



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

BULGARIA

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If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

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INTRODUCTION

Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered ⁽¹⁾ and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter
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European Unit

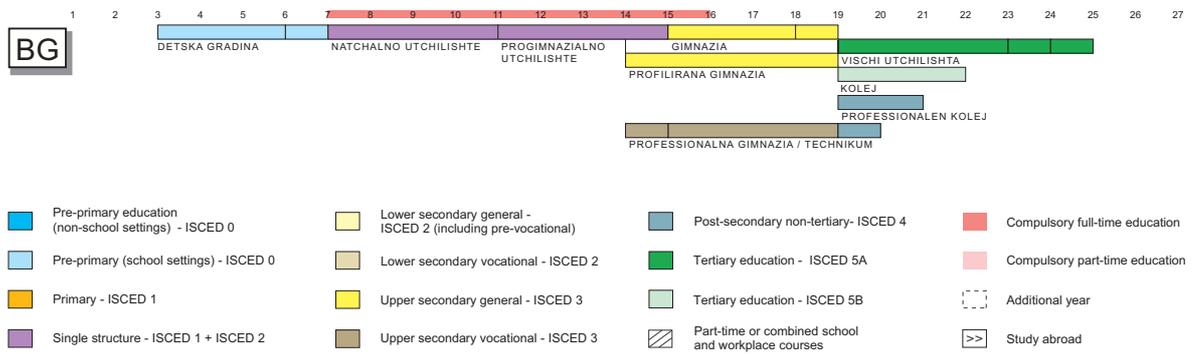
Johan van Rens
Director of CEDEFOP

Peter de Roij
Director of the ETF

June 2003

⁽¹⁾ The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

Organisation of the education system in Bulgaria, 2003/2004



Source: Eurydice.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Background

The Republic of Bulgaria is situated in South Eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula on a territory of 110 993 square km with a population of approximately 8 427 000. Bulgaria is a republic based on the system of parliamentary democracy. The head of the state is the President, who is directly elected by the people for 5 years. State power is divided between the executive, legislature and judiciary. Legislative power lies in the National Assembly elected for 4 years. The domestic and foreign policy of the country enters within the scope of the activities of the Council of Ministers according to the Constitution and the national legislation.

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

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

Within that framework, **quality of education and training** is one of the main objectives. Substantial progress has been made through working out of new curricula and educational standards in compliance with the economic and social changes. Contemporary quality assessment schemes both for secondary and higher schools are in the process of elaboration. The institutions themselves show increasing responsibility for the quality of education they are offering. New technologies are being introduced in the training process.

The **cost-efficiency of the educational processes** is another aspect of the education system development. A lot of activities have been undertaken in order to strike a balance between the public resources allocated for education and the refundability for the society and the

individual. The main results achieved are the autonomy of the higher education institutions, as well as the decentralization of the secondary school system. Several steps have been undertaken in order to improve the interaction with the economy and the business circles.

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

1.2 Basis of the education system: principles – legislation

During the last twenty years, basic legislation in the field of education has undergone modifications in 1991, 1995, 1998, 1999 and 2002.

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

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

Restrictions and privileges based on race, nationality, gender, ethnical and social origin, religion and social status are not allowed. Education is secular and compulsory up to 16 years of age. It is free of charge at state and municipal schools.

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

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

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

The completion of the respective level of education guarantees the acquisition of the general educational minimum as well as of knowledge and skills corresponding to the interests and the individual needs of the pupils.

- Alignment of the national legal framework with the requirements of the European educational area and introducing changes in the main legal documents while considering national specificities and priorities – the Law on National Education, the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Education Minimum and the Syllabus, and the Rules governing the implementation of the Law on National Education; approving Ordinance No. 3 on the system of evaluation, Ordinance No.4 on the school documentation, Ordinance on the textbooks and teaching resources; and assuring the system of national education with state educational requirements;
- Gradual introduction of the new syllabus and curricula for the subjects that form the compulsory and elective course of study;
- Introduction of compulsory training in the preparatory groups of preschool education.

As to the system of **vocational education and training**, priorities are also connected with the economic and political changes in Bulgaria. In order to achieve better mobility and adaptability of the trainees for the labor market, a new approach is actually being applied. The main objective of the reform

process is to provide possibilities for every member of our society to acquire, develop, upgrade or continue her/his professional education and training meeting her/his personal and market needs. The present day situation in the country, as well as the EU experience presupposed that problems of vocational education and training can't be solved solely by specialists working in the area of education. Branch chambers and trade-unions should actively participate in the process of professional competence evaluation, practical training, course content, etc.

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

The National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria plays a principal role in decision-making on the problems related to education. It adopts the legislation, concerning the educational system. Basic and secondary education is established in compliance with the National Education Act (NEA) 1991 (last amendments 2002). Within the framework of the secondary general education a new Law, concerning the standard on Educational degree, Educational minimum and Syllabus has been recently adopted. The main characteristics of this document could be summarised as follows:

As to the system of vocational education and training, the implementation of the new Law on Vocational Education and Training is one of the major steps undertaken by the Bulgarian Government in the field of the preparation of the country for full membership in the EU.

The most representative document to describe the current political intentions concerning higher education is the Higher Education Act adopted in 1995 and its successive amendments up to the last ones of 2002. The main directions determined in general are: a balance between the authority and responsibility of the state and the appropriate degree of autonomy and freedom of the institutions; introducing a three level degree system – Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's degree with their functional place in the labor market in compliance with the Bologna Process; enhancing access to educational programs and facilitated transition from one program and level to others, development of assessment activities at both internal and external levels of evaluation and accreditation. Relating to this aim has been established the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency assuming the responsibility for institutional

and programme accreditation.

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

- Quality assurance of all programmes in compliance with the labor market and European dimensions of education
- Innovation in teaching and learning methods including lifelong learning tendencies
- Raising the scope of academic autonomy by entrusting more responsibility to higher education institutions
- New schemes of funding higher education institutions, resources allocation and student support
- Research activities under business initiatives and private funding
- Improvement of evaluation procedures transferring a part of evaluation criteria to achievements measurement.

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

Implementation of the legislation is ensured by the appropriate administrative bodies.

The basic characteristics of the **administration** of education are its further democratization and decentralization as well as a broadening of the autonomy given to the education establishments. A simplified administrative structure, professional qualification and expert competence, freedom of action and innovation are currently being established.

The administration of school education is organised on four levels: national, regional, municipal and school level. **The Ministry of Education, Science (MES)** is a specialised body of the Council of Ministers for the administration of the education system. It determines and implements state policy in the field of education; forecasts and plans the activities pertaining to the development of education by drafting long-term programmes and operational plans; organizes and coordinates the work of the administrative units and education establishments; monitors the activity of all types and levels of schools (including nursery schools) in the country; approves school documentation and planning of school places; ensures the implementation

of innovations, the supply of textbooks, curricula and teaching staff; and carries out international activities in the field of education.

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

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

The type of system management undergoes further fundamental changes in compliance with the last amendments to the National Education Act. Instead of the strongly centralized system, a new model of administration is now being developed, thus giving individual character to the regional educational structures. The process is mainly related to the redistribution of the administrative functions of the units within the system in compliance with their specificity and readiness. School co-operation and partnership with local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations is also in a process of expansion. One should also mention the draft of the School Board Act.

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

The school is a legal entity. Its pedagogical, organizational, methodological, administrative and managerial autonomy has been extended considerably in recent years. The school administrative bodies are the Head and the Pedagogical Council. Since the school year 1994/95, the tradition of setting up a School Board of Trustees has been restored to create a link with parents and the public. Members of this Board are the school head, teachers, parents, public figures, businessmen, etc. School public bodies may also involve the Parents' Council, the Students' Council, the Class Council, etc.

The school has the right to organize its activity by taking into account the age of the pupils, their class and extra-curricular activities as well as the administrative functions of the school.

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

The school head manages its funds – both budgetary and extra-budgetary.

Experts at the MES and Inspectorates for Education (IE), as well as school heads are employed on the basis of a competition announced by the MEST, and the deputy school heads, teachers and other members of staff are appointed by the school head.

The scientific assembly and dissemination of data in the field of education is performed by the National Institute for Education (NIE) at the MES and other education institutions.

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

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

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

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

The National Assembly

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

The Government

The Council of Ministers exercises the executive power in the Republic of Bulgaria. It sets down the main trends in the national policy in the sphere of higher education and submits proposals to the National Assembly for the establishment, transformation or closing down of educational institutions, and for the amount of allocations for each state-funded higher school. On the basis of

proposals from the respective higher education institutions or a proposal submitted by the Minister of Education and Science, the Council of Ministers establishes, transforms or closes down faculties, branch-schools, colleges and institutes within the state-funded higher education institutions, determining along with this the status of these units.

The National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation

The procedure for accreditation of the higher education institutions is novel to the higher education system in Bulgaria. The institution created specially for this purpose and called the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation develops and approves the procedures and respective documentation for the process of accreditation, evaluates the projects for establishment or transformation of higher education institutions, faculties and specialities, assesses the activities of the higher schools, their faculties and specialities and on the basis of all this accredits or denies accreditation. Its information system stores data on the accredited higher education institutions, faculties and specialities.

The Higher Attestation Commission

The Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) with the Council of Ministers is an institution conferring the *Doctor's* educational and academic degree, as well as all other academic degrees and titles. It consists of a Presidium, Scientific Commissions for the various scientific fields and specialities, appointing scientists of academic rank and Doctors of Sciences.

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

The Scientific Commissions are HAC bodies. They are established for the various scientific fields, groups of scientific fields or scientific lines. The Commissions handle the proposals of the scientific councils and decide whether to confer on or strip off an

academic title, how to place within the national system or whether to approve the academic degrees obtained abroad, and authorize the appointment of foreign reviewers.

1.4 Inspection/supervision/guidance

The main characteristics of the educational management are as follows:

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

Control over the teaching process and its results is carried out by the competent bodies: MES, IE, the school heads and deputy heads.

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

School heads and deputy heads also have power to control the teaching process and education results.

Inspection is not independent from the other activities of the administrative bodies, but is an integral part thereof.

The inspecting bodies monitor school legislation, school curricula and syllabuses and state education requirements in terms of performance and efficiency of the teaching

methods used, and also organize examinations. They assist the teachers and evaluate their work and the quality of education delivered.

Finally, one should mention that according to the last amendments to the National Education act standards concerning the study content and the assessment system are in process of elaboration.

The main steps in the field of external evaluation of the system are:

- Establishment of a National evaluation unit for the secondary education ensuring the organization of the state matriculation exams and all the external examinations that will provide not only criteria for maintaining the quality but also an impetus for raising it;
- Carrying out the state matriculation exams and through this providing equal conditions to all students, who complete their secondary education; ensuring sound control on behalf of an independent national commission at the exit of the secondary school that will prevent from subjectivism in evaluating students' work during the upper secondary school; assuring equal criteria for evaluation in the different regions of the country and providing opportunity for synchronizing the educational requirements between EU member states and the rest of the European countries;
- Elaboration of a process for training results control; verification in the first, forth and eighth grades for evaluating the effectiveness and quality of the new curricula and for determining the achievements of the pupils at the end of the primary and basic level of schooling;
- Establishment of a system for follow-up monitoring providing general information in respect of quality of education services and proposals for its' improvement.

1.5 Financing

Education is financed by grants from the state budget through the MES, which is the major source of financing, as well as from local budgets through the community administrations. The grant is determined in a differentiated manner according to the level of education and type of school involved. Capital investments are also determined in order to subsidise research work, to promote teachers' qualification and the wages for staff working in education. Private schools are not financed by the state.

The education outlays, including those planned for capital investment, are distributed between the different levels of education (secondary schools, colleges, higher education institutions). Funds can also be awarded for in-service teacher training. Actual spending on education has been increasing, although the relative share of GDP has been decreasing in recent years. As already stated, when enumerating the principles of education, the latter is free-of-charge for all pupils.

According to the principle of the education system decentralization, a new model for school financing is actually in a process of development. So far, 20 municipalities have been involved into the implementation of the 'delegated budgets' methodology in their schools. The introduction of delegated budgets means that the subsidies for education coming from the state or municipal budgets are allocated to schools through a formula. Each pilot area has developed a formula to reflect local circumstances. The main criteria are the number of students in the school and the size of the school premises. The specific factors in the formula are municipality dependent. The school headteachers have the right to vire money between paragraphs within the framework of the budget informing the funding body about the changes. Efficiency savings and funds raised through other sources are not taken by the municipal councils or the MES but are rolled over to the following financial year without any bearing on the school's subsidy for the next year.

1.6 Advisory (consultative) bodies

At all levels of school administration, specialized public bodies (Supreme School Council, consultative, expert bodies, etc.) exist alongside the state bodies in order to assist the work of the latter and the adoption of administrative decisions. They have a different status – standing or temporary – with either constant or temporary membership. At schools, such a body is called the Board of School Trustees, but other bodies could also be established – methodological councils, subject-oriented commissions, and expert committees. The role of parents in the consultative council is

regulated within the Rules of procedures for the activities of the Board of School Trustees published in State Journal No 111 of 1995. The document provides for the active participation of parents in the organization of the following activities: extra-class and extra-school activities, organization of additional foreign language instruction, sports and aesthetic activities. The Board of School Trustees could also assist the state bodies in their work concerning different administrative decision matters.

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

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

1.7 Private schools

The first private schools in Bulgaria were established in 1992. The order and conditions of establishment are defined and amended by the *National Education Act – 1991 (last amendments 1998), Statute and special regulation of MEST for private schools*. Private schools have a curriculum, whose compulsory part must meet the requirements of the state curriculum. Private schools have the right to supplement this with other curricula e.g. intensive foreign language teaching, music, arts, ecology, management, trade and marketing.

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

In 2001/2002 there were 5075 pupils in 55 private general secondary schools.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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

As part of the national education system, pre-primary education is regulated by the National Education Act (1991), the Rules of Procedures on the Implementation of the National Education Act, Regulations, Directions and Programmes.

The system of pre-primary education includes children from the age of 3 to the age of 6/7. Besides the state-funded sector, which is prevalent (more than 95%), the private sector is also developing.

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

Pre-primary education includes day-care nursery schools, health-care nursery schools, specialized nursery schools, part-time nursery schools and preparatory groups for school (pre-school groups). As of the 2003/04 school year attendance of pre-school groups is compulsory. Most children attend the day-care nursery schools.

2.1 Organisation

Most of the nursery schools are separate institutions opened by the municipalities. They have a full-time work regime and are located in purpose-built premises. If there are too few children, groups are formed within schools where pre-school groups are also organized. They work on a part-time basis and in shifts. Children in nursery schools are divided into three groups according to age – from 3 to 4 years; 4 to 5 years, and from 5 to 6 years. The age division is not obligatory and can in some circumstances be wavered (according to the number of children in a

group or the level of development of a given child). The children may be divided into mixed age groups. There are 12 to 22 children per group. State nursery schools are opened where at least four but no more than eight groups are formed.

2.2 Curriculum and assessment

The volume and content of the courses for different activities are defined according to two programmes:

- Programme for Education of Children aged between two and seven;
- Nursery school activities.

The selection and structure of the contents are determined by the abilities of the 3- to 6-year-olds. The education content is classified by subject, and for each age group the subject is widened and developed. The content is integrated into several main themes: 'My world', 'Myself and others', 'Me and nature', etc. The programmes operate at national level and teachers are entitled to opt for one of them.

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

Within the preparatory groups, the basic form of instruction takes place in classes which prepare the children for introduction into the classroom style of education at school. At this stage, the children pass automatically from one age group to the next, regardless of their individual development and results. To provide a more personalized system, there are set state education standards, as well as a system for assessing the achievements and development of each child within the preparatory group.

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

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

2.3 Teachers

There are 18 637 teachers (pedagogical staff) working in the pre-primary education system in Bulgaria. They have some form of higher education qualification and perform administrative and pedagogical functions. If there are less than five groups in a certain nursery school, the head also teaches a group, or in some cases is head of two nursery schools. Every group has two teachers, who are trained to be generalists and not teach just one subject. The main task of all teachers is to organize the education processes and the conditions in the nursery school and to care for the well-being of all children. They can choose from all the available education programmes, and work full-time, i.e. 6 hours a day.

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

Larger nursery schools with more than 8 groups have psychologists. They help teachers with programme development and in their interaction with children. The psychologists have higher education qualification in the respective area. They can have full-time contracts, as well as temporary ones. There are not legal provisions for the duration of their in-service training. The duration is optional and normally it lasts 2-3 weeks per year.

2.4 Statistics

In 2001/2002 there were 199 206 pupils in pre-primary education of which 453 in private kindergardens. The average participation rate is 70.6%. Within that period were operating 22 private pre-primary schools.

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION/TRAINING

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

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

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Education Act (1991), school education is compulsory from the age of 6/7 up to the age of 16. It comprises basic education (*osnovno obrazovanie/osnovno obrazovanie*) (years 1 to 8) which is divided into: first stage – (*natchalenn etap/nachalenn etap*) (years 1 to 4) and *second stage* *progimnazialenn etap- progimnazialenn etap*) (years 5 to 8). Basic education could be obtained at state, municipal and private schools.

Basic education is free-of-charge with the exception of private schools. The textbooks are to be provided by the pupils except for grade 1.

All basic schools in Bulgaria are coeducational. All children who have reached 7 years during the civil year are admitted to compulsory primary education. According to the decision of the parents, children who have reached 6 years are also admitted. School attendance is also related to the child's readiness for school. Maturity to enter primary education is defined at the end of pre-primary education or at the beginning of primary education according to criteria and parameters developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Most of the schools which provide foreign language instruction in the first year define specific entry requirements and set special tests.

The average rate of attendance of a given pupil must not be less than two-thirds of the hours for each subject studied. If this norm is not respected, for whatever reason, the pupils must sit term examinations or/and annual examinations in the subject(s) concerned.

3A PRIMARY EDUCATION

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

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

The number of pupils in a class averages 20. Year classes are formed according to age.

3A.1 Organisation of the school

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

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

The academic year lasts from 15 September to 24 May for the year 1; 15 September to 31 May for years 2 to 4.

3A.2 Curriculum

There is a single curriculum for primary education which is compulsory for all pupils from years 1 to 4. In the 2002-03 school year it included the following subjects: Bulgarian language and literature – 7 hours per week for grades 1 to 4, mathematics – 4 hours; foreign language 2 hours for grade 2 and 3 hours for grades 3 and 4; mankind – 1 hour for grade 1; man and society – 1,5 hours for grade 2 and 1 hour for grade 4] nature – 1 hour in grade 2 and 1 hour for grade 2 and 3] music – 2 hours for grades 1 and 2 and 2 hours for grade 3 and 4 fine arts 2 hours for all grades house activities – 1 hour for all grades.

As of the 2003/04 school year early foreign language teaching, in grade 2 was introduced in some schools following this curriculum..

3A.3 Assessment/certification/ guidance

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

Assessment in the first year is qualitative and includes the following levels: fair; good; very good and excellent. The knowledge and skills of pupils from years 2 to 4 are evaluated during the school year by oral, written and practical tests and other forms of control. Assessment is carried out by the teacher and periodically by the teacher with the state administrative bodies. The term score is the average of at least three current marks. The annual score is the average of the two term scores. For those subjects included in the curriculum with only one hour per week or every two weeks, there is no term score. The annual score for them is the average of at least three current marks. Tests are not compulsory.

The pupil's knowledge and skills are evaluated by using a six-point scoring system including the marks excellent (6); very good (5); good (4); fair (3) and poor (2). The highest mark is excellent (6). Some disciplines such as singing, fine arts, etc. use a general mark ('pass' or 'fail').

Marks are awarded by subject for each term and for each academic year.

At the end of a given year, the assessment results are used to determine whether a pupil may pass to the next class.

After successful completion of year 4, a certificate (*удостоверение за завършен IV клас*) is issued. The certificate includes the annual score in the subjects studied in year 4, as well as the score obtained in the chosen/optional subjects. The overall score for completed elementary schooling is calculated with an accuracy of up to 0.01 as an average score of all the marks in all compulsory education subjects. There are no examinations at the end of year 4.

3A.4 Teachers

From years 1 to 4, the teacher works with one class.

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

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

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

The teachers for years 1 to 4 work 160 academic days. The qualification of teacher in Bulgaria could be attained within the framework of the university level educational programmes for Bachelor and Master. Several higher education institutions offer such programmes with a duration of at least 4 years for Bachelor's degree and at least 5 years – for the Master's one. In general they are full-time employed under permanent or temporary contract. There are not legal provisions for the duration of their in-service training. The duration is optional and normally it lasts 2-3 weeks per year.

3B COMPULSORY- SECONDARY EDUCATION

3B.1 Organisation of the school

Lower secondary education (*progimnazialen etap/Прогимназиален етап*) (years 5 to 8) lays the foundations for studying the basics

of different sciences and at the end of this education pupils should have acquired such skills.

On average, there are 22-23 pupils per class. The year classes are formed according to age.

School premises in large cities are used in two shifts and in small towns and villages in one shift.

The organization of the teaching process is based on a five-day week. General instruction comprises 34 school weeks per year. The academic year lasts from 15 September to 15 June.

3B.2 Curriculum

There is a core curriculum which is compulsory for lower secondary education. It provides for studying the Bulgarian language and literature; mathematics; knowledge of the mother land; nature studies; history; physics, chemistry; biology; geography; fine arts; music; work and technics (technical work); physical education. As of the school year 1998/99 a new module 'Computer techniques and information technologies' has been introduced in the subject work and techniques. The duration of the module is 34 hours per year, res. 2 hours per week.

Pre-secondary course content purpose is to provide general instruction. The chosen subjects represent three to four hours of lesson-time per week. These hours are mainly used and distributed between a foreign language and sports or arts-oriented school activities.

Different didactic techniques and methods are used (such as working in groups) and corresponding textbooks, teaching aids and literature, compilations, teaching software, etc. help create an atmosphere of interaction and mutual cooperation between the teacher and the pupils and between the pupils themselves.

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

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

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

3B.3 Assessment/certification/ guidance

Assessment is similar to primary education (see point 3.A.3 'Assessment').

A certificate of basic education (*Svidetelstvo za zavurcheno osnovno obrazovanie / Свидетелство за завършено основно образование*) is issued after the successful completion of year 8. The certificate includes the annual score obtained in the subjects studied in year 8, as well as the scores obtained in the chosen subjects. The overall score for completed basic education is calculated with an accuracy of up to 0.01 as an average score of the marks in the subjects defined with the curriculum in the respective fields: Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, Informatics and Information technologies, Social sciences and civic education, natural sciences and Ecology, Arts, Sports and technologies. There are no examinations upon completion of year 8.

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

3B.4 Teachers

From years 5 to 8 teachers split into different disciplines.

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

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

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

The teachers for years 5 to 8 work 170 academic days. They have an annual paid leave equal to 52 working days. During the rest of the days they carry out different school activities (examinations, work with the children, in-service training, etc.). In general they are full-time employed under permanent or temporary contract. There are not legal provisions for the duration of their in-service training. The duration is optional and normally it lasts 2-3 weeks per year.

Statistics

In 2001/02 academic year, the number of public schools was as follows: primary schools (grades 1-4) – 368; lower secondary education (grades 5-8) – 22, basic schools (grades 1-8) – 1829.

As to the private schools, there were 55 private general schools. With a total number of 5 075 pupils.

In 2001/02 the total number of pupils studying in years 1 to 4 was 341 963. Within the same year the total number of pupils for years 5 to 8 was 348 974. The net enrolment rate of the population for primary education is 96.4% and 84.2 for lower secondary education.

The total number of teachers in for 2001/02 was 21 223 for primary education and 28 894 for lower secondary education.

The average value of pupil to teacher ratio in primary education is 19.9 and in lower secondary education is 21.6

Number of schools for years 1 to 8 in 1997/98

Total	Years 1 to 4	Years 1 to 8	Years 5 to 8
2219	368	1829	22

4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary general education is provided by:

- secondary comprehensive schools (SCS), which cover: school grades 1 to 4; pre-secondary school grades 5 to 8; and secondary school level –grades 9 to 12.
- specialized secondary schools – These cover grades 8 to 12.
- secondary schools –These cover grades 9 to 12

4A GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

The system of secondary general education (*sredno obchto obrazovanie средно общо образование*) in Bulgaria is regulated by the National Education Act from 1991 (last amendments 2002) and by different regulatory documents produced by the MES. It covers pupils from years 9 to 12 (13).

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

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

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

There are on average 22 to 23 pupils per class in secondary schools, with an average of 3 to 5 classes per year, i.e. at a given secondary school there are from 12 to 20 classes for years 9 to 12 with an average ranging from 250 to 450 pupils.

4A.1 Organisation of the school

There are also **private secondary schools** Some of the secondary schools (as stated above) contain the basic school in order to form the so-called secondary comprehensive school (SCS). School premises in the big cities are used according to a two-shift

scheme, while in small cities and villages they are used according to a one-shift scheme.

The length of the school day corresponds to the possibilities offered by the premises.

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

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

There are day-time and evening secondary schools.

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

4A.2 Curriculum

At *profilirani gimnazii* with intensive foreign language instruction secondary schools (after year 7), pupils pass a one-year course of intensive foreign language study,. There is no specific adaptation period provided for pupils in other schools. At each secondary school pupils may choose a set number of branches for more detailed study of a given subject (humanities, mathematics and physics, biology and chemistry, etc.).

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

4A.3 Assessment

The knowledge and skills that the pupils acquire during the academic year are assessed by oral, written and practical forms of examination. The control is performed by

the teacher throughout the academic year. The marks are recorded for each term and also for the academic year. State administrative bodies (municipal, regional and national) practice continuous control.

The term and/or annual marks are calculated from at least three current marks. Tests are an obligatory form of examination and assessment.

Pupils who have successfully completed the last year of secondary school with an average of at least 'very good' (5.00) in the subjects studied and an annual mark for the last year of study (in general compulsory instruction or compulsory-elective instruction) of at least 'very good' (5.00) are exempt from sitting the matriculation examinations. Those who have successfully completed their general secondary education receive a certificate of secondary education (*Diploma za sredno obrazovanie*/Диплома за средно образование). The certificate must obligatorily mention the chosen branch of specialization.

Pupils do not automatically pass to the next class. If they have more than three poor marks (Poor = 2), they repeat the year; if they have three or less poor marks, the pupil has the right to sit a supplementary examination; if they do not pass the supplementary examination, they repeat the year. There is no passing to a higher grade on probation.

There are no special classes for remedial pupils.

After successful completion of the last year of secondary school and passing the compulsory matriculation examinations a Diploma of completed secondary education is issued.

Students in upper secondary education sit written matriculation examinations in:

- Bulgarian language and literature;
- an elective-comprehensive subject on their own choice (without Bulgarian language and literature) which is part of the compulsory-elective instruction in the last school grade.

The final qualification includes:

- the marks of the matriculation examinations with an accuracy of up to 0.01 or the marks used for exemption from sitting the matriculation examinations;
- the average score of the marks (with an accuracy of up to 0.01) in the compulsory subjects in upper secondary education;
- the marks in the subjects from:
- the compulsory-elective instruction in the grades from the upper secondary

education, according to the curriculum. For the secondary comprehensive instruction the accuracy is up to 1.00

- the profiled instruction in the grades from the upper secondary education. For the profile-oriented secondary instruction the accuracy is up to 0.01
- the elective instruction in the grades from the upper secondary education, according to the curriculum.

The overall score for completed secondary general upper education is calculated with an accuracy of up to 0.01 as an average score of the marks in: Bulgarian language and literature; two foreign languages, mathematics; history; philosophy, physics, astronomy, chemistry; biology; geography. In case of sitting for matriculation examination the average score of the marks in the compulsory subjects in upper secondary education is replaced by the results from these examinations.

The overall score for completed secondary general upper education at the profiled schools with profiles: Fine arts, Music, Choreography, Christian art and Culture, Informatics, as well as at the sports schools is calculated as an average score of the marks in: Bulgarian language and literature; two foreign languages, mathematics; history; philosophy, physics, astronomy, chemistry; biology; geography as well as the mark in the main branch subject as follows: fine arts, music, choreography, history of arts, informatics, sports. In case of sitting for matriculation examination the average score of the marks in the compulsory subjects in upper secondary education is replaced by the results from these examinations.

Holders of secondary school leaving qualifications (*Diploma za sredno obrazovanie*) are entitled to continue their education on a higher educational level/university and non-university, without restriction as to the choice of a higher education establishment. The secondary school leaving qualification gives also access to the labour market.

The qualifications, concerning secondary general education, are actually subject to various changes in compliance with the recent amendments to the National Education Act. The educational system as a whole is in a process of preparation for the implementation of the 12-years schooling model, combined with compulsory matriculation examinations. To this regard, standards for educational degree, educational minimum and syllabus, as well as standards concerning the study content and assessment are in process of elaboration.

4A.4 Teachers

Within the secondary school, teachers are divided by discipline and have higher education qualifications, having graduated from a corresponding higher education institution, plus a pedagogical qualification. Their training in a higher education institution lasts 4 to 5 years, including their pedagogical practical work at school.

Teachers are specialists in the discipline they teach and some of them have a second specialization also obtained at higher education level.

According to the timetable which teachers must cover, they may either be employed full-time in a permanent post or attain the necessary number of academic hours by also teaching at another school. There are also teachers who work on a part-time basis, teachers who give lectures and receive payment not under an employment contract, but under a specific contract for a particular type of work. Teachers have 54 days' paid annual leave.

The norms for full-time secondary school teaching depend on the subject taught and could be a minimum of 648, 684, or 720 academic hours annually. The maximum is obtained by multiplying the minimum by 1.5 (i.e. 972, 1026, 1080). The qualification of teacher in Bulgaria could be attained within the framework of the university level educational programmes for Bachelor and Master. Several higher education institutions offer such programmes with duration of at least 4 years for Bachelor's degree and at least 5 years – for the Master's one. In general they are full-time employed under permanent or temporary contract. There are not legal provisions for the duration of their in-service training. The duration is optional and normally it lasts 2-3 weeks per year.

4A.5 Statistics

In 2001/02 were operating 160 upper-secondary schools (grades 9-12), 393 secondary comprehensive schools (grades 1-12) and 40 secondary comprehensive schools (grades 5 -12).

The total number of students in post-compulsory education was 148 581 for 2001/02 year, while the total number of teachers for the same level was 13 144 The pupil to teacher ratio was 10.7.

The number of of graduates for 2001/02 from upper secondary education was 32047.

4B VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Important changes within the system vocational secondary education (*средно професионално образование*) are expected with the adoption of the new Law on Vocational Education and Training (1999 and amendments). The main objectives of that Law are, as follows:

- Creation of a reliable information system on both vocational qualifications and vocational education and training needs;
- Establishment of national standards on vocational education and training, comparable to the European ones;
- Establishment of a long-life vocational education system;
- Decentralization of the vocational education system management
- Development of an effective system for quality control, concerning the system for vocational education and the qualifications certification, according to the national standards;
- Creation of preconditions for effective co-operation and partnership between the respective institutions and organizations at national, regional and local levels;
- Establishment of a supervised by the Council of Ministers National Agency for vocational education and training. The activities of the Agency are closely related to the procedures of accreditation within the national system of vocational education and training, as well as to the co-ordination of the institutions working in the area of the vocational education and training;
- Development of national programs on vocational qualifications;
- Organization of vocational qualifications acquisition through the equal participation of study units, ministries, organisations of employers, etc.
- Accreditation of educational institutions by the National Agency for vocational education and training.
- State requirements development in the area of vocational education and training

Thus, the above mentioned Law on Vocational Education and Training shall regulate:

- The active participation of the employers in the process of market requirements determination as a function of the labor market development;
- The active participation of the employers in the process of state standards development in the area of vocational qualifications;
- The active participation of the employers in the procedures for qualifications evaluation;
- The active participation of NGOs in the training process
- Social partners participation in the process of study content development.
- Education standards development; Results monitoring at the exit of the system for adult education.

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

4B.1 Organisation of the School

Secondary vocational education is provided in: vocational training schools and/or technical schools covering grades 8/9 to 12. There are also vocational training schools (from grade 6 or 7) offering 3-year training programs; vocational training schools (from grade 9) offering up-to 4-year training programs and vocational training schools offering 2-year training programs after completed secondary education.

4B.2 Curriculum

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

4B.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

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

Studies in technical schools are completed after sitting examinations in Bulgarian language and literature and mathematics and on vocational training (theory and practice of the profession). Certificate for secondary specialised education (*Диплома за средно специално образование*) as well as a certificate for professional qualification (*Свидетелство за професионална квалификация*) are issued.

4B.4 Teachers

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

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

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

4B.5 Statistics

In 2001/02 the total number of students in vocational education was 191 328. They were distributed as follows:

Type of school	Technical schools and vocational <i>gimnazii</i>	Vocational schools upon completion of secondary education	Secondary Vocational technical schools
Students	142 230	3572	39365

5. INITIAL/VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational education and training which is provided through sandwich-type training, particular apprenticeship is not a common practice in Bulgaria.

The apprenticeship system is under the responsibility of the employers and is regulated by the Labor Code.

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

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

Unemployment Security and Employment Incentives Law determines the vocational training and retraining of unemployed organised by the National Employment Service.

The Professional Training and Unemployment Fund proportionate to the days of attendance pay unemployment allowance to the persons participating in vocational training programs organised by the National Employment Service. Professional training for employees in enterprises jointly organized by National Employment Service and the employers is funded by the Professional Training and Unemployment Fund and by the employers.

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

Education/training establishments for the training are state and municipal training centers, company training centres, vocational schools, and vocational colleges.

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

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

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

5.1 Organisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.2 Establishments

According to the new Law education/training establishments are: state and municipal training centres, company training centres (*професионални училища/professionalni*

utchilishta) vocational schools, and vocational colleges (*професионални колежи/professionalni koleji*).

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

5.3 Financing

The Professional Training and Unemployment Fund proportionate to the days of attendance pay unemployment allowance to the persons participating in vocational training programs organised by the National Employment Service. Professional training for employees in enterprises jointly organized by National Employment Service and the employers is funded by the Professional Training and Unemployment Fund and by the employers.

5.4 Curriculum

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

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

5.5 Assessment

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

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

5.6 Teachers/Trainers

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

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

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

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

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

In compliance with the Bologna follow-up process, important amendments to the Higher Education Act became effective recently. Thus, within that area a model, comprising under- and post-graduate levels is being operational. The undergraduate one comprises the *Specialist in...*, as well as the *Bachelor's degree*, while the postgraduate one gives possibility to students to choose between *Master's degree*, which gives additional knowledge and skills and better chance at the labor market, and *Doctoral programs* where predominantly young researchers are trained.

The recent amendments to the Higher Education Act related to the structure of higher education qualifications are mainly oriented towards improving the opportunities for equal access to further studies, as well as towards increasing system effectiveness and internal mobility. For example, Art.42, par.3 provides to the holders of Bachelor's degree the opportunity to apply for doctoral studies. Its Par.5 provides to the holders of the 'Specialist in...' qualification the possibility to continue their studies at Bachelor's level. One should also mention that the amendments to the Higher Education Act define a broader profile-oriented basic training of the Bachelor's programs, and an in-depth fundamental content of the Master's ones.

Currently, the focus is placed on the necessity for transparent qualifications, study courses and curricula. One of the main reasons for concentrating efforts to this effect is the concern of higher education institutions and the state authorities regarding the quality of education. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency was established to monitor and to assure the quality in the higher education sector. Development of tailor-made study programmes and qualifications that correspond to the interests of individual students may be expected in the future. Nevertheless, the current legislation allows for individualized curricula and greater choice of courses for students with higher academic achievements. Most higher education institutions provide such opportunities though to a limited number of students.

Despite the fact that the procedure for accreditation of the higher education institutions is more or less novel, an effective mechanism for external assessment and accreditation of higher education in Bulgaria

has already been introduced. At present internal higher school systems for quality assessment and evaluation are being in a process of setting-up, thus getting the academic community involved in it.

Prior to the new Higher Education Act there were semi-higher institutes which trained specialists in various vocational spheres (tourism, pedagogy, etc.) in the course of 2.5-3 years. Those who passed successfully their state exams received a Diploma of Semi-higher Education which featured their speciality and qualification entitling them to continue their education in the higher schools or to practice their profession. It was possible for them to upgrade and supplement their qualification within the framework of their major speciality, for which they were issued respectively a certificate or credentials.

The 1995 Higher Education Act introduced the **non-university type of higher education provided by colleges (колежи)**. They offer a three-year programme for vocationally-oriented education in various fields with a view to obtaining the degree of Specialist in ... They are mainly incorporated within the structure of the universities. They may also be independent, provided they fulfil the required academic and material requirements.

According to the Higher Education Act **university education institutions** in Bulgaria are *университети* (universities), *специализирани висши училища* (specialized higher education institutions): *институтути* (institutes), *академии* (academies), etc. there are also colleges which are non-university type of higher education institutions. In 2001/02 there were in total 90 establishments for higher learning including private ones. 37 state higher education institutions were functioning in the country, training specialists for the educational and qualification degrees of *бакалавър* (Bachelor), *магистър* (Master) and the scientific educational degree *доктор* (Doctor). There were also 42 state colleges. Private institutions were as follows: 5 universities and specialized institutions and 6 colleges.

Universities provide a wide range of specialization in at least in three or four basic fields of study (humanities, sciences and technologies) and cover a considerable number of scientific areas. An university can also carry out preparation in one or two basic fields of science and culture. In this case the

university's specialization is reflected in its name. Specialized higher schools (academies and institutes) carry out scientific activities and education in basic fields of science, arts, sports and military science. Their names denote their area of specialization.

The structure of higher education comprises the following degrees:

- First degree – at least a 4-years programme ending with a Bachelor's degree;
- Second degree – at least a 5-years programme or one year after the Bachelor's degree ending with a Master's degree;
- Third degree – at least a 3-years programme after covering the Master's degree or 4-years after covering the Bachelor's degree, ending with a Doctor's degree.

6.1 Admission requirements

Holders of secondary school leaving qualifications (*Diploma of Secondary Education*) are entitled to continue their education on a higher educational level (university and non-university), without restriction as to the choice of a higher education establishment. Admission to higher education institutions is based on successful entrance examinations. The type and number of these examinations are determined by the higher education institutions and are closely linked to its respective profile.

The requirements for enrolment, depending on the type of the higher school and the subject you are going to read, comprise written competition exams (one or more), tests (varying in volume and structure in the different higher schools), and a diploma of completed secondary education. The autonomy of higher education institutions allows them to define themselves the requirements for enrolment every year. The procedure for application is determined on annual basis and made public in the reference manual of the higher school.

6.2 Fees/Student finance

Fees for the students are determined annually. According to the Higher education Act the Council of Ministers is responsible for

setting the so-called State quota of students. This means that the government determines the number of students to be accepted by the higher education institutions and sets the level of state subsidies in accordance with the number of students. Studies will be free of charge for students holding one of the places within the State quota. If the higher education institutions allocate additional study places, the extra students, known as private students, are charged tuition fees. This currently applies to about 50% of all students.

The state settles the term fees for education and administrative fees.

Students have access to hostels, grants and free medical care. Higher schools can support students with serious medical problems. Provision is also made for waiving the payment of fees during the training period.

As of the 1999/2000 academic year tuition fees are introduced for all students.

6.3 Academic year

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

6.4 Courses

There are unified state requirements for all vocational fields and in-service teacher training provided in the **colleges**.

University type higher education institutions provide education in the fields of study, where the unified national requirements are fulfilled. They can also carry out teaching to raise the level of qualification. They also carry out research activities for the development of basic fields of science and culture. Scientific research institutions such as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture and other scientific organizations offer educational programmes for covering Doctor's degree in those specialities which they have been accredited for.

6.5 Assessment/qualifications

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

Non-university education

College graduates with the educational and qualification degree of **Specialist in...** (*специалист по...*) are entitled to practice their profession or to continue their education at university level..

Diplomas of semi-higher education issued prior to the entry into force of the new higher education Act grant to their holder the rights of graduates with the Specialist in... education degree.

University education

The **Bachelor's and Master's** courses end with state examinations or defence of a diploma thesis. The Doctor's degree ends with defence of doctoral thesis under the conditions prescribed by the Academic Degrees and Titles Act.

A **diploma of a completed degree of higher education** (*Диплома за завършена степен на висшето образование*) is issued by the higher education institution and are recognized by the State when the training of the student meets the requisite State Requirements for obtaining education in the respective educational degree, speciality or professional qualification. A diploma of a completed degree is granted after successful fulfilment of the curriculum.

Graduates with Bachelor's degree may continue their education in the second degree, in the third degree or to practice their profession. Graduates with Master's degree may continue their education in the third degree or to practice their profession.

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

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

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

6.6 Teachers

The **academic staff** occupy the following positions: lecturers with academic experience are associate professors and professors and lecturers without academic experience are assistant professors, senior assistant professors or chief assistant professors. Members of the academic staff could be employed on permanent or part-time basis. There are no special legal regulations concerning their in-service training.

6.7 Statistics

The total number of students in 2001/02 was 228 394. The total number of higher education teachers in 2001/02 was 23 888. The total number of graduates from higher education in the same academic year was 47504

7. ADULT EDUCATION

7.1 Specific legislative framework

There are several documents which provide an outline of the general tendencies towards formulating a future coherent policy related to lifelong learning:

- National Report on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning/NRMLLL/. The report contains: analysis of the legislative basis providing access to education and training; analysis of the status and perspectives of the process of LLL – contribution to the six key messages of the Memorandum; proposals for initiatives and actions at local, regional, national and European level; Suggestions for a definition of LLL issue and expected results, key elements; List of measures and actions undertaken against the juvenile unemployment; Analysis of the status of the system for informing and career guidance; examples of innovative practice concerning the successful interaction between the levels and sectors of learning and between institutions

The national consultation process on the Memorandum has been launched with the establishment of a Task Force comprising representatives of the:

Government – Ministry of Education and Science/MES/, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy/MOLSP/, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Regional Development and Welfare, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defence, National Employment Office, National Institute on Education, National Statistical Institute;

nationally representative organizations of employers – Bulgarian Industrial Association, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;

nationally representative organizations of workers and civil servants – Confederation of the Independent Syndicates in Bulgaria, Confederation of the Labour 'Podkrepa';

higher schools – Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridsky'; University of National and World Economy, National Distance Education Centre;

non-governmental organizations – Bulgarian Federation of Societies for Spreading Knowledge, Federation of Scientific and Technological Unions.

- National Economic Development Plan/NEDP/. The National Economic Development Plan is a major strategic document for Bulgaria's commitment to changes in the education and training, respectively lifelong learning.

The Plan formulates six long-term priorities in the national policy. These are: (1) institutional strengthening and administrative capacity improvement; (2) improving Bulgarian business competitiveness, in particular in the field of industry, tourism, SMEs development, and export orientation of Bulgarian business; (3) speeding up the construction and the modernisation of basic infrastructure, environment protection and improving environmental conditions; (4) raising the quality of life and adapting human resources to the economic conditions; (5) attaining balanced and stable regional development benefiting from cross-border co-operation opportunities; and (6) development of agriculture and rural areas.

In the context of lifelong learning, priorities 4 *raising the quality of life and adapting human resources to the economic conditions* is of strategic importance.

The document contains a special 'Human Resources Development' Operative Program which has formulated three main objectives:

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

7.2 Administration

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

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

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) as specialised body of the Council of Ministers is responsible for the management of the education system. In this context the MES has the power to propose the education policy and law. Furthermore the MES exercises control over the activities of all types of schools, including the approval and implementation of curricula. After a governmental change in 2001, the VET- and General Education Departments in the MES have been merged into one Department, with two Units.

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

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), a specialised body of the Council of Ministers, supports the MES in specific aspects of VETA implementation. The NAVET has a Managing Board, with a chairperson appointed by the Prime Minister and with representatives from MES, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, and social partners. To support the work of the NAVET, there are at present 13 expert commissions working in various occupational areas, following the tri-partite principle.

The basic functions of NAVET include:

- to elaborate criteria and procedures for licensing and accreditation for approval by MES
- to issue and remove licences for vocational training centres and vocational guidance centres
- to elaborate and propose to the Minister of Education and Science the list of vocations for vocational educational and training
- to develop standards for respective vocations
- to participate in the elaboration of the State educational requirements for the documents of Public education system and the System for certification of vocational education and training
- to assign, conduct and implement

scientific surveys in the field of VET and vocational counselling

- to support the international recognition of the documents for VET and vocational counselling
- to develop and update registers of the VET centres and centres for vocational guidance and counselling

Education Inspectorates are, by law, 'regional subdivisions of the MES'; they are legal entities, but the MES specifies their structure, functions and territory, and issues contracts with inspectors. The 28 regional inspectorates report directly to the MES and their main role is to supervise and control schools.

Municipalities are responsible for primary and general secondary education schools. There are currently only 12 VET schools (out of 504) under the responsibility of municipalities. In this context the municipalities provide funding for maintaining, constructing, furnishing and repair of schools and buildings, as well as salaries for teachers.

At the level of the schools, *School Boards* are 'public bodies' set up to assist schools, following the guidelines of the MES. They are registered as NGO-s but since 2002 their functions are specified in the Public Education Act.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLOSP) is responsible for training of employed and unemployed. The MLOSP develops the National Employment Plan (NEP) for consultation with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health and social partners, and for approval of the Council of Ministers. The NEP is the major financial instrument for implementation of training initiatives.

As of 2002, *The Employment Agency* (EA) is the Executive Agency of the Ministry of Labour and social Policy and replaced the Employment Service (NES). As of 2003, the EA is responsible only for active labour market measures (including training), together with its 9 regional – and local labour offices. According to the new law, the National Insure Agency will pay the Employment benefits.

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

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

The National Council for Vocational Qualification of the Work Force will coordinate the national policy and strategies for training and acquisition of vocational qualification of employed and unemployed persons. The Council is in process of establishment.

The Employment Committees, on a regional level, also support the state policy on employment and training for acquiring professional qualification. They develop the regional employment plans, including training, for inclusion in the NEP, and approved by MOLSP. At the moment a total of 19 Commissions are operational, out of 22.

'Pre-accession Funds, International Programs and Projects' Department (PFIPP) at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is an executive agency under 'Human Resources Development' priority of the NEDP.

The main role of the Department is to organize, coordinate and manage the activities on planning, programming, execution, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs in the field of employment, vocational training and qualification, social protection, equal treatment, funded by EU pre-accession funds as well as by other international and bilateral donors.

7.3 Funding

Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for funding of the general adult education.

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

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

The vocational training centres, vocational information and career guidance centres and the train the trainers' centres are financed by the Professional Training and Unemployment Fund.

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

7.4 Organisation

The target groups are represented by:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- public and municipal general incl. evening schools;
- vocational schools;
- vocational colleges;
- vocational training centres;
- vocational information and career guidance centres;
- colleges within the system of higher education.

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

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

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

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

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

CVT – Active Employment Measure

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

	1999	2000	2001	2002
Labour market training	1652704	1606835	1402100	2498800
Training for unemployed adults and those at risk	1598890	1570501	1389600	2447100
Training for employed adults	53814	36334	12500	51700

Source: Employment Agency

In this context 'labour market training' includes training as a qualification component under a certain programme or measure and the qualification courses contracted by the Labour Offices.

CVT provided by schools (trends and numbers)

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

money needs to be paid back to the Ministry. Therefore this not actively promoted by schools. With the objective to deliver CVT in the future the MES envisages to set up a CVT Unit in the Ministry, to develop a strategy and respective implementation measures.

The school based CVT leads to the acquisition of vocational qualification for a vocation included in the List of Vocations or to the acquisition of qualification for part of vocation (for one or more modules – short training courses). In this context the training delivered to adults follows the curricula and methodology applied for schoolchildren. The surveys show that neither the content nor the methodology is appropriate to deliver adult training and that reform would be required. The introduction of a framework programme F that has been newly introduced in the VET law, aims at tailor-made CVT by VET schools, but has not been defined and implementation has not started yet.

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

CVT provided by public and private training centres

The training centres organise training for acquisition of vocational qualification, acquisition of qualification for part of vocation, updating of existing vocational qualification, and motivational training, training for key competencies (ICT, foreign languages, etc.). They mainly organise short-term courses for unemployed financed by the Local Employment office. These courses are not recognised by the MES. Figures on people trained and list of centres (names and sectors) are available and will be provide.

With the objective to ensure quality and accreditation of continuing training, the VET law foresees accreditation procedures for public and private training centres, which would allow them to issue certificates recognised by the MES. This has consequently also been introduced in the new Employment Promotion Act. Consequently, as of 2004, 2004 only licensed training centres can provide training services for the Employment Agency and be paid for this. Given lengthy procedures, until now only a few centres have been accredited.

CVT provided by enterprises

The enterprises organize CVT, which in the period 1999-2000 could be considered as a low level, and respective argumentation will be provided. There are no figures on how many enterprises provide CVT, which sectors. (see also p. 30) Some conduct courses in-house others hire training

providers to deliver training. CVT Study.

The relative share of the enterprises which have their own company centre for vocational training is low – 4.2% as for the enterprises of the public sector this share comes up to 5.0% and 3.2% – for enterprises from the private sector.

Training according to the CVT study takes mainly the form of courses – 36.4% of the total number of training activities. Then come working meetings, lectures and seminars – 25.6%, training on the job – 16.0%, self-training – 8.9% and others – 8.9%.