



Education and Culture DG

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## **Research report**

Under the project

European Values in Vocational Education  
/EVive/

# Educational System in Bulgaria. Vocational Education System

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## Introduction

The present research is carried out in the framework of the Leonardo Da Vinci project “European Values in Vocational Education – Evive”. The project aims at fostering an active citizenship across Europe by analyzing values in different countries and compiling them to work on common European values.

The research describes the educational system in Bulgaria and the system for vocational education.

## Educational System in Bulgaria

Education in Bulgaria is managed by the Ministry of Education and Science. The legal act that regulates the Education in Bulgaria and sets up the institutional framework is the Education Act<sup>1</sup>. Full-time education is mandatory for all children between 7 and 16 years-old and it is free of charge in the public institutions, except for the higher education institutions. The system comprises four levels:

**Pre-Primary Education** is designed for 3 year-olds until their entering the first grade. Before starting school, children must have two years of compulsory pre-school preparation.

**Elementary Education** includes *Primary School* (grades 1-4), and junior high school (grades 5-8). Certificates are obtained upon successful completion of grade 4 and 8 respectively. The Certificate for Elementary Education is a pre-requisite for continuing the education to the next educational level or for further vocational training.

**Secondary Education** comprises comprehensive high schools and vocational education institutions. The admission to comprehensive schools is based upon grades from entry exams, usually in literature and mathematics as well as grades in junior high school. Students can enroll in high school after the successful completion of grades 7 or 8. Usually, those who want to study languages, mathematics, or informatics in-depth apply to high school in 7th grade.

Students graduating from high-school must take high school exit exams in Bulgarian language and another subject of their choice.

**Higher Education** can be obtained in various institutions – Universities, Colleges and Specialized Higher Schools. The degrees, consistent with the Bologna Process, are the following: Bachelor's (undergraduate), Master's (graduate), and Doctoral degrees (Ph.D.).

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<sup>1</sup> Promulgated, State Gazette, issue 86/ 19991, with last amendment of 12/2013

## Vocational Education System

### Legal framework

Currently, the main legal act, which sets forth the framework of professional education and professional qualifications in Bulgaria, is the Law on Professional Education and Training<sup>2</sup>. The Law establishes the organizational and institutional framework, management and financing of the national system for professional education and training.

The main task of the system is to create the framework for obtaining professional qualifications and professional legal capacity.

### Vocational education system in Bulgaria

The system of professional education and training in Bulgaria has three components, namely:

- a) professional orientation – provides information, consulting and advice with regard to choice of profession and career development;
- b) professional education – provides the basic educational minimum and the obtaining of second level of professional qualification; and
- c) professional training – provides the obtaining of professional qualifications (full or partial) and their further upgrading.

Currently, there are four legally stipulated **levels of professional qualification** in Bulgaria. They have the following characteristics:

- a) first grade – the person has acquired professional competences, which enable him/ her to perform routine and non-changing activities with low level of difficulty;
- b) second grade – the professional competences obtained are enough for performing complex activities in changing working conditions;
- c) third grade – professional competences for practicing professions, which include performance of complex activities and taking responsibility of other people's work;
- d) fourth grade - professional competences for practicing complex and changing activities, which involve management responsibilities and distribution of resources.

Professional qualifications can be obtained in the currently existing *system of educational institutions*, which are also explicitly stipulated in the Law on Professional Education and Training. These institutions are organized in a network of formal and non-formal education and training providers, which can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Vocational schools;
- b) Vocational gymnasia;
- c) Vocational gymnasia (or four-year vocational schools);
- d) Art schools;
- e) Sport schools;

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<sup>2</sup> Promulgated, State Gazette, issue 68/ 1999, with last amendment of 08/2013

- f) Vocational colleges;
- g) Centres for vocational education;
- h) Centres for information and professional orientation;
- i) Centres for training of trainers.

### **Responsible Administrative Bodies:**

#### **a) National Agency on Professional Education and Training**

The overall management of the system of professional education and training in Bulgaria is carried out by the National Agency on Professional Education and Training. The Agency is a consultative body, which is established and functions under the Council of Ministers in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Professional Education and Training.

#### **b) Ministry of Education and Science**

The Ministry of Education and Science is the institution responsible for carrying out on the national level of the state policy in the area of professional education and professional qualifications. Its main task is to manage the national budget in the part for professional education and training and controls its implementation. Through its regional units it coordinates the interaction between the various stakeholders in the sector.

#### **c) Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**

The other important ministry is the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. It participates more actively in the strategic planning and policy formulation through performing analyses of the tendencies on the labor market; gives opinion and advice on the state requirements for obtaining a professional qualification and on the List of professions; determines the requirements for healthy and safe conditions when performing professional education and training and performs control for their implementation.

#### **d) Councils and Commissions**

On a regional level, the Councils for Tripartite Cooperation and the permanent and temporary employment commissions under the district councils for regional development continue to function with the objective of addressing issues related to the actions and measures for employment and for vocational training on a regional level.

The municipalities participate in the formulation of policies in the field of professional education through collection and provision of data for the demand of labor force, management of the municipality budget and the facilities where professional education and training is carried out.

## **Conclusion**

Bulgaria traditionally has had high educational standards. However, in the post-communist era, some problems came to the fore and the gap between business and education has expanded.

Bulgarian companies have been complaining for years of the lack of well prepared professionals who don't respond to the real needs of the business. Other problem is that the geographical distribution of the vocational schools and their organisation was set up many years ago, before the democratic changes, so they don't match the actual situation and the modern industry.

These circumstances effect in the existence of many educational courses, not organized in a specified system, necessary to meet actual business' requirements.

Currently ideas for modernization are generated and changes are planned so that soon the companies could have on their disposal qualified personnel and young people could find a suitable and satisfying employment.

The area of vocational education is estimated as a niche with high development potential.

## References:

- ❖ *Education Act*  
<http://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2132585473>
- ❖ *Law on Professional Education and Training*  
<http://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134673921>