Vinci program, its projects for the last year were mainly oriented toward the following priorities: Qualifications transparency promotion; Quality development of the systems and practices for VET; Teachers in-service training. The total number of submitted projects for 2005 is 276 and the funds average adoption is 144%.

As of January 1st 2007 Bulgaria participates in the new Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013)

11.6.1. Mobility and Exchange of Pupils/ Students

Actually there are 18 secondary schools in Bulgaria awarding German diplomas /DSD II der KMK – Deutsches Sprachdiplom Stufe II der Kultusministerkonferenz/, thus giving the holders of these qualifications a chance to apply for further studies in German universities

There are several possibilities for students in Bulgarian universities to apply for scholarships within the framework of the bilateral agreements and programmes Bulgaria has signed with over 70 countries all over the world.

During the last few years, the measures undertaken in the field of recognition of qualifications for both academic and professional purposes were directed towards regulating the academic recognition of education completed and degrees by profession and qualification obtained. On the other hand, several important steps were made towards establishing necessary legal preconditions to facilitate recognition of professional qualifications and the right to provide services for both Bulgarian and foreign citizens. It could also be emphasized, that the terms of elaborating and coming into force of the legal acts are completely observed. This fact indicates a systematic progress in the sector regarding the process on harmonization of national legislation with the European Region's one.

An important legal initiative facilitating the unification of criteria for recognition of higher education diplomas issued abroad is the adoption of the Law on the Ratification of the Convention on

Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention) /SG 25 – 28 March 2000/. The ratification of the Lisbon convention complements the existing legal basis in respect of elaboration of secondary legislative measures concerning the criteria and procedures for recognition of qualifications, concerning higher education.

In compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention amendments to several acts of the secondary legislation regarding recognition of documents certifying secondary and higher education acquired as well as periods of education completed were promulgated. The Council of Ministers' Decree No. 168 of 14 August 2000 adopted an Ordinance on the State Requirements for recognition of higher education acquired or periods of education completed in foreign higher schools. By virtue of the Ordinance the procedure for recognition of higher education can be organized and carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science and decisions on recognition can be made by a Commission established by the Minister of Education and Science, comprising 10 members – persons holding high academic ranks in the basic scientific fields and 2 representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science.

According to Article 11 of the Ordinance:

- (1) The recognition of higher education acquired in foreign higher schools shall be accomplished upon comparing the data of the documents presented and of the requirements approved for obtaining higher education in the same and/or in a similar speciality in Bulgarian higher schools.
- (2) The following indicators are taken into consideration when recognising higher education:
 - o enrolment;
 - o duration of the studies;
 - o total horary of the studied subjects;
 - o proportion between the horary of the studied subjects that provide the fundamental, the special, and the specialized education;
 - o theoretical/practical horary ratio;
 - o graduation requirements.”

Furthermore, in compliance with Art. 17, Par. 1 and 2 of the same document, the National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC/NARIC-Bulgaria) supports the activities related to recognition of higher education. The Centre is officially positioned with an Ordinance No. RD–14–189 of the Minister of Education and Science dated 12 September 2000.

Recognition of a study period of higher education is accomplished by the respective higher school where the student has submitted his/her application form.

The 2004 amendments to the Higher Education Act provided legal grounds for use of both the Diploma Supplement and ECTS.

11.6.2. Mobility and Exchange of Teaching and Academic Staff

Mobility within European programs

Comenius 1, Comenius 2.2, ARION and Leonardo da Vinci are the EU programs in which Bulgarian teachers are actively participating. For example, under the ARION program 25-30 teachers are performing study visits in different European countries. Bulgaria has already hosted 2 ARION study visits in the towns of Sofia and Plovdiv. Further 3 study visits are scheduled for 2007 in the towns of Veliko Turnovo, Blagoevgrad and Burgas.

Foreign language teacher mobility is assumed as an important tool for education quality increase.

Bilateral mobility schemes for foreign language teachers

Initial teacher training in the target language country - Visits to the target language country for foreign language teachers are not compulsory and are not included into the curriculum. However, within the framework of different inter-university agreements and mobility programs, some Bulgarian universities have the possibility to organize study periods to be undertaken by some Bulgarian students in the target language country. Several intergovernmental agreements also give such opportunity. Grants for Bulgarian students are also offered by foreign academic exchange services /DAAD, British Council, Institut Français, Consejería de España/.

In-service teacher training in the target language country - Offered within the framework of: bilateral agreements for co-operation in the field of education, science and culture; contracts between universities (for university staff); European and regional programmes; courses offered by foreign cultural institutes in Bulgaria (French Cultural Institute, British Council, etc.) The associations of foreign language teachers in Bulgaria also offers different opportunities for in-service training by organizing conferences, seminars or by participating in education programs developed by the different teacher training institutes.

Length of training - In general the duration is from 1-2 weeks to several months

Kulturkontakt /Austria/ offers on annual basis scholarships for Bulgarian teachers. Der Pädagogische Austauschdienst also offers 10 scholarships for teacher training in Germany. Teacher training courses are regularly organized in Besançon, France. Switzerland also offers 1-week courses in Lüzern.

11.7. Statistics

Statistical data on the participation of Bulgarian universities in the CEEPUS program

Academic Year	Number of networks with BG participation
Summer term 1994/95	2
1995/96	11
1996/97	15
1997/98	10
1998/99	10
1999/2000	17
2000/01	21
2001/02	17
2002/03	17
2003/04	15
2004/05	15
2005/06	22
2006/07	22

Source: National CEEPUS Office of Bulgaria