



**ACHIEVING THE LISBON GOALS
THE CONTRIBUTION OF
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN BULGARIA**



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1. PROGRESS OF THE NATIONAL VET SYSTEMS TOWARDS MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF LISBON

1

1.1 STRATEGIES FOR AND BARRIERS TO IMPROVING THE STATUS, FLEXIBILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Raise the status of initial vocational education and training (IVET)

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

The transformation of the VET system in order to better meet the needs of a market-oriented economy and the needs of individuals is progressing step by step. At the beginning of 2004 the Ministry of Education and Science launched a public discussion on a draft strategy for development of the system of Bulgarian

secondary education, including the IVET, within the next five years. It is currently still under discussion and there are no clear indications of whether or not it will be adopted.

The main achievements so far of the IVET system can be defined as follows.

- In 2003 a new list of vocations was approved, this being the basic document for the planning and management of the IVET system.
- In 2003 framework programmes for acquisition of vocational qualification were approved.
- The process of elaboration of new state education requirements (standards) for VET programmes has begun.
- National qualification examinations for the theoretical part of VET programmes were introduced for students working towards the second level of vocational qualification.

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- All VET schools were transformed in line with the new requirements of the VET law introduced in 1999.

Further information on the achievements listed is presented below.

Improve the attractiveness of IVET

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

The number of students enrolled in IVET programmes as a proportion of all students in secondary education has decreased slightly over the years, although for the school year 2003/04 it has remained at the same level as the preceding year (1998/99: 57.8%; 2001/02: 56.3%; 2002/03: 55.7%; 2003/04: 55.8%).

The types of programme provided in VET schools and the proportion of students enrolled can be summarised as follows.

- Art schools provide courses lasting four years leading to the third level of vocational qualification and the secondary education diploma. The popularity of art schools remains constant: 1.8% of all VET students from 1999/2000 onwards attended art schools.
- Vocational gymnasias providing five- or six-year programmes leading to the third level of vocational qualification and the secondary education diploma have attracted an increasing number of students over the years, from 66.8% in 1999/2000 to 75.0% in 2003/04.
- Vocational gymnasias or vocational schools providing four-year programmes leading to the second level of vocational qualification and the secondary education diploma have seen their popularity decline from 26.3% in 1999/2000 to 20.7% of total enrolments in 2003/04.

- Vocational schools after sixth and seventh grade (those which enrol students after the sixth or seventh year of education) providing three-year training leading to the basic education diploma and the first level of vocational qualification have a minor role, the number of students enrolled having decreased from 1.2% to 0.9%.
- Vocational schools after eighth grade, lasting two years and providing access to the basic education diploma and the first level of vocational qualification, have a limited number of enrolments, only 0.2% in 1999/2000 and 0.4% in 2003/04.
- Post-secondary vocational colleges providing only the fourth level of vocational qualification through two-year programmes have been attracting less students over the years, the numbers falling from 3.5% in 1999/2000 to 1.3% in 2003/04.

As can be seen, there are opportunities to follow different VET programmes in different types of school. An interesting feature of the Bulgarian VET system is the provision of VET programmes of different duration in different types of school. For example, the vocational gymnasias can provide a five- or six-year VET programme leading to acquisition of the third level of vocational qualification but it can also provide four-year programmes leading to acquisition of the second level of vocational qualification.

The data show that certain vocational programmes attract more students, namely technical sciences, business administration and personal services.

Although the evidence suggests a high level of interest in programmes such as technical sciences, we should not underestimate the fact that schools are not always prepared to diversify their range of vocational programmes to match the changing interests of students, because of a lack of appropriate teachers and facilities.

Increase the flexibility of IVET

Conditions to ensure flexibility of the system have recently been created. As

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described above, giving students the opportunity to obtain different levels of vocational qualification in upper secondary education, as well as a number of options for continuing training (recognition of vocational competences acquired through previous training being under development) is a new policy of the Ministry of Education and Science that is currently being implemented.

When the Bulgarian VET law was implemented in 1999 it also introduced framework programmes for VET. By the end of 2003 six framework programmes had been approved, these being applicable to both initial VET and CVT. The programmes provide the framework for the training, specifying the conditions for access to the first, second, third or fourth level of qualification, for the acquisition of skills for vocational qualifications and for updating and upgrading previous qualifications. The programmes can be applied to either students in IVET schools or persons over 16 years of age undertaking CVT.

As explained above, the existing types of vocational school and vocational gymnasium provide VET programmes of between two and six years, leading to vocational qualifications from the first (low skilled) to the third level of qualification respectively. It is important to note that graduates of the IVET schools also receive the diploma for secondary education, except those in vocational training programmes at ISCED 3C level. However, if a student performs poorly the system ensures that he or she receives only the certificate for secondary education as well as a certain level of vocational qualification. The difference between the certificate and the diploma for secondary education is that the diploma allows a student to continue into higher education, including university, while the certificate is issued to prove that the student has attended classes during the secondary education course. The certificate is intended to support the transition of students to the labour market. Before the certificate was introduced, those who performed poorly and failed their final exams had to leave the system with a basic education diploma, despite having attended vocational gymnasias.

The secondary education diploma verifies a student's knowledge of general subjects. In all IVET schools, at the end of the course of education and training the students are expected to pass theoretical and practical exams in the vocation in order to obtain a vocational qualification.

The system also allows a student to sit the exams for achieving the vocational qualification after the end of the normal course of studies if he or she decides to so.

Another important step was the transformation and renaming of the VET schools, which was completed in 2003/04. In the context of the evolution of the legislation since 1991, and more specifically the VET law adopted in 1999, the schools within the formal VET system were classified into two basic types. The first are the so-called four-year vocational schools and vocational gymnasias (four to six years), which provide secondary education and vocational qualification. The second are vocational schools (in certain cases classes) usually providing two- or three-year VET programmes following completion of grades six, seven and eight. These lead to vocational qualifications, but without the acquisition of the secondary education diploma; for example, students graduate with basic education (see above).

As far as the modular approach is concerned the Phare project 'BG 9506, Vocational Education and Training; Education; Research, Science and Technology', which commenced in 1996, had the main objective of improving quality in the national VET system. To this end, 18 standards were elaborated on a pilot basis and the modular approach was introduced in the VET system. A total of 33 pilot schools from 18 towns were involved in the project to implement the modular curriculum approach for vocational training in 18 vocations. After completion of the project, during the period 1999–2004 a total of 31 VET schools had introduced the modular approach. In the current school year, 2003/04, 64 VET schools (288 classes and 7 000 students) are implementing the modular approach in Bulgaria. The number of teachers trained in the modular approach is 594 in 2004 (compared to 217 in 1999).

The main barriers to achieving these objectives

In the period up to 1989 many vocational schools were established that do not currently have the equipment to provide high-quality vocational training. In the course of the transition period the number of students has decreased for demographic reasons. The only way of achieving modernisation of the equipment appears to be through the Phare programme. However, even in the particular schools that are benefiting from the support of the Phare programme there are problems concerning the renewal of equipment such as delays in concluding contracts.

Another important issue is the optimisation of the vocational schools network. Although the Ministry of Education and Science reports that this has been completed, it is difficult to evaluate progress since there was no official statement regarding the target for network optimisation. However, statistical data indicate some progress, since the total number of VET schools decreased from 553 in 1998/99 to 496 in 2003/04.

There are also difficulties in implementing the state plan for students' enrolment in the different programmes and fields of study. The plan is drafted in accordance with the national plan for economic development and takes into account the priority branches for each region. The regional administration and principals of some schools financed by the state or the municipalities have expressed disagreement with the optimisation of the school network. They argue that students should have an opportunity to study in their own localities. The municipalities even finance classes with minimal numbers of students. Often courses on popular professions are financed even though there are people in these professions who are registered unemployed.

There is a lack of motivation among VET schools to become involved in the delivery of CVT courses. The reason is linked to financial requirements relating to the centralised management of school budgets and the return of all income to the Ministry

of Education and Science. This prevents schools from using any part of what they could generate as income from CVT courses for improvement of their facilities and necessary equipment.

1.2 REDUCING THE NUMBER OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

An important indicator of the implementation of the right to education and of the improvement of the access to education is the enrolment rate in primary and secondary education. The participation in education of children in Bulgaria aged 5 to 14 (98.0% in 2002 and 98.2% in 2003) is close to the EU average (99.2% in 2000). The completion rate for upper secondary education (20–24 years) was 75.6 % in Bulgaria in 2003 compared to the EU average of 76.8% (the EU target for 2010 is 85%).

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

Dropouts from the system accounted for 3.0% in 2002/03 (3.1% in 1998/99, 2.6% in 1999/00, 2.9% in 2000/01 and 2.7% in 2001/02). There are no data for dropouts by ethnic group, although Ministry of Education and Science's estimates suggest that most of dropouts from basic education are children of Roma origin. Since education in Bulgaria is compulsory until 16 years of age, those who drop out of the system and who are aged below 16 must be enrolled again in the next school year.

For students from rural areas the dropout rates are even higher, at 4.7% in 2000/01, 4.2% in 2001/02 and 4.5% in 2002/03.

The dropout rates from the VET system during the past three years were 3.1% in 2000/01, 3.1% in 2001/02 and 3.5% in 2002/03.

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The steps taken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to address the dropout issue are legislative measures (the Social Assistance Act), including government initiatives to encourage parents to send their children to school. The approaches and measures adopted aim to eliminate or reduce the impact of the main reasons for the current situation, such as poor social and financial conditions of families; insufficiency or absence of motivation on the part of pupils, the family and the public environment to acquire education and qualifications with a view to future participation in the social and economic life of the country; poor cooperation between the education system and the public authorities and communities; shortcomings and deficiencies in the organisation and contents of education (including inappropriate forms and methods of education, and the structure and complexity of the curricula); poor command of the Bulgarian language; and the geography of the education infrastructure, in particular such problems as the remoteness of schools and transport issues.

The Ministry of Education and Science has taken the following steps in the same direction.

- Through the Regional Inspectorates of Education, the Ministry of Education and Science undertakes biannual surveys into the number of dropouts and the reasons for their early school leaving. The main reasons put forward by vocational secondary schools are in line with those already cited above.
- A consultative council on the education of children from minority groups has been established as a permanent interdepartmental public expert body with equal participation of relevant specialists from non-governmental organisations.
- A strategy for the integration of children and students from minority groups has been elaborated. The main aim of the strategy is to create conditions and opportunities for equal access to education by reducing the existing educational segregation of children of Roma origin.
- In the 2003/04 school year an assistant teacher position was introduced in the first grade in some schools, with the aim of helping children from minority groups to adapt more successfully to school life.
- A draft law introducing a fund for 'educational integration of children and students from minority groups' has been prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. This fund will raise resources from the state budget and donor organisations to support the education of children from minority groups.
- The Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Matters under the Council of Ministers, is implementing the Phare project 2001 relating to the educational integration of children from minority groups. This involves the training of teacher assistants and the introduction of a teachers' qualification for those working in a multiethnic environment.

1.3 INCREASING VET AT TERTIARY AND POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

The Bulgarian higher education system makes no formal distinction between vocational- and academic-oriented programmes.

Following the changes in the Higher Education Act in 1995, tertiary education in Bulgaria leads to a Bachelor's degree (four-year programme), a Master's degree (five-year programme) and a doctorate (minimum three-year programme at ISCED 6).

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

The technological and vocational qualification at tertiary level refers to fields of education such as business and

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administration, engineering, manufacturing and processing, and agriculture and forestry. Levels of participation in these fields has remained relatively constant since 1998/99, the trend being for more students to go into programmes of a technological nature (for example the figures for business and administration were 22.5% in 1998/99 and 23.0% in 2002/03; for engineering 14.6% in 1998/99 and 16.9% in 2002/03; and for manufacturing and processing 1.4% in 1998/99 and 2.0% in 2002/03).

An even stronger trend towards technology-oriented programmes can be observed among tertiary colleges. In these institutions, participation in engineering has increased from 16.6% in 1998/99 to 26.5% in 2002/03, and in manufacturing and processing from 0.9% in 1998/99 to 2.5% in 2002/03, while participation in fields such as education and health has fallen.

The largest proportion of students in the higher education system is those enrolled in bachelor's, master's and doctorate programmes, who represent 92 to 93% of all students in higher education. The participation rate of the population aged 19–23 years in tertiary colleges (ISCED 5B programmes) is very low (2.7% in 1998/99, 2.2% in 2000/01, 2.4% in 2002/03 and 2.6% in 2003/04) compared to the participation of the same age group in university programmes (23.4% in 1998/99, 23.0% in 2000/01, 23.9% in 2002/03 and 24.1% in 2003/04).

Some of the universities provide short-term courses through their centres for lifelong learning. However, quantitative information is not available.

Post-secondary vocational colleges provide ISCED 4C vocational training programmes of two years' duration. Students enter the programmes after completing their secondary education. The training in post-secondary programmes leads to the highest level of vocational qualification: in Bulgaria this is level 4, which corresponds to a managerial job profile.

The system also allows entry to post-secondary programmes in the secondary vocational gymnasias. This

occurs if a gymnasium is willing to deliver the programme, providing that its request for authorisation for this has been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

1.4 INCENTIVES FOR UPDATING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

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

Additional policy documents that have been adopted by the Bulgarian government testify to its commitment to stakeholders with regard to the further development of human resources as a key parameter for the competitiveness, employability and adaptability of the Bulgarian citizens. The following documents can be mentioned in this context: the government policy document 'The People are the Wealth of Bulgaria', EU Accession 2007 and annual progress reports, and the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy Priorities agreed with the European Commission in 2002. The 'New Social Policy Strategy' (2002–05) concentrates on four priorities, including VET, and contains an action plan that describes measures at national and regional levels.

Since 2001 the National Employment Action Plan has been developed on an annual basis, defining concrete active labour market measures and the budget for their implementation.

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

The Employment Promotion Act has set up a financial incentive scheme for employers to maintain or enhance the vocational qualifications of their employees. The amount of funding is determined on an annual basis by the National Employment Action Plan. Employers who receive state funds for training are obliged to retain the trained employee for at least six months after the training is finished. In 2003 the number of employed persons who participated in state funded training was 16 064, compared to 554 in the previous year.

This scheme has not yet been fully exploited because of its relatively recent introduction and the fact that employers' awareness of this opportunity is still low.

The Employment Agency organises training for the acquisition of vocational qualifications, taking into account labour market needs, employers' requirements and the annual National Employment Action Plan. The following types of training are eligible: training for employees in micro- and small enterprises who have been employed for at least three months before the start of the training, and employees who need further qualifications because of changes in their working environment as a result of technological developments or production changes.

According to CVTS2, which was conducted in 1999, an average of 28% of enterprises (4 173) provided some form of CVT, representing 13% (151 450 persons) of employees in all enterprises. According to national data on the number of all trained employees in enterprises in 2002, a total of 6 515 enterprises were providing training for 176 030 participants, or 5.9% of all those employed.

There were six hours of CVT courses for every 1 000 working hours (only enterprises with CVT courses) in 1999 in Bulgaria, while the average in EU and accession countries was eight hours.

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

Contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion

The unemployment rate decreased substantially in 2003. Data from the National Statistical Institute indicate that on average the unemployment rate for 2003 was 13.7% (around 500 000 unemployed) compared to 18.1% in 2002. However, the number of long-term unemployed people remains a challenge (in 2003 the number of long-term unemployed people as a proportion of the overall unemployed population (aged 15–64) accounted for 65.2% compared to 65.7% in 2002). The data for 2003 indicate that the youth unemployment rate (up to age 29) remains high at 28.1% (in 2002 it was 29.3%).

The Public Employment Service is only dealing with active labour market measures. While most active labour market measures include training components, the government has placed particular emphasis on the subsidised employment

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scheme 'From Social Care to Employment' in order to integrate long-term unemployed people into the labour market. The net impact of this programme will be evaluated at the end of 2004.

In 2003 around 30 000 people completed training courses for the unemployed, which is 66% higher than in 2002, but less than the National Employment Action Plan target for 2003 (72 648 people). Furthermore, there is a difference between those who have started and those who have completed courses. Further efforts will be needed to enhance the take-up of such measures.

Unemployed people who have been approved by units of the Employment Agency to start up economic or agricultural businesses could be given additional funds in the form of a credit to follow training for a qualification in that type of business and its management.

1.5 MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF AN AGEING POPULATION

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

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

1.6 EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF VET

The Bulgarian VET system remains heavily centralised. IVET is financed by the state, except in a few instances in which the funding comes from the municipalities.

Although funding for VET has been increased, it is still considered low in relation to the need for modernisation.

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

In general the VET teachers do not receive adequate training to update their knowledge and skills in their subject areas.

As previously mentioned, the process of optimising the school network is continuing, with some results achieved so far. However, the end target of the process has not been explicitly stated.

There is a need to encourage cooperation between schools and enterprises. No steps have been taken to address the lack of practical arrangements for VET students in enterprises. The organisation of work placements would require an incentive scheme.

A piece of research entitled 'Evaluation of the net impact of the active labour market measures programmes active in the labour market in Bulgaria' (2001) indicates that training is essential for obtaining and retaining a given job. This type of analysis can support the arguments for expansion of training under active labour market measures.

Main trends in terms of investment in VET

According to the Eurostat data, public expenditure on education accounted for 4.4% of Bulgaria's GDP in 2000 and 3.6% in 2001, but was still lower than in many EU countries (the average was 5% in 2000, according to Eurostat). National data indicate that for 2002 the public expenditure on education accounted for 3.8% of the GDP. As regards the amount of private investment in education, national data indicate that this was 1.0% in 2001

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and 1.0% in 2002. According to national data there was an increase of 14.8% in public expenditure on VET from 2001 to 2002, while private expenditure on VET fell by 9.0% over the same period.

Expenditure by enterprises on CVT amounted to 1.0% of total labour costs in 1999, while the corresponding EU average stood at 2.3%.

According to data of the Employment Agency, in 2003 BGN 7.4 million was spent on labour market training out of a total of

BGN 138.4 million spent on active labour market measures (source: *Short country Report 2003*, Human Resource Development Centre). A comparison with 2002, when BGN 2.5 million were devoted to training activities (out of a budget of BGN 81.2 million budget for all active labour market measures, shows that while there is a substantial increase in the overall budget for all active labour market programmes (0.27% of GDP in 2002 compared to 0.88% of GDP in 2003), the share earmarked for labour market training within this overall budget remains low.

2. INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

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2.1 IMPROVEMENTS IN LEARNING PROCESSES AND CONTENTS

The major innovations within the school system concern the development of competence-based training and the introduction of the modular approach. In 2003 an overview of the results so far showed that this approach has been particularly effective for the vocational training of adults.

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

2.2 IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION OF DIFFERENT LEARNING SITES – INTEGRATION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

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

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According to the Ministry of Education and Science, for some programmes in fields such as tourism, building and banking, cooperation between schools and companies is reported to be improving. Students of vocational gymnasia in these fields undertake their practical training in these companies and are very often offered a job there subsequently. However, there is no data available to illustrate this process.

The Employment Promotion Act encourages employers to carry out training in the workplace and to open up new facilities to provide probation and apprenticeship opportunities. Unemployed people can also be hired for training and working at a particular workplace during the absence of an employee. Crafts training as well as training with a craft person in the workplace is also carried out as part of employment and training programmes.

2.3 EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF VET PROVISION

The first series of compulsory State Matriculation Examinations for secondary education (including VET), on the Bulgarian language and a second subject relating to the profile of the school, have been postponed until 2006, although the original intention of the government was to introduce the exams in 2003. Only the students who have received lower than average grades in Bulgarian literature during the course of upper secondary education, including those in IVET schools, are required to sit a final exam.

For students enrolled in VET schools the first State Qualification Examinations will be held at the end of the school year 2003/04 following national examination programmes for level 2 vocational qualifications. While each vocational school sets the dates for the practical exams according to its individual circumstances, the theoretical examination will be arranged on a nationwide basis. This will also be the first time that employers and trade unions of the relevant occupation will

be represented on examination commissions. After 2006 VET graduates will be required to sit State Matriculation Examinations to gain access to the secondary education diploma and the State Qualification Examinations to obtain a certificate for one of the four levels of vocational qualification.

Evaluation of the quality of vocational schools is undertaken by the Regional Inspectorates for education. However, there are no unified evaluation criteria. The criteria used may include student enrolment, the number of students who have dropped out, and the provision of human resources and facilities.

In 1999 the VET law introduced licensing procedures for CVT providers delivering training that leads to state-recognised vocational qualifications. Licensing is one of the tasks of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), and aims to improve the quality of training. A licence is awarded to a training centre and information about that centre is published on the NAVET website. The criteria used by NAVET when awarding a licence include: the training centre's compliance with legal requirements (including the VET Act); the compliance of facilities with health and safety regulations; the goals and tasks of the centre; evidence of demand for the courses offered (including information from the labour offices, employers and municipalities); management system; requirements for trainees; quality-assurance mechanisms; resources (teachers, classrooms, labs, equipment); and the system of tracking trainees following graduation. The stages and duration of the licensing procedures are agreed with social partners and ministries, and accepted by the NAVET's Executive Council. The duration of the procedure is determined by its components: verification and evaluation of the conditions for providing high-quality training as stated in the application of a training centre. Based on the information provided by NAVET the licensing procedure, forms an open and dynamic system, and its components are evolving through a process of monitoring and control. The effectiveness of the

2. INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

licensing procedure is monitored by NAVET's annual surveys of licensed centres for vocational training.

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

However, some concerns have been expressed by small-scale providers that the procedures are too bureaucratic and expensive. Furthermore, the licensing procedure is too new to allow an in-depth analysis that would allow a better understanding of the quality of the courses that are actually provided by training centres.

2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

It is envisaged that a state education requirement (standard) for teaching eligibility and qualification will be developed.

In-service training is delivered in three higher education institutions in Bulgaria in 'departments for information and teacher qualification'. However, these departments deal with general pedagogic and education subjects. According to the ETF monograph on VET and public employment services the department for teacher qualification at Sofia University has carried out training for about 5% of all VET teachers. The training is predominantly short-term and covers subjects such as the use of new technologies in teaching, modular training methodology, and tools for assessing students' achievements. We observe that there is no tailor-made VET teacher training system in place.

Examples of good practice include project-based initiatives such as modules for the training of trainers in a number of training for employment programmes.

Under the 'Employment for teachers in training disabled children' programme, specialised courses are being organised and delivered to enable unemployed teachers to teach children with various types of disability. The programme 'Computer training for young people' also envisages courses for the training of trainers. The programme 'Crafts education under the dual system, pilot project' includes training for craft person to enable them to train unemployed young people over 16 who have secondary education. Under the 'Project for the integration of young people leaving social institutions', various courses have been planned for supervisors from these institutions, social workers from the social assistance directorates and teachers; this is under the terms of a memorandum of agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and Switzerland.

The professional status of teachers and trainers needs to be changed, since the latter are among the lowest paid of all university-educated specialists.

Career progression is not perceived to be accompanied by adequate financial rewards. The additional remuneration generally corresponding to progression through the five qualification levels is insufficient to motivate teachers to participate in in-service training. In 2003 a starting salary for a teacher was BGN 2 544 per annum; qualified teachers with 15 years' experience receive, on an average, BGN 3 468; teachers with the highest level of qualification and 15 years' experience will receive BGN 3 852. The increase in teacher remuneration is still not perceived as an adequate stimulus, although the increase in percentage terms has been very high over the past five years. Moreover, despite the significant rise in teachers' salaries in recent years, they are still lower than the average for the country as a whole, a fact that has negative effects on the quality of education.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Science confirm that there is no difference in teachers' salaries in the general and vocational secondary education sectors.

3. BUILDING EUROPEAN COMPETENCES FOR A EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET

3

3.1 CHALLENGES AND POLICIES IN RELATION TO THE LISBON EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The employment rate for Bulgaria is 52.5% (EU 25 – 62.9%), while the 2010 EU target is 70.0%. The female employment rate is 49.0% (EU 25 – 55.0%), while the 2010 EU target is 60.0%. The employment rate of older workers is 30.0% (EU 25 – 40.2%), while the 2010 EU target is 50.0%.

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

The participation rate in education (ISCED 1–6) in 2000/01 was 44.2%, compared to the EU average of 57.5%. The early school leaver rate was 22.4% in 2003 compared to the EU 25 average of 15.9% and the 2010 EU target of 10%. The completion rate for upper secondary education in the 20–24 age group was 75.6% in 2003, while

the 2010 EU target is for at least 85% of 22 year-olds in the EU to complete upper secondary education.

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

The level of participation of the adult working-age population (aged 25–64) in lifelong learning is very low in Bulgaria (1.4% compared to the EU average of 9.0% and the 2010 EU target of 12.5%).

3.2 INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS

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

ACHIEVING THE LISBON GOALS THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN BULGARIA

Among the most important bodies operating at national and regional level are those described below.

- The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is a specialised body of the Council of Ministers, established under the Vocational Education and Training Act to carry out licensing activities in the field of VET, as well to act as a coordinating body for the institutions involved in consulting, education and training. The NAVET has a governing board comprising various stakeholders including the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and social partners.
- The National Council for Tripartite Partnership comprises permanent committees on such issues as labour legislation, social insurance regulations, incomes, the standard of living, and training.
- The National Employment Promotion Council (subordinate to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy) is a partnership-based advisory body dealing with the development of the employment policy and National Employment Action Plan.
- The National Council for Vocational Training, established in 2003, is a permanent advisory body with the task of coordinating the development of a national policy and strategies for vocational training and certification of employed and unemployed people in a lifelong learning context.
- The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities in employment for men and women, and for disadvantaged groups, has been established in subordination to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. This body makes proposals and recommendations for the development and implementation of the section of the National Employment Action Plan that concerns the enhancement of the equality policy.

The following bodies operate at regional level.

- Tripartite Cooperation Councils, under the regional offices of the Employment

Agency, control and monitor the implementation of programmes and measures, and advise on funding priorities.

- Permanent and Interim Employment Committees, under the District Council for Regional Development, determine, organise and control the implementation of government policy on employment and vocational training.

3.3 TRANSPARENCY, RECOGNITION AND MOBILITY

Establishment of credit frameworks

There is currently no system of transferable credits in VET. Discussion on the issue could be launched with external support, since credit transfer does not appear to be among the priorities at present.

Establishment or reform of a qualifications framework

The list of professions (comprising 200 vocations) that is to be used as the basis for VET programmes has been drawn up in line with the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED-97) and the International Standard Classification for Occupations (ISCO-89). The list will become effective from the school year 2004/05, and will be open to appropriate revision and updating.

Implementation of Europass

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

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CVT	Continuing vocational training
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Communities
ICT	Information and communication technologies
ISCED	International standard classification for education
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
NAVET	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
VET	Vocational education and training

