

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

**NATIONAL STRATEGY
FOR CONTINUING
VOCATIONAL
TRAINING
2005-2010**

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THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING 2005–2010
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INTRODUCTION

The strategic goal of the European Union by 2010 is the creation of the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The achievement of this goal requires exceptional attention to be paid to provide appropriate education and vocational training thus improving the suitability of the workforce for employment. The public administration of the Republic of Bulgaria, a country for which accession to the European Community is imminent, takes into account the European strategies, policies and practices in the field of continuing vocational training. We consider as leading in this respect the Lisbon Strategy 2010, the life-long learning concept, the “Education & Training 2010” Programme, the European Employment Strategy, etc.

During the period of transition to a market economy accompanied by intensive restructuring of the manufacturing nation-wide, there is a definite trend of disparity between the quality of the workforce and the new competence requirements. It becomes still more pronounced in comparison with the future requirements towards the national workforce, in view of the pre-accession processes and the developing globalisation. The education reform in Bulgaria, and the vocational education and training reform in particular, face a significant challenge – to provide conditions for vocational training, which will sustain the quality of the workforce and its suitability for employment in compliance with the requirements of the labour market and the knowledge-based economy. This task can be fulfilled by continuous vocational training for all on equal accessibility and equal terms. A clear, specific strategy is needed, with targets defined in time and social space, which provides the resources for the development of the continuing vocational training in the country. The Strategy is interrelated with similar social and economic development documents: the Government Programme, the National Plan for Economic Development by 2006, the National Plan for Development by 2013 (currently in preparation), the Employment Strategy for 2004–2010, etc.

The **purpose** of the Strategy is to facilitate the development of the vocational education and training reform by providing the conceptual, methodological, and planning conditions for its implementation.

The **subject** of the Strategy is the training of all persons beyond age 16 to gain, extend and refine vocational qualifications in order to improve their suitability for employment and facilitate their occupational career pathways and personal development.

The **goal** of the Strategy is to outline the national priorities for the development of continuing vocational education in the context of life-long learning, as well as to point out the institutions responsible for the implementation of the strategy.

I. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING: CURRENT SITUATION, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

1. CURRENT SITUATION AND TRENDS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

During the transition period the labour market is characterised by a quantitative and qualitative disequilibrium. The demand for jobs considerably exceeds the supply. At the same time, the qualitative characteristics of the unemployed workforce do not match the qualitative structure of the job vacancies. The negative demographic situation aggravates both this disparity and the undesirable effects in the demand for and supply of jobs. The negative population growth rate and the considerable emigration have an adverse effect on the absolute numbers and structure of labour in Bulgaria. A permanent trend of decreasing the working-age population is observed.

The prevailing part of the total workforce are secondary school graduates – 55,7%. The high school graduates are 23,4%, and the less educated amount to 20,9%.

As a result of the economic stabilisation in recent years, the unemployment rate in the country is declining. For 2003 it was 13,7%¹. High levels of long-term unemployment and low educational and skill levels of the unemployed are still typical. Over 40 % of the long-term unemployed in 2003 were either unskilled or had the lowest skill levels. For the remaining part, as well as for many of the employed, deskilling presents a serious problem – especially for the older workers. The level of youth unemployment is considerable (28,1%). For many young people the reasons are: low level of education, lack of a profession, or lack of experience.

The qualitative structure of the workforce varies by regions.

The distribution of the unemployment rates and the qualitative structure of the unemployed by regions and municipalities (communities) is rather uneven.

The workforce demand² varies depending on the general condition of the economy, seasonal factors, and the development of subsidised employment. The decision of the employer to hire labour with certain quantitative and qualitative characteristics is all-important.

These factors, along with the Europe-wide and world-wide trends for higher employment suitability requirements, determine the need for continuing vocational training both for all age groups of the workforce and for all regions.

¹ Source: National Statistical Institute.

² Source: Administrative statistics of the Employment Agency.

Vocational training for the people on the labour market is organised by the Employment Agency. The total number of training courses delivered in 2003 is 1,977, which represents more than a double increase compared to year 2000.

The majority of those, who have completed some vocational training in 2003 (29,294 persons) were unemployed at enrollment time. The number of employed persons, who have completed such training during the same period is 8,863. By comparison, the number of people who have completed vocational skills training in year 2000 amounts to 12,569, including only 496³ employed persons.

The acquisition of additional vocational skills prevails with 67,4%, followed by re-qualification training – 22,9%, and initial vocational skills training – 9,7%. There is an upward trend in the number of additional vocational skills training courses delivered. The latter were nearly 2/3 of all vocational training courses conducted in 2003.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The **Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria** (1991) lays down the basic principles for free development of the education (Art. 23) and everyone's right to education (Art. 53). These were elaborated in a series of laws and regulations. The principal laws, which constitute the legal framework of continuing vocational training in the country, are:

The **Labour Code** – LC (1986, last amended 2004) establishes the rights and obligations of the stakeholders, involved in and during the training process for gaining and improving qualifications and re-qualification based on an employer-employee agreement.

The **Public Education Act** – PEA (1991) provides the major regulatory mechanisms of education. It spells out the right of citizens to continuously improve their education and qualifications, and specifies the role and place of the State Educational Requirements, as well as the procedures for the supply of certification documents for educational degrees and skills gained.

The **Vocational Education and Training Act** – VETA (1999) provides the regulatory mechanisms of the initial and continuing vocational training. Its major goal is to match the quality of the vocational education and training provided to the needs of the labour market, and in accord with the trends in the European Union. VETA specifies the functions of the vocational education and training (VET) system to prepare citizens for realisation in the economy and society, and provides conditions for gaining and continuously improving their vocational skills.

³ Source: Administrative statistics of the Employment Agency.

The **Higher Education Act** – HEA (1995) regulates the structure, functions, administration, and financing of the higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria. It facilitates the synchronisation of the Bulgarian higher education system with the European trends pertaining to accessibility of quality training, opportunities for mobility within the system, and transparency of the qualifications acquired.

The **Employment Promotion Act** – EPA (2001) formulates the transition from passive social assistance towards active measures on the labour market to increase employment and raise the qualifications of the workforce. It introduces incentives for employers to train their employees to maintain and improve their qualifications and to train also unemployed in the context of life-long learning. EPA regulates the types of continuing vocational training organised by the Employment Agency and the conditions for its delivery.

The **Crafts Act** – CA (2001) regulates the conditions and rules for training handicrafts, including training by a master at a specific job in the handicraft enterprise. CA specifies the basic degrees of craftsmen training.

The **People's Community Centres Act** – PCCA (1996) regulates the activity of the community centres nation-wide for fulfilment of their major tasks, including citizens' advance in knowledge, and introducing citizens to the values and achievements of science, arts and culture through training and by establishing opportunities for study.

The **Convention on Technical and Vocational Education** (signed in Paris on November 10, 1989, depositor – UNESCO, effective since August 29, 1991; effective in Bulgaria since October 1, 1994, approved by Decision ¹ 236 of the Council of Ministers on June 15, 1994). By signing the Convention our country confirms its willingness to develop policies and strategies for technical and vocational education, to provide conditions to youths and adults alike to acquire knowledge and skills needed for their economic and social development, as well as for their personal and cultural growth in society.

3. INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

At the national level:

The **Council of Ministers** (CM) determines the National education and employment policies.

The **Ministry of Education and Science** (MES) manages, co-ordinates and controls the implementation of the National vocational education and training policy. The Ministry regulates and provides methodical guidance for continuing vocational training, delivered through a system of primary and secondary vocational schools, art schools, vocational colleges, and high schools. The Minister of Education and Science approves the National Educational Requirements for the

acquisition of qualifications by occupation and the List of Professions for vocational education and training. He also provides conditions for the implementation of the National Educational Requirements with respect to the vocational education and training system, and approves qualifications programmes in the Vocational Education and Training System.

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** (MLSP) develops, co-ordinates and implements the National policy for the professional qualifications of the workforce (both employed and unemployed). The Ministry is responsible for the development of the annual National Action Plan for Employment, the determination of the needs for vocational training, based on an analysis of the trends in the labour market, and the provision of professional counselling. The Ministry participates in the maintenance of the National Classifier of Professions.

The **Employment Agency** under the Minister of Labour and Social Policy implements the National policy for employment promotion and labour market protection, provides professional information and counselling, vocational and motivational training of both unemployed and employed, as well as mediatory employment-related services.

The **National Agency for Vocational Education and Training** (NAVET) is a specialised body of the Council of Ministers, established (1999) by the Vocational Education and Training Act to license vocational education and training activities and co-ordinate the institutions involved in vocational guidance, training and education. The Agency develops the National Educational Requirements pertaining to the vocational education and training system, as well as the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training regulates vocational training provided in the licensed vocational training centres.

The **Ministry of Culture** (MC) implements the state policy in the Art Schools, participates in the development, co-ordination and maintenance of the National Educational Requirements for gaining qualifications by occupations. MC participates also in the development, co-ordination and maintenance of the List of Professions for vocational education and training.

The **Ministry of Health** (MH) takes part in the co-ordination of the List of Professions for vocational education and training, determines the chronic diseases and physical injuries that are incompatible with vocational education and training for occupations on the list.

The **Branch Ministries** participate in the development, co-ordination, and maintenance of the National Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualifications by occupations. They participate in the development, co-ordination and maintenance of the List of Professions for vocational education and training, take part in the co-ordination of the National Plan for admission to the schools they finance, allocate the budget for vocational education and training

and control its spending, name their representatives in the NAVET board of managers and the NAVET expert commissions by professional branches.

The representative employers' organisations and the national level organisations of workers and employees participate in the development, co-ordination and maintenance of the National Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualifications by occupations. They take part in the development, co-ordination and maintenance of the List of Professions for vocational education and training, name their representatives in the NAVET board of managers and the NAVET expert commissions by professional branches, participate in the organisation of examinations and give examinations for the acquisition of vocational qualifications, nominating their representatives in the examination commissions.

The National Council for Employment Promotion under the Minister of Labour and Social Policy is a standing co-operation and counselling body, which operates during the development of the employment policy.

The National Advisory Council for Vocational Qualifications of the Workforce co-ordinates the national policy and strategies for vocational training of the workforce, co-ordinates the social partners on life-long learning at the national level, and co-ordinates the needs for vocational training.

At the regional level:

The “Regional Employment Office” Directorates within the employment promotion set of measures organise the implementation of the national policy for gaining vocational qualifications, suggest measures and training projects, co-ordinate and support the local Employment Offices, including for provision of vocational counselling and guidance services within the region.

The Regional Education Inspectorates work out programmes and strategies for the development, operation and improvement of vocational education and training structures within the territory of the district.

The Standing and Interim Employment Commissions with the District Councils for Regional Development determine, organise and control the implementation of the national employment promotion and vocational training policy at the regional level.

The district administration participates in the implementation of the national employment and vocational training policy at the regional level.

At the local level:

The Municipalities participate in the formation of the vocational education and training policies within their territories regarding the need for specialists and workers; provide occupational guidance for students, unemployed, etc.; develop the related equipment and facilities, Vocational Training Centres and information and professional guidance Centres by municipal budgeting.

The “Employment Office” Directorates provide occupational information, counselling and guidance for referral to the most appropriate programmes, employment measures and training as part of their inherent mediation activities for identifying job vacancies. They organise also vocational and motivational training for both employed and unemployed persons.

The Co-operation Councils with the “Employment Office” Directorates of the Employment Agency monitor the implementation of the programmes and measures included in the National Employment Action Plan, and control compliance with the regulations for selection of the appropriate programmes and measures.

4. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Continuing vocational training in the country is performed by formal education and training and non-formal training institutions.

The principal formal education and training institutions for continuing vocational training, according to VETA, are the primary and secondary vocational schools, the vocational colleges, and the Vocational Training Centres (VTC).

As of 2003 the vocational institutions network in the country comprises 470 schools, secondary schools and colleges, including 421 state, 12 municipal, and 37 private schools. Continuing professional training takes place in 179 vocational schools, secondary schools and colleges.

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training licenses the Vocational Training Centres and monitors their operation. All Centres licensed in 2002 or later offer vocational training for first, second and third levels of vocational qualifications. Currently there are 146 licensed Centres and 169 affiliates thereof.

The major difficulties facing the continuing vocational training institutions in the formal system stem from shortage of funds needed to modernise the equipment and facilities; lack of up-to-date educational and reference literature; insufficient methodical background of the teachers and lecturers for work with adults; shortage of funds for improving the qualifications of the teachers, especially in real-life production; insufficiently effective dialogue with the employers, who are not particularly interested to participate in the continuing vocational training process. The

schools, conducting continuing vocational training, experience additional difficulties due to the lack of mechanisms for decentralised financial management of the revenues from this specific activity.

The primary and secondary vocational schools, colleges, and licensed Vocational Training Centres attest the completion of the vocational training by certificates complying with the National Educational Requirement about the documents in the public education system.

The higher education system supplies continuing vocational training through specialised high school units. All high schools in the country (a total of 51) have units for post-graduate studies and units for vocational training of over 16-year-olds.

The enterprises carry out non-formal continuing vocational training of their employees (28%). The training takes the form of vocational training courses, on-the-job training, participation in seminars, conferences, etc.

According to the People's Health Act employers can also deliver, under certain conditions, vocational training to unemployed persons.

The Community Centres also offer non-formal continuing vocational training. The potential for such training is under-utilised by far, however, and these cases are rare. These traditional Bulgarian cultural-educational associations can initiate activities to facilitate citizens' advance in knowledge, and introduce them to the achievements of science, arts and culture. In the smaller towns and villages the Community Centres are the only institutions providing access to a library, Internet and information in general. Therefore, they have to be supported for the sake of the development of continuing vocational training.

Overall, the challenges facing the continuing vocational training system are related to: improving the information openness and feedback mechanisms; improving the quality of training and closing the gap to the competences required for access to the European labour market; creating mechanisms to motivate both the users of qualifications-related services, and the organisations investing in continuing vocational training; joining the efforts of all social partners, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), concerned with the development of the human resources and the economic progress of the country.

II. THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

The goal of continuing vocational training development and improvement is as follows:

To establish and improve conditions for acquisition, advancement and development of vocational qualifications of the workforce, in order to improve the latter's suitability for employment, occupational career paths and personal development.

In connection with the attainment of this strategic goal and taking into account the development prospects for 2005-2010, the following main priorities have been set:

- 1. Better accessibility of continuing vocational training.**
- 2. Efficient interaction and co-ordination of the institutions involved in continuing vocational training.**
- 3. Quality assurance of the continuing vocational training.**
- 4. More investments in continuing vocational training.**
- 5. Scientific support for continuing vocational training.**

III. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

PRIORITY № 1

BETTER ACCESSIBILITY OF CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

A necessary condition to include all citizens in continuing vocational training is to provide equal access opportunities for all, regardless of sex, age, residence, ethnicity, social class and property qualification. Therefore, the forthcoming actions, aimed at improving the access to continuing vocational training, should be organised into a system providing free access to various levels, forms and methods for knowledge acquisition and skill development. The major principles of this system are: openness, diversity, width of scope, comparability, measurability of the results, transparency, and mutual recognition of the qualifications.

To develop the conditions for access to continuing vocational training it is necessary to:

- ◆ Monitor and analyse the trends related to the participation of over 16-year-olds in continuing vocational training.
- ◆ Develop an information system for continuing vocational training demand and supply.
- ◆ Improve the legal framework with respect to accessibility of continuing vocational training.
- ◆ Render the social environment active for life-long learning.
- ◆ Develop and implement a programme, concerned with motivation for continuing vocational training, focused on the disadvantaged groups in the labour market.
- ◆ Develop methods and circumstances for open training, including the existing distance-learning network and e-learning.

№	Activity	Responsible institutions⁴	Execution time-frame	Sources of financing
1.	Status quo analysis of continuing vocational training in the country.	MES, MLSP, NAVET, NSI	2005	PHARE, government budget
2.	Improving the legal framework regulating the opportunities for continuing vocational training.	MES, MLSP, MF, ME, social partners	2005–2006	Financing not needed
3.	Development of a national information system for the demand for and supply of vocational training.	MLSP, MES, other Ministries, NAVET, social partners	2005–2006	PHARE, government budget
4.	Development and implementation of a programme to motivate citizens to take part in continuing vocational training.	Employment Agency, National Institute of Education , NAVET, social partners, regional and local authorities	2005–2006	Government budget
5.	Raising awareness of the continuing vocational training, guidance and counselling.	MLSP, MES, NAVET	2005–2006	Government budget
6.	Establishing opportunities for distance- and e-learning through the existing network of local computer laboratories.	MES, NAVET, regional and local interested institutions and organisations	2005–2010	Government budget

⁴ The leading institution is listed on top.

PRIORITY № 2

EFFICIENT INTERACTION AND CO-ORDINATION OF THE INSTITUTIONS, INVOLVED IN CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The strategic significance of continuing vocational training for improving the competitiveness of the enterprises and the professional development and adaptability of the workforce, requires collective responsibilities to be assumed by the institutions at the national, regional, and local levels (Ministries, organisations of employers, workers and employees, regional and local authorities). In order to achieve maximal flexibility of the relationships between the continuing vocational training and the needs of the labour market, effective co-operation and interaction are needed at all levels – national, regional, and local.

The realisation of this priority requires undertaking the following activities:

- ◆ Establish administrative capacity to co-ordinate the co-operation between the institutions and social partners on continuing vocational training policies.
- ◆ Improve the legal framework which determines the responsibilities of the institutions involved in continuing vocational training.
- ◆ Expand the scope of collective negotiation for training in order to improve the adaptability of the enterprises and their workforce relative to the labour market.
- ◆ Set up an open discussion network encompassing the institutions involved in continuing vocational training at the national, regional, and local levels.
- ◆ Expand continuing vocational training services at the regional and local levels, making them available to the specific target groups.

№	Activity	Responsible institutions⁵	Execution time-frame	Sources of
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⁵ The leading institution comes first.

				financing
1.	Establish administrative capacity to co-ordinate the inter-institutional co-operation on continuing training.	MLSP, MES, NAVET	2005	Government budget
2.	Improve the legal framework specifying the responsibilities of the institutions involved in continuing vocational training.	MLSP, Ministries, social partners	2005–2006	Financing not needed
3.	Develop measures to improve the framework of collective negotiation for continuing vocational training of the workforce.	MLSP, Ministries, social partners	2005–2007	Government budget
4.	Stimulate society participation in the discussions on continuing vocational training at the regional and local levels.	Institutions and organisations on the regional and local levels	2005–2007	Government budget
5.	Establish casual Co-ordinating Councils for continuing vocational training at the local level.	Employment Agency Labour Offices, Regional Education Inspectorates, institutions and organisations at the local level, social partners	2005–2006	Government budget
6.	Promote awareness of the continuing vocational training programmes.	MLSP, Ministries, social partners, institutions and organisations at the regional and local levels	2005–2010	Government budget

PRIORITY № 3

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Continuing vocational training quality is vital, if comparability with the European practices is to be attained by 2010. The quality of training reflects directly upon suitability for employment of the workforce, productivity and competitiveness of both the enterprises and the workforce, reduction of unemployment, and dealing with social isolation. This priority is related to the forthcoming actions aiming at increasing the employment level laid down in the Employment Strategy for 2004–2010.

The following activities need to be performed to this end:

- ◆ Improving the qualifications of the teaching staff involved in continuing vocational training.
- ◆ Increasing the capacity of the providers of continuing vocational training.
- ◆ Developing a package of general principles to validate the informal/non-formal training or self-education in order to provide compatibility with the European Union countries.
- ◆ Introduction of European instruments for assessment and recognition of qualifications.
- ◆ Fostering an advanced culture of learning by raising awareness, counselling, and guidance.
- ◆ Modernisation of educational equipment and facilities.

№	Activity	Responsible institutions ⁶	Execution time-frame	Sources of financing
1.	Develop and implement programmes to improve the qualifications of the teaching staff, involved in continuing vocational training.	MES, institutions concerned with the qualifications of the teaching staff, MLSP, nationally represented organisations	2005–2008	PHARE, government budget

⁶ The leading institution is on top of the list.

Nº	Activity	Responsible institutions⁶	Execution time-frame	Sources of financing
		of employers		
2.	Administer programmes to train managers of continuing vocational training providers on strategic planning, needs for training determination, qualifications services marketing, etc.	MLSP, MES, NAVET, ME, social partners	2005–2008	Government budget
3.	Motivate the high schools to provide andragogics training in the pedagogical curriculums.	MES, High schools	2005–2006	Financing not required
4.	Modernise equipment and facilities for continuing vocational training.	Responsible institutions at the national, regional, and local levels	2005–2010	PHARE European Social Fund, government budget, private capital, sponsors, donors
5.	Develop and implement a validation system for qualifications acquired through informal/non-formal training or self-education.	MES, MLSP, social partners	2005–2007	Government budget
6.	Set up a system for and introduce European instruments for recognition and assessment of qualifications.	MES, MLSP, NAVET	2005–2008	Government budget
7.	Train employers to claim resources from the target funds for vocational training of the staff.	MLSP, Industrial Branch Chambers	2005–2007	Government budget, European Social Fund

PRIORITY № 4

MORE INVESTMENTS IN CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The investments in the human capital of Bulgaria during the past years mark controversial trends. Despite the fact that a great deal of the employers and individuals are aware of the importance of this factor, the share of vocational training delivered is still insignificant. The population's low income, the economic instability, and the lack of understanding by some of the employers are all negative factors which need to be dealt with.

In this context the following actions are essential:

- ◆ Raise staff awareness about employer-provided continuing vocational training. Spread good practices.
- ◆ Introduce new measures and tax incentives for employers to improve the qualifications of their workers and employees.
- ◆ Introduce effective measures to encourage the unemployed to participate in continuing vocational training, while taking into account the specificity of regions with structural unemployment, rural regions, and risk groups.
- ◆ Raise the managerial culture of the employers to set up short-, medium-, and long-term plans for the development of the human resources in the small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- ◆ Introduce new measures and incentives for the individual to participate in continuing vocational training.

№	Activity	Responsible institutions ⁷	Execution time-frame	Sources of financing
1.	Extend the measures encouraging initiatives for continuing vocational training of unemployed, while taking into account the specific needs of the regions and the target groups. Involve the municipalities in planning of the resources for continuing vocational training within their territories.	MLSP, MF, ME, Regional Educational Inspectorates, municipal administrations and other institutions involved in continuing vocational training	2005–2010	Government budget, European Social Fund
2.	Expand and optimise the meas-	MLSP	2005–	Govern-

⁷ The leading institution is on top of the list.

№	Activity	Responsible institutions⁷	Execution time-frame	Sources of financing
	ures providing incentives to employers to improve the qualifications of their workers and employees.	MF, ME and organisations of employers, other institutions involved in the continuing vocational training	2010	ment budget, European Social Fund
3.	Initiation and implementation of projects to train employers to plan for human resources development in small- and medium-sized enterprises.	MLSP ME, organisations of employers	2005– 2007	Government budget
4.	Expand the measures providing incentives for the individual to participate in continuing vocational training.	MLSP, MF, ME, organisations of workers and employees, other institutions involved in the continuing vocational training	2005– 2010	Government budget
5.	Amend the applicable financial procedures to transform the revenue generated by the state schools into incentives in support of continuing vocational training activities.	MES, MF	2005	Government budget
6.	Introduce into the regional development plans measures, related to human resource development through continuing vocational training.	MRDPW, regional and local authorities	2005– 2010	Government budget

PRIORITY № 5

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The establishment of an effective continuing vocational training system presumes the availability of methodologies, didactic approaches, analyses, and research. The research capacity of the high schools is under-utilised both with respect to analysis and support of continuing vocational training in the country, and research assisting the development of continuing vocational training policies. Research on human resources development is virtually non-existent in the government agencies, even at the national level. This disrupts the timing of the decision-making process and impacts unfavourably the quality of the decisions.

The following actions are foreseen towards the implementation of this priority:

- ◆ Methodological support of pedagogical staff to provide continuing vocational training beyond age 16.
- ◆ Information support of the research.
- ◆ Collection, popularisation and implementation of good continuing vocational training practices.

№	Activity	Responsible institutions ⁸	Execution time-frame	Sources of financing
1.	Development of research capacity and institutional building.	MES, MLSP, ME, MF, organisations of employers	2005–2007	Government budget
2.	Develop and implement a methodology for training adults.	MES, MLSP, NAVET, National Institute of Education	2005–2007	PHARE, government budget
3.	Spread the results of continuing vocational training research.	MLSP, MES, NAVET, National Institute of Education , institutions and organisations at the national level	2007–2010	Government budget
4.	Research, popularise and implement good continuing vocational training practices.	MLSP, MES, NAVET, National Institute of Education	2005–2010	Government budget

⁸ The leading institution comes first.

IV. FINANCING THE CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Investing in the quality of the human resources is a component of the general social policy of the Republic of Bulgaria⁹.

The analysis of the existing trends in the development of the continuing vocational training and the challenges of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union point out the necessity to invest considerably more in training. The implementation of the objectives and the national priorities laid down in the Strategy requires significant financial resources.

Overall, an increase in the share of public expenses for education is expected, including vocational training (4.6% of GDP for 2002; 4,9% of GDP is the preliminary data for 2003)¹⁰.

A considerable increase in employers' investments is needed to maintain and improve the vocational qualifications of the staff employed in their enterprises.

Programme-oriented spending of government budget funds should be applied whenever possible. This will permit the most effective utilisation of the financial resource by the responsible institutions – MLSP, MES, MF, ME, MRDPW, MYS and the other agencies and authorities – to achieve the goals of the Strategy. **All of them will work towards the fulfilment of the major priorities of the Strategy, according to schedule.**

The inflow of funds from **international aid** will still be a significant contribution to vocational training financing for various institutions and target groups.

The following sources of financing for continuing vocational training are foreseen for 2005–2010:

- ◆ Government budget funds, allocated to responsible institutions, regional and municipal administrations.
- ◆ PHARE programme – “Social and Economic Cohesion” Section.
- ◆ Structural funds of the European Union (following 2007).

⁹ Government Programme, National Plan for Economic Development (2000–2006), National Action Plan on Employment (2002, 2003, 2004), Joint Report for Assessment of the Priorities in the Employment Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria and Progress Report 2003, Employment Strategy 2004–2010, etc.

¹⁰ Data of the National Statistical Institute.

- ◆ International sources.
- ◆ Employers' funds, including co-operation schemes for small- and medium-sized enterprises and pooling of financial resources for occupational qualifications training.
- ◆ Own revenues of occupational training providers.
- ◆ Personal funds for the development of the individual workforce.
- ◆ Other funds – of Municipalities, local legal persons, non-governmental organisations, etc.
- ◆ Sponsorships, donations, etc.

The effective utilisation of these financing opportunities for continuing vocational training presumes a high degree of co-ordination on various levels, in compliance with the priorities of continuing vocational training.

V. EXPECTED RESULTS

Through the period of social-economic changes the providers of continuing vocational training should direct their efforts towards the needs of the labour market. Closer co-operation of all institutions involved in continuing vocational training will match better the training courses to the present and future needs of the labour market.

The implementation of the strategy is expected to bring about:

- ◆ The development of an operational information system about the demand for and supply of continuing vocational training.
- ◆ An increase in citizen awareness motivation for participation in continuing vocational training.
- ◆ An increase in the number of participants in continuing vocational training.
- ◆ The improvement of the interaction and co-ordination between the institutions and organisations, responsible for continuing vocational training at the national, regional and local levels.
- ◆ Closer correspondence between the demand for and supply of vocational qualifications.
- ◆ Strengthening the capacity of professional training providers in respect of their marketing activities and the quality of the continuing vocational training offerings.
- ◆ Increasing the number of continuing vocational training courses offered as a part of the active measures on the labour market towards sustained employment.
- ◆ Improved access to e-learning by setting up infrastructures as a flexible training form, providing impetus to the development of continuing vocational training;
- ◆ Reduction of the inter-regional divergence in the employment and on the labour market.
- ◆ Arousing media interest and vitalising the public discussion on continuing vocational training issues.

VI. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of monitoring the Strategy implementation activities is to ensure that they are performed on time and to quality.

The sheer variety of the activities requires that each is subjected to special monitoring. For this purpose each activity must be split into concrete tasks. These tasks must permit assessment and progress control of the implementation of the Strategy in conformity with the specificity of the separate parameters. The subject of the monitoring is determined by the set of institutions listed herein, which are responsible for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation of the Strategy in its entirety requires also a general monitoring process. Its major goal is to provide for the synchronisation and mutual assistance of the stakeholders towards the implementation of the activities and priorities planned. This monitoring is envisaged as a function of the established administrative capacity for co-ordination of the inter-institutional co-operation on continuing vocational training policies, laid down as activity № 1 in priority № 2.

GLOSSARY

Continuing vocational training – training of over 16-year-olds to acquire, expand, and improve their professional qualifications in order to improve their employment suitability, support their occupational career progression and individual development.

Formal training – Training carried out in the vocational training institutions, specified by VETA (Art. 18), and characterised by a nationally recognised document certifying the qualifications gained.

Non-formal training – Training carried out as an organised activity outside the formal system.

Self-education – A process of learning (and self-study) during one's entire life, by means of which one acquires knowledge and skills, attitudes, intellectual values out of one's every-day experience, through educational influences and sources from the social and material environment, including libraries and mass media.

Life-long learning– A process of learning and acquiring knowledge by formal and informal/non-formal training and study, as well as by self-education, during the entire life of the person.

Life-long learning is considered by society as one of the most important factors for the development and improvement of one's occupational realisation and for promoting the active participation of people in the economy. It is a necessary prerequisite for the free movement of the workforce and a leading principle for the further development of the education and training systems in Bulgaria.

ACRONYM LIST

CA	Crafts Act
CM	Council of Ministers
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
EA	Employment Agency
EPA	Employment Promotion Act
ESF	European Social Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEA	Higher Education Act
LC	Labour Code
MC	Ministry of Culture
ME	Ministry of Economy
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MF	Ministry of Finance
MH	Ministry of Health
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
MRDPW	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
MYS	Ministry of Youth and Sport
NAVET	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training
NIE	National Institute of Education
NSI	National Statistical Institute
PCCA	People's Community Centres Act
PEA	Public Education Act
PHA	People's Health Act
REI	Regional Educational Inspectorate
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETA	Vocational Education and Training Act

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