



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING FOR THE PERIOD 2008 – 2013

Adopted by Protocol N 42 of a meeting of the
Council of Ministers on 30 October 2008



УЧЕНЕ
през целия живот

Table of Content:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| List of abbreviations..... | 4 |
| Foreword..... | 5 |
| I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL) | |
| 1. Definition of lifelong learning..... | 6 |
| 2. The process of lifelong learning..... | 6 |
| 3. European and national context of LLL..... | 6 |
| 4. The strategy vision..... | 8 |
| 5. Objective..... | 8 |
| 6. Principles..... | 9 |
| 7. Participants in lifelong learning..... | 9 |
| II. LIFELONG LEARNING DURING THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL | |
| 1. Secondary education – general and vocational..... | 10 |
| 2. Higher education | 11 |
| 3. Adult Learning..... | 12 |
| III. PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF LIFELONG LEARNING | |
| - PRIORITY DIRECTION: IMPROVING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESSIBILITY TO LIFELONG LEARNING | 15 |
| - PRIORITY DIRECTION: ENSURING QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF LIFELONG LEARNING..... | 16 |
| 1. Contemporary requirements for learning content..... | 17 |
| 2. Vocational training in the context of LLL..... | 18 |
| 3. On the job training..... | 19 |
| 4. The key competencies in the process of LLL..... | 20 |
| 5. Training of teachers, trainers and faculty..... | 20 |
| 6. Lifelong guidance..... | 21 |
| 7. Recognition of qualifications..... | 22 |
| 8. Evaluating learning outcomes..... | 23 |
| 9. LLL - research and development..... | 24 |
| 10. Financial resources of lifelong learning..... | 24 |
| IV. INDICATORS FOR LLL PROGRESS MEASURING..... | 26 |
| Appendix: Glossary..... | 27 |

List of abbreviations:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training |
| CVT | Continuing Vocational Training |
| CVT | Centres for Vocational Training |
| EQF | European Qualifications Framework for LLL |
| EU | European Union |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| ISCED | International Standard Classification of Education |
| IVT | Initial Vocational Training |
| HRD | Human Resources Development |
| LLL | Lifelong Learning |
| MES | Ministry of Education and Science |
| MLSP | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| NSI | National Statistical Institute |
| NEAA | National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency |
| NAVET | National Agency for Vocational Education and Training |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| OP | Operational Programme |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| VETA | Vocational Education and Training Act |

FOREWORD:

In 2004 the European Council adopted the report *Education and Training 2010: the success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms*.

The message of the report is that intense education reforms and result-oriented investments in lifelong learning are of utmost importance for achieving the common goal: in 2010 the European Union to be “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion“.

European Council called upon the member-states to develop coherent national strategies for lifelong learning as an important contribution to achieving the ambitious common goal.

This National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for 2008–2013 presents the future policies for the development of lifelong learning in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union (EU) demands changes in the education and training area related to synchronization of the level of knowledge and key competencies. Training/education is growing further and further away from the its general definition, related to formal education and is viewed as a constant process of lifelong learning. The dimensions of lifelong learning are of importance not only to individual people, who regardless of their age and acquired formal education have the opportunity to fully realize their potential, but also for employers, who are actually the consumers of these resources.

The Strategy for Lifelong Learning provides guidelines for the actions that the Bulgarian government should undertake in order to ensure the future preparedness of Bulgarian citizens to actively participate in a new global knowledge-based economy.

Achieving the strategic goals requires the active inclusion of each citizen and each institution – state, municipal, employer’s, trade-union’s, non-governmental, etc. Applying a new, integrated approach to lifelong learning requires ensuring and using suitable and sufficient material, technical, financial and human resources.

This strategic document points out the priority directions for development of LLL, the activities needed to achieve them, the necessary legislative changes, financing mechanisms, indicators for measuring the progress.

The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning aims to unify the efforts of all institutions and citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria for creating the necessary conditions and realising the process of lifelong learning in order to ensure full-value development of each citizen of the Republic of Bulgaria as an individual, professional and citizen, thus supporting the process toward a competitive knowledge-based economy.

I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL)

1. Definition of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is a process of constant intentional acquisition of knowledge and skills. It presupposes opportunities for learning at any age in a varied context – not only through the traditional forms at educational and training institutions, but also at the work place, at home, or during your free time.

Lifelong learning is a way of thinking – each one of us should be open to new ideas, decisions, skills, aptitudes or attitudes. Viewed as a systematic process, it is directed to the learners and their needs for personal and professional development.

The philosophy «**it is never too early or too late to learn**» turns into a mission for many different education and training organisations.

The definition of lifelong learning used in this Strategy includes the six key messages presented in the Memorandum for Lifelong Learning (LLL):

- universal and continuing access to learning for gaining and renewing the skills needed for active participation in the knowledge-based society;
- increase of investments in human resources;
- effective teaching and learning methods;
- significant improvement of the ways in which learning participation and outcomes are understood and appreciated, particularly in the field of non-formal and informal learning
- rethinking guidance and counselling – providing information and counselling of high quality;
- bringing learning as close to the learners' home as possible.

2. The process of lifelong learning

The process takes place on several levels: formal education, non-formal and informal learning, without excluding all opportunities provided by traditional and distance learning:

- **Formal education and learning** takes place in education and training institutions and leads to officially recognized documents.
- **Non-formal learning** is an organized form of learning outside the educational and training institutions. It typically does not lead to certification but leads to increasing the personal, professional and civil competencies. The results of non-formal learning could be validated and certified, thus leading to obtaining officially recognized documents.
- **Informal learning** is intentional, resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities or just by looking for information.

3. European and national context of LLL

In terms of the common European tendencies, the main priorities of LLL in Bulgaria can be defined as:

- access to lifelong learning and expansion of education and training opportunities;
- opportunities for acquiring and improving key competencies;
- activating social partners for inclusion in the process of LLL;
- validation and certification of the results of non-formal and informal learning;
- high quality of education and training as well as access to information;

- qualitative services in terms of information, orientation, guidance and counselling;
- support for social inclusion;
- training of trainers.

In order to achieve these priorities it is necessary to amend the existing LLL regulatory framework, optimise the LLL resources and apply good practices.

The LLL concept in this document is based on two clearly distinguished groups of competencies that interact with each other and can be acquired simultaneously or separately:

- Professional competencies – this group is related to the professional knowledge, skills and aptitudes that scholars or people working in a particular professional field should have.
- Key competencies – this group includes transferable (basic) skills an employee needs in any situation. The transferable (basic) skills – communicative skills, skills for working with ICT, team work, self-training, etc. demand a particular methodology, time and place for training, evaluation schemes, etc.

The following eight key competencies are defined in the EU countries:

- Communication in the mother tongue;
- Communication in foreign languages;
- Mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology;
- Digital competence;
- Learning to learn;
- Social and civic competencies;
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- Cultural awareness and expression.

The key competencies are an important factor for enhancing personal development, active citizenship and social inclusion of everyone, as well as for increasing people's mobility and motivation. Together with the knowledge and skills that lead to nationally recognised qualifications, the key competencies can be regarded as a significant element of the adaptability of the individual to the demands of the labour market.

The regulatory framework in the field of education, training and employment promotion in Bulgaria includes elements of the LLL concept, presented in the already existing legislation – Labour Code; Employment Promotion Act; Public Education Act; Vocational Education and Training Act; Higher Education Act; Skilled Crafts Act; Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act, as well as in regulations for applying some of these laws.

Further development of the regulatory framework is needed, related to improving the access to education for all age groups, learners' motivation, increasing employment through learning and flexibility in passing from one level or form of learning or training into another.

The concept of LLL is also included in national strategic documents and programmes: the National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training 2005-2010, National Employment Action Plan; the Updated Employment Strategy 2008-2015; the School and Pre-school Education Development National Programme 2006-2015; National Strategy for Implementation of ICT in School Education 2005-2007; the Strategy for National Youth Policy; the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minority Groups, etc.

The implementation of the Strategy for LLL on regional and local level will be supported by the measures within the framework of the Regional Plans for Economic Development, as well as by those in the plans for municipal development, already designed for the period 2007-2013, in accordance with the National Plan for Development and the National Plan for Regional Development for the respective period, the Integrated Programme for LLL and the three Operational Programmes – *Human Resources Development, Competitiveness and Regional Development*.

4. The strategy vision

By the year 2013 to achieve a significant growth of participation of the citizens in the Republic of Bulgaria in the process of lifelong learning, to provide them with free access to and suitable conditions for learning, so that they develop as individuals, responsible both to themselves and to society, who take full advantage of the opportunities of contemporary knowledge.

5. Objective

The objective of the Strategy is creating opportunities for the citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria to expand their personal and professional knowledge, skills and aptitudes in order to improve both their own welfare and the competitiveness of the national economy by:

- enhancing the adaptability of each individual to economic and social changes;
- encouraging participation in all forms of LLL for further professional and personal development.

The Strategy marks activities for improving the conditions for taking part in the process of learning, for upgrading qualifications, for recognising learning outcomes and for applying into practice all professional, personal and social skills and competencies. The activities are directed toward:

- developing an effective lifelong learning system, meeting the different learner's requirements and creating varied opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal learning, corresponding to the labour market needs;
- clearly formulating responsibilities, optimising and coordinating the activity of the participants in the LLL process on a national, regional and institutional level;
- updating the regulatory framework in order to support the realisation of the LLL concept and encourage inclusion of different social groups in LLL activities, while paying at the same time special attention to the specific risk groups;
- developing LLL quality ensuring systems, targeted at the learning content, environment, methods of evaluation, contemporary training forms, trainers' qualifications, etc.;
- implementing a credit transfer and accumulation system in the process of learning for obtaining qualifications and personalising the learners' individual and professional development, as well as for ensuring the mobility of learners and employees;
- establishing a learning motivation and culture through developing lifelong counselling and guidance at schools, universities and work places;
- developing validation and certification mechanisms for the results of formal, non-formal and informal learning and based on previous experience, and creating a transparent and coherent system for all learning outcomes – knowledge, skills and competencies;
- encouraging academic and scientific activity and improving the ways of collecting statistical data about LLL;
- creating a financing system, as an instrument for ensuring the effectiveness and quality of education through shared and balanced common responsibility of state, employers and learners;
- establishing mechanisms of interaction and exchange of information for all participants in LLL.

By the year 2013 the Republic of Bulgaria will strive to achieve the following goals in the field of lifelong learning:

| | 2007 (base value) | 2013 r. (target) |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| Level of participation of people aged 25-64 in lifelong learning | 1,3% | 5% |
| Percentage of early school leavers | 16,6% | 12% |
| Percentage of people aged 20-24 with secondary education | 83,3% | 85% |

6. Principles

This Strategy is based on the following principles:

- **Cooperation:** understanding the necessity for developing a LLL culture in society and in all interested institutions, including the social partners and establishing conditions for interaction, consultations, open discourse and sharing of responsibility.
- **Transparency:** creating validation and certification systems for the learning outcomes;
- **Flexibility:** directing the reforms in education and training policies to cater to the learners needs by using different forms of LLL;
- **Openness and willingness:** creating access and inclusion opportunities for all who need and are willing to participate in LLL;
- **Decentralisation:** bringing the lifelong learning system as close as possible to the learner by stimulating decision-making and realising personal responsibility in the process of learning; distributing the resources on regional and local level; promoting market principles and competitiveness as a main tool in providing qualitative services for LLL on different levels in the education and training system;
- **Measurement:** setting and effectively using a system of indicators for measuring the progress of the Strategy implementation and the quality of LLL activities.

7. Participants in lifelong learning

The participants in the process of lifelong learning are:

- **learners** – all Bulgarian citizens who become a part of lifelong learning in order to acquire personal and professional competencies;
- **education and training institutions** – the institutions providing formal and non-formal education and training in order to meet the expectations and needs of individual persons and the community;
- **state authorities – ministries and agencies** – define the national policy in the field of education and training as well as the respective tools and measures ensuring the effectiveness of LLL;
- **employers and employers’ organisations, trade unions, school boards of trustees and other partners** – define the expected results, actively support the LLL processes, suggest new methods of cooperation and participate in shaping the policy and the future priorities for LLL;
- **district administrations, municipalities and local communities** - participate in designing LLL policies on regional and local level and directly oversee the processes of development of LLL in the context of establishing their position as “learning regions”;
- **non-governmental organisations, scientific organisations, etc.**, supporting the process of LLL by conducting research and analyses, organising information and promoting activities for lifelong learning, etc.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING DURING THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

A significant problem for our country is the under-developed system for lifelong learning. According to Eurostat data, in 2007 the percentage of Bulgarian citizens between the age of 25 and 64 who have been educated or trained (in the sense of lifelong-learning) is 1,3 % which is more than seven times lower than the average for EU-27, which is 9,7 %.

According to data of the National Statistical Institute (Education at a Glance OECD indicators, OECD, 2006 and NSI) the participation of learners in the education process in terms of age groups and as a share of the population is as follows:

| Year | Learners between 5 and 14 as a share of the population at the same age /%/ | Learners between 15 and 19 as a share of the population at the same age /%/ | Learners between 20 and 29 as a share of the population at the same age /%/ |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 2000 | 94,2 | 62,6 | 15,6 |
| 2001 | 96,1 | 65,3 | 14,5 |
| 2002 | 98,0 | 70,5 | 15,2 |
| 2003 | 98,2 | 74,2 | 15,4 |
| 2004 | 97,5 | 74,9 | 16,6 |
| 2005 | 97,2 | 75,8 | 17,2 |
| 2006 * | 96,3 | 76,0 | 18,7 |

* the calculations are based on the preliminary data for the size of the population as of 31.12.2006

1. Secondary education – general and vocational

Pre-school and school education cover the period from early childhood up to the high-school years. This period is related to obtaining initial knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for the working world, for employability, socialisation and active civil society. The skills and competencies acquired during childhood and adolescence are of crucial importance for the lifelong development of the individual.

The Ministry of Education and Science, on a central level, and the Regional Inspectorates for Education, on regional level, support the implementation of state policy into the school education system and follow the common national priorities, synchronized with the EU priorities.

The Strategy for LLL envisions result-oriented activities for developing opportunities for non-formal and informal learning within the framework of compulsory school education.

Directions for future development:

- Realising the full potential of each child and pupil/student and providing opportunities for successful social realisation, both professional and personal.
- Strengthening the trust in the education system through social dialogue, wide public agreement and commitment of Bulgarian citizens to its reformation.

Regardless of the relative stability of inclusion of the age groups between 5 and 19 in the learning process, additional measures that would stimulate full inclusion and re-entering the education system are needed.

Activities:

- Promoting extracurricular and out-of-school activities as well as other alternative in-school activities as opportunities for increasing school attractiveness (deadline – by 2011).

- “Recognizing” non-formal and informal learning on a systematic level as instruments for development and/or improvement of learning skills (deadline – by 2013);
- Developing the key competencies that are fundamental for school education such as ICT, foreign languages, entrepreneurship, learning to learn skills in terms of the EU framework, which defines them not only as knowledge, skills and relations in the formal (school) education but also in the non-formal (extracurricular and out-of-school initiatives) and the informal learning (self-education) (deadline – by 2011);
- Strengthening the exchange of information as a good practice at schools through active participation in the national education portal, ensuring high-speed internet at every school, designing e-classes, multimedia training, etc. (deadline - 2013);
- Expanding the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as a common priority of the EU in both extracurricular and out-of-school forms (deadline – by 2011);
- Providing opportunities for upgrading the qualifications of secondary education teachers – general and vocational (deadline – by 2013);
- Securing the role of parents in the management, monitoring and control of school activities, as well as developing partnerships and cooperation between schools and other education and training centres, libraries, cultural clubs and non-governmental organisations (deadline – by 2013);
- Conducting practically oriented trainings together with representatives of business (deadline - by 2013);
- Conducting monitoring and assessment of the learning process quality through both external and internal evaluation (deadline – by 2011);
- Developing European partnerships as an additional instrument for implementing good practices (deadline – by 2013);
- Increasing the care provided to children, especially to disabled children and young people at school age, more specifically assisting them in acquiring professional qualification and skills for social adaptability. (deadline – by 2013);
- Providing accessible and qualitative services for career guidance to all students. (deadline – by 2013).

2. Higher education

The institutions for acquiring higher education are universities, specialised higher education schools and independent colleges, functioning on the principle of academia autonomy and in accordance with the laws of the state.

The learners in the system of higher education are students and Ph.D. students educated in programmes for obtaining education and academic degrees, defined by the Higher Education Act and, as well as post graduate students, trained in programmes for upgrading their qualifications and in special units for continuing education. The qualifications in the system of higher education are related to acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies needed for independent professional and academic activity and team work. Training for upgrading qualification does not serve as grounds for the trainee to acquire a degree or specialty.

Higher education institutions ensure the quality of education and of scientific research, create conditions for transition between education degrees, mobility of students and academic staff and recognition of prior learning.

Directions for development:

Development of the system of lifelong learning in the field of higher education:

- Preparing for professional and personal development, employability and life as active citizens in a knowledge-based society;
- Large scale higher education: expanding the policies for accessibility to education and qualifications within the system, ensuring transparency of qualifications and simplifying the procedures for recognising

them, improving the credit accumulation and transfer system;

- Strengthening the dialogue with nationally representative organisations of employers in order to expand vocational training targeting quick realisation on the labour market;
- Promoting and improving distance learning by using up-to-date information and communication technologies; ensuring a suitable education environment for people with specific educational needs or disadvantaged people;
- Acquiring and upgrading qualifications – clearly defining the learning outcomes in accordance with the levels in the national qualifications framework for higher education;
- Creating mechanisms for recognition of prior learning (formal, non-formal, professional experience, etc.) for the purposes of higher education as well as for recognition of learning in different context;
- Ensuring quality – enhancing the role of universities' internal systems for quality control of education and the faculty performance. Inclusion of foreign experts in the external institutional and programme evaluation. Implementing effective criteria, taking account of the results achieved at the end of the training.

Activities:

- Including the issue of lifelong learning in the Strategy for Development of Higher Education and in the Higher Education Act (deadline – by 2013);
- Designing a National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education synchronised with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (deadline - by 2011 r.);
- Adopting a new classifier of the higher education areas and vocational and professional trainings as well as a methodology for its implementation. (deadline – by 2011);
- Ensuring and maintaining the quality of education and faculty performance in compliance with established procedures for post-accreditation monitoring and control (deadline – by 2011).

3. Adult learning

For the purposes of this Strategy “adult“ is anyone who is 16 years old or above. Lifelong learning offers different opportunities for learning and training suited to different target groups in different stages of their lives: for adolescents, elder people, unemployed or employed individuals, who may turn out to have skills not suited to the constant changes.

Even though it targets **everyone**, there are policies and measures in the Strategy concerning specific target groups:

- Employed individuals – the representatives of this group are most interested and motivated to participate in non-formal and informal learning, have experience with different forms, methods, venues of training and possible learning alternatives. This group has higher expectations in terms of the training provided;
- Unemployed – a big part of the representatives of these groups have a low education level or are without any education and/or professional qualifications, with low literacy level, as well as limited inclusion in the social life and labour market. This group has a strong need of vocational training and training for acquiring basic skills and competencies;
- Adolescents above 16 not completed secondary education and professional qualifications and early school-leavers - this group needs a smooth transition between the different types of training, flexible opportunities and forms for continuing education and training;
- Elderly people, before and after retirement age – most of the people in this group have acquired educational, qualification and professional status, as well as a relatively rich professional, life, social and learning experience. Usually they are not flexible in terms of the rapid technological changes and the processes of globalisation. Learning foreign languages and acquiring computer skills and intercultural experience in a way corresponding to their specific abilities to acquire knowledge leads to prolonging their labour activity.

Among all age groups there are certain that are at risk: people with very low income, living in geographic and social isolation; people with special needs; prisoners; illiterate; people with alcohol and drug addictions. These groups are in need of specific psychological support, basic literacy, development of social skills and vocational training.

According to National Statistical Institute (Education at a Glance OECD indicators, OECD, 2006 and NSI) the education structure of the population between 25 and 64 years of age in percentage is as follows:

| Year* | Primary and lower education | Secondary education | Higher education |
|-------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 2000 | 32,9 | 48,7 | 18,4 |
| 2001 | 28,9 | 49,8 | 21,3 |
| 2002 | 28,5 | 50,3 | 21,1 |
| 2003 | 28,8 | 49,9 | 21,3 |
| 2004 | 28,4 | 50,0 | 21,7 |
| 2005 | 27,6 | 50,8 | 21,6 |
| 2006 | 25,6 | 52,5 | 21,9 |
| 2007 | 22,5 | 55,1 | 22,4 |

* Data of the labour force survey; for the period 2000-2002 the data is for June and for the period 2003-2007 is average for the year.

Directions for future development:

- Expanding opportunities for acquiring education degrees and degrees for vocational qualifications for people of all ages;
- Creating opportunities for acquiring key competencies, directed toward furthering personal and professional development and establishing active civil position;
- Expanding the lifelong learning opportunities for all different groups of the population, for both individuals with low education and without any qualifications, in order to increase their employability, and for highly qualified specialists, who contribute to the development of the country and the competitiveness of the economy;
- Socially responsible involvement of business (the employers) in the context of lifelong learning as a manifestation of contemporary company culture;
- Turning orientation, guidance and counselling into a main element of adult learning;
- Drafting regulations for new forms and opportunities for participation of adults in LLL.

Activities:

In order to enhance the participation/inclusion in lifelong learning result-oriented actions will be taken for:

- Identifying the training needs of adults and designing strategies to meet these needs (deadline - by 2013);
- Identifying the specific groups with low education level and without qualifications in order to include them in different forms of learning; offering alternative education programmes for early school leavers: programmes targeted mainly at social integration and inclusion in the labour market, literacy courses, motivation, “second chance” schools (deadline – by 2011);
- Improving the institutional framework for LLL by expanding the opportunities for learning in clubs, libraries, cultural houses (“chitalista”), youth information-guidance centres, regional and local community centres. Creating opportunities for “family learning” as an instrument for integration in the process of LLL; motivating families to learn by founding community training centres, open to the members of the whole family (deadline - by 2013);

- Developing programmes and projects, suited to the specific education/training needs of people with disabilities (deadline – by 2011);
- Designing programmes/projects for acquiring key competencies, necessary for enhancing employability and the labour market competitiveness (deadline – by 2011);
- Increasing the opportunities for lifelong learning at the work place, with an emphasis on opening more internships and apprenticeships in enterprises of all sectors of the economy (deadline – by 2011);
- Encouraging employers to invest in shaping new professional skills necessary for adapting to the changes in technological development and the demands of the job (deadline - by 2013);
- Creating mechanisms for sharing the financial responsibility for the training between employers, state institutions, municipalities, and trainees (deadline – by 2013);
- Improving education programmes and teaching methods so that they take account of prior learning and experience of the learners; encouraging the training and upgrading of qualification of adult trainers, developing different forms of learning – distant, electronic, blended learning (class-room based learning as well as completing tasks on their own) (deadline – by 2013);
- Designing instruments for recognition of prior learning and validation and certification of results of non-formal and informal learning (deadline – by 2013);
- Changes in legislation, related to flexible opportunities for re-entering education, for mobility in the education system and the labour market, and also control and monitoring of the system (deadline – by 2013).

III. PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

PRIORITY DIRECTION: IMPROVING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESSIBILITY TO LIFELONG LEARNING

Ensuring **flexible access to education and training** is a key priority for lifelong learning on European and national level. The national policy of Bulgaria with regard to the access is directed at guaranteeing large-scale inclusion of all in different learning activities. The purpose is to ensure a real, effective and equal access to learning for everyone.

Regardless of the positive changes in the last few years, there are still unsolved problems in regard to the access to education and training in Bulgaria, including in regard to groups with specific needs and at risk:

- there are still unsolved problems in the regulatory framework in terms of access to education and training of adults, as well as recognition of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- lack of systematic information about the different opportunities for inclusion in training courses and the entry requirements;
- coordination between the participants in the process of adult education and training on a national and regional level is not sufficiently effective;
- the learning environment is not sufficiently stimulating either in terms of contemporary infrastructure or in terms of the public attitudes toward the continuing upgrading of knowledge and skills;
- often inadequate distribution of educational and training institutions in geographical and economic terms;
- public and family environment influence the inclusion in different forms of lifelong learning. Financial problems as well as problems, related to the time that needs to be devoted to training often do not stimulate the individuals to enhance their competencies in personal and professional aspect, and in a number of cases influence negatively the decision for participation in LLL.

Directions for future development:

Regarding the access to education and training it is necessary to work in two directions: increasing participation as a whole and improving the balance among the participants, mainly in regard to disadvantaged and elderly people.

The wide access to education and training is also related to taking steps for encouraging mobility in education, developing more effective approaches suited to the specifics of teaching adults using appropriate training methods, and increasing flexibility for ensuring better opportunities for re-entering the education and training system for all groups of the population.

The higher access flexibility and increase of competitiveness on the labour market require improving the practices for recognition of learning outcomes in its different forms. One of the key priorities in terms of the whole system of learning has to be the development of a system for transfer of credits in education and training. An important strategic task for ensuring flexibility of education and training provided is adopting criteria for recognition of prior learning.

Distance and e-learning in Bulgaria have to be used to the greatest extent considering the free access and flexible approach for acquiring knowledge that these two forms provide to learners.

The broad free access of big numbers of people to education and training in the different forms of lifelong learning requires effective cooperation and coordination between all social partners on different levels. It is necessary to:

- encourage the dialogue between the state, public and political structures, the civil society, employers and trade unions;
- develop adequate financial instruments and promote mechanisms for motivating individuals to participate in all forms of lifelong learning; provide support for learners in general, especially for the

groups with specific needs;

- ensure correspondence between the needs and the training provided;
- provide information, counselling, orientation and guidance for learning in accordance with the individual capabilities and the demands of the labour market.

Activities:

- Creating conditions for inclusion of all children in the education processs as early as pre-school age and for keeping them at school for the mandatory school age, paying special attention to children from risk groups, especially to Roma children (deadline - by 2013).
- Creating supportive environment for vocational training for students with special education needs (deadline- by 2013).
- Implementing a new education structure and system of standardised external evaluation and achieving entrance to secondary and tertiary education as well as to the labour market (deadline - by 2011).
- Developing and applying plans and programmes for training of employees from the state and private sector; improving the relations between business and learning (deadline - by 2013).
- Decentralisation and offering different education and training opportunities by stimulating the territorial and branch development of a network of education and training institutions (deadline - by 2013).
- Designing and realising youth programmes for activities for young people's free time (deadline - by 2013).
- Developing distance learning as means of improving the access and providing support for the participants in this form of learning (deadline - by 2013).
- Validation and certification of results of non-formal and informal learning (deadline - by 2013).
- Providing suitable architectural and psychological learning environment for people with special needs (deadline - by 2013).
- Upgrading the teaching methods and materials for vocational education and training (deadline - by 2013).
- Designing a module system for obtaining qualifications and introducing common EU instruments among employers and trainers. Developing a credit transfer and accumulation system in the sphere of vocational education and training (deadline - by 2013).
- Improving the material and technical resources and the usage of up-to-date information technologies in education institutions (deadline - by 2013).
- Developing financial/credit instruments for easing the access to education (deadline - by 2013).
- Setting a regulatory framework for new opportunities and access to LLL (deadline - by 2013).

PRIORITY DIRECTION: ENSURING QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

An extremely important priority of the lifelong learning policy is ensuring quality and effectiveness of education and training. A main goal is maximum development of the potential of **everyone** in terms of creating opportunities for quicker adaptation to the changing environment and increasing employability.

The quality of education and training is also influenced by: the available material and technical resources and facilities; the supply of up-to-date learning materials and textbooks; the available modern technologies and implementation of ICT; conducting practical trainings in production facilities; teachers' and trainers' qualifications; the contemporary curricula directed at acquiring of key and professional competencies – the last ones identified with the active participation of the employers, etc.

Directions for future development:

- Activating social dialogue about ensuring the quality of lifelong learning.
- Participation of social partners in the development of State Education Requirements (SER), curricula and study programmes and national examination programmes for all degrees and forms of education.
- Establishing approaches, positioning the learner in the centre of the learning process: interactive methods

of teaching and training within the system of formal education, with an emphasis on the key competence “learning to learn”.

- Implementing a management and monitoring system of the quality of education and training.
- Applying EU quality indicators and providing the respective information for monitoring progress.

Activities:

- Clearly defining the responsibilities of social partners and participants in the process of learning and ensuring quality and effectiveness of LLL (deadline – by 2011);
- Establishing public-private partnerships for ensuring the quality of LLL (deadline – by 2013);
- Financing measures for assessing and ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the different forms of training and levels of education and qualification (deadline – by 2013);
- Transfer, promotion and application of innovations (deadline – by 2013);
- Enhancing participation in EU programmes in the field of LLL (deadline – by 2013);
- Setting a regulatory framework for the systems of monitoring and control of LLL quality (deadline – by 2013).

In order to improve the opportunities for access and ensure quality and effectiveness of LLL, the emphasis is on the following areas of intervention:

1. Contemporary requirements for learning content

a. Secondary education – general and vocational

Directions for future development:

Optimising the learning content in the context of lifelong learning is to continue in the direction of:

- Higher flexibility and decentralisation of the changes in the curricula based on local and regional needs.
- Change in the attitudes toward the learning process – from mere reproduction of knowledge to its creative rationalisation and practical application.
- Systematic integration of the key competencies – ICT, entrepreneurship, learning to learn at all stages and levels of school education.
- Achieving agreement between the state education requirements for obtaining qualifications in vocations in Bulgaria and those of the other EU member-states by using the European Qualifications Framework for LLL as an instrument for juxtaposition of qualifications.
- Expanding social dialogue on all levels in order to guarantee cooperation between interested parties; establishing flexible schemes and opportunities, reflecting the constantly changing employers’ demands of the qualification of their personnel.
- Achieving agreement between employers’ requirements and the training offered in accordance with the technological development of the different sectors of economy and the growing need for updating the key competencies of employees on all levels.

Activities:

- Updating relevant documentation in the field of vocational education – state education requirements, curricula, study plans and programs, national examination programmes (deadline – by 2011);
- Encouraging the reform of the curricula in the field of vocational education in terms of achieving higher flexibility and better correspondence between the skills and qualifications demanded by the labour market and the education and training offered for all stages and degrees (deadline – by 2013);
- Updating the List of Vocations for Vocational Education and Training in accordance with the labour market requirements (deadline - by 2011);
- Designing and implementing short-term modules for acquiring vocation for students who have left the schools of general education after 10th grade (deadline - by 2011);
- Developing specialised programmes for acquiring social skills for children from risk groups and with special education needs (deadline - by 2011);

- Applying flexible approaches for improving the organisation and methods of learning for children with special education needs (deadline – by 2013);
- Implementing interactive training methods (deadline - by 2011);
- Establishing partnerships between teachers, experts, school boards of trustees, enterprises, local authorities (deadline - by 2011);
- Complete utilisation of the e-education portal potential for the purposes of LLL (deadline – by 2013);
- Sharing and applying experience gained in work on projects, financed by the EU (deadline – by 2013).

b. Higher education

Directions for future development:

- Adapting the learning content in order to focus it on the education needs of students in accordance with the concept of measuring the learning outcomes of trainings in terms of degrees and professional qualifications. Ensuring transparency and flexibility of the process of education and its goals.
- Orientation of the national education programmes to the demands of the labor market in order to achieve competencies for work in competitive environment. while preserving optimal balance between fundamental scientific knowledge, applied-scientific research, theoretical preparation and practical training.
- Developing the education programmes for the different education degrees, as well as the forms of updating qualifications in such a way so that they become more interdisciplinary. Taking into account the needs of the market for specialists with non-traditional, specific knowledg, skills and competencies in more than one professional area. Shaping competencies for working with new technologies in a competitive environment.
- Implementing up-to-date module programmes in order to expand the scope of qualifications and encourage the free choice of students, post-graduate and Ph.D. students.
- Creating skills and attitudes for self-dependent planning of the continuing education and career progress.

2. Vocational training in the context of LLL

Vocational training in Bulgaria is taking place both within the system of formal education and training and through a number of forms of non-formal and informal learning.

The initial vocational training and the continuing vocational education are associated with acquiring knowledge and skills on a part of a vocation, of a level of vocational qualification and of new qualifications. Vocational training is conducted by vocational schools, vocational secondary-schools, vocational colleges, higher schools, licensed centres for vocational training, employers' and employees' organisations, NGOs, etc.

According to data of the NSI from the year 2005, 179 vocational secondary schools and vocational schools (38% of all) provide vocational training for adults, and 17 have licensed independent Centres for Vocational Training. As of October 2007 the number of vocational training centres licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training is 470.

Continuing vocational education for acquiring of specific key and professional competencies, related to technological processes is also offered in different forms of non-formal education by the enterprises or the companies themselves.

In spite of the constantly increasing number of providers of CVET there is a lack of correspondence to labour market needs and the lifelong learning concept.

The development of the reform in continuing vocational education and training is realised through the adoption of National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Education 2005 – 2010.

Directions for future development:

- Committing to the existing vocational education and training to the needs of the sectors/industries.
- Strengthening the partnership and cooperation between the education and training institutions, social partners, regional and local authorities.

- Ensuring monitoring and control of the quality and effectiveness of vocational education and training.
- Creating opportunities for validation and certification of vocational knowledge, skills and competencies, acquired through non-formal and informal learning, by the system of formal vocational education and training.
- Ensuring free access to information about initiatives and learning resources, trainings, good practices from projects, etc.

Activities:

- Identifying training needs of individuals employed in different economic sectors and designing integrated sectoral approaches (deadline - by 2011);
- Stimulating training institutions to periodically modernise their material and technical resources and facilities, update curricula and materials, improve the qualifications of teachers and trainers (deadline - by 2013);
- Studying and applying good practices within the EU framework for validation and certification of prior, non-formal or informal learning in vocational education and training (deadline - by 2011);
- Improving the schemes of public-private partnerships and decentralisation of activities related to providing vocational training (deadline - by 2013);
- Designing mechanisms for data collection and analysis, monitoring and control of the licensed providers of vocational training (deadline - by 2013);
- Organising forums, initiatives and campaigns for increasing awareness about the opportunities and importance of vocational training in the context of lifelong-learning; creating internet-based “virtual resource centres“ on regional and local level (deadline - by 2011);
- Initiating changes in the regulatory framework for implementing new and varied forms of learning (deadline - by 2013).

3. On the job training

On the job training is an important precondition for achieving better business results for increasing productivity and decreasing incidents at the workplace.

Directions for future development:

Designing and applying module programmes for achieving effective training within the company, as well as on the job training in order to:

- assist the development of the key competencies;
- ensure acquisition of new skills, techniques, technologies and processes;
- expand the opportunities of the „introduction“ training;
- improve companies’ policies regarding the adaptability of human resources.

Activities:

- Strengthening the key role of the branch organisations for the future development company-based training (deadline - by 2013);
- Promoting the idea of flexibility of company management and shaping a culture and company policy for human resources development (deadline - by 2013);
- Developing and completing pilot projects for creating financing mechanisms for “training within the company” (deadline - by 2013);
- Stimulating employers to provide training and practice in a real-life working environment for secondary and tertiary education students (deadline - by 2011).

4. The key competencies in the process of LLL

The acquisition of up-to-date key competencies leads to increasing in competitiveness, productivity and innovations on a national scale.

Directions for future development:

For successful realisation of the process of LLL, it is necessary to:

- Increase awareness and create conditions for acquisition of key competencies;
- Study and distribute good practice in acquiring key competencies;
- Measure and analyse the learning results of acquiring key competencies.

Activities:

- Including key competences in designing the National Qualifications Framework (deadline - by 2011).
- Implementing acquiring key competencies in education and training (deadline - by 2011).
- Designing and applying national programmes for adults, directed toward acquiring key competencies (deadline - by 2011).
- Developing mechanisms for validation and certification of acquired key competencies and their legal regulation (deadline - by 2013).

5. Training of teachers, trainers and faculty

Developing programmes for training teachers and trainers complies with the European principles for teachers' competencies and qualifications. The academic boards of higher education schools encourage the inclusion of faculty in different forms of learning.

Directions for future development:

- Implementing flexible and open learning and teaching methods.
- Developing national network for training teachers, as well as trainers and adults.
- Creating opportunities for flexible career development of teachers.
- Encouraging mobility during the basic preparation for upgrading teacher's qualifications and for continuing training of trainers.
- Putting an emphasis on studying European languages and on using specialised terminology during the basic and continuing training of teachers.
- Deepening cooperation between education institutions, enterprises and trade unions on a local, regional and national level for acquiring up-to-date knowledge and skills about the new technological achievements.
- Effective utilising of training opportunities within the Integrated Programme for LLL of the Community and other international programmes.
- Establishing conditions stimulating acquisition and upgrading of professional and teaching qualifications of the faculty, including the part-time lecturers;
- Changing the regulatory framework for assigning academic degrees and titles;
- Encouraging the career development of young scientists and researchers in order to attract them to teach at the higher education institutions;
- Expanding faculty access to the European information networks, connected to the Common European space for higher education and culture;
- Stimulating faculty to use different forms of trans-border inter-university cooperation.

Activities:

- Implementing a system for professional and career development of teachers following certain standards, directly related to teachers' remuneration (deadline - by 2013).
- Developing a validation and certification mechanism for the results of non-formal and informal learning

and binding it to the career development of teachers (deadline - by 2013).

- Creating a portal for exchange of good teaching practices, including different disciplines and promoting the opportunities of e-learning (deadline - by 2013).
- Putting an emphasis on foreign language teaching in the process of acquiring and upgrading of qualifications of teachers and students in higher education institutions (deadline - by 2013).
- Supporting and promoting projects for teachers' and trainers' mobility as a part of the programmes for their continuing professional qualification. (deadline - by 2013).
- Using the project financing opportunities provided by the Operational programmes Human Resources Development and Competitiveness, the Integrated Programme for LLL, etc. (deadline - by 2013).
- Actively participating in the Training of Trainers Network (TT Net) by CEDEFOP – (deadline - by 2013).
- Stimulating active participation of the employers in the process of continuing training of teachers and trainers (deadline - by 2013).

6. Lifelong guidance

Lifelong guidance is an important element of the whole concept of LLL and is defined as a main priority within the framework of the Copenhagen Process, both for the sphere of education and for the sphere of employment and the labour market.

The development of the lifelong guidance system in our country requires serious changes, mainly in terms of expanding the access and ensuring better quality of guidance services for everyone – pupils, students, employed, un-employed, disadvantaged people, elderly people .

Vocational guidance services, provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Pedagogy Centre and its 27 regional structures, the Regional Education Inspectorates and the schools are related to guidance in the field of education. Human resources for an effectively working system for secondary education vocational guidance are presently being organised. Modules for early vocational guidance at a pre-secondary level have been introduced.

In 2005 an international project for creating a career guidance network at schools within the Socrates programme was launched: its goal is to facilitate the transition between finishing school and successfully becoming part of the labour market.

Vocational guidance services in the system of higher education are based on already established university career centres; their mission is to “assist students and young specialists in finding suitable realisation on the labour market”.

Vocational guidance services for adults are provided by the National Employment Agency through its Labour Office Directorates and aim to support active behaviour of the citizens on the labour market.

The main task of the National Centre for European Guidance, a part of the Human Resources Development Centre is to disseminate information about guidance and counselling in the field of continuing education and training; to offer assistance to guidance counsellors and the society on issues related to learning, VET and employment in Europe.

Vocational guidance is a priority and a mandatory element of the national education and training policy. The main challenges are:

- lack of national lifelong guidance system;
- deficit in terms of the information provided and its quality;
- weak coordination between the responsible institutions, the providers, and the users of vocational guidance services;
- lack of sufficient number of specialists in Vocational guidance; lack of qualified vocational guidance specialists.

Directions for future development:

The realisation of lifelong learning and employment policies requires developing a national lifelong

guidance system in the following key areas:

- Developing people's ability to plan and direct their career by themselves, to develop their knowledge and skills in order to enhance their employability.
- Finding effective ways of expanding the access of citizens to lifelong guidance.
- Formulating policies and programmes for lifelong guidance as an integrated part of the social and economic development programmes on a national and European level.
- Developing coordinated lifelong guidance policies and programmes in the sectors of education, training, employment and municipal development in accordance with the national and international economic changes and technological development.
- Formulating and executing the lifelong guidance policies and programs with the participation of the responsible respective ministries, social partners, service providers, employment offices, education and training institutions, people employed in the guidance system, main users – pupils, parents, students, adolescents, adults, people from specific target groups, elderly people.
- Improving the access and quality of the guidance services for everyone – young people, adults, older people.

Activities:

Bulgaria's inclusion in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network involves taking active and urgent measures for developing a modern, effective, vocational guidance system. The first steps for that are:

- Founding a National Lifelong Guidance Forum to support the development of the national lifelong guidance system (deadline - by 2011).
- Developing a National Lifelong Guidance Development Programme (deadline - by 2011).
- Developing a unified National Lifelong Guidance System (deadline - by 2013).
- Developing training and qualifications programmes for the personnel providing lifelong guidance services (deadline - by 2013).
- Developing national and local vocational guidance programmes and projects corresponding to the specifics of different regions and to the needs of the different target groups – young people, old people, etc. (deadline - by 2013).
- Organising forums and promoting lifelong guidance good practices (deadline - by 2013).
- Setting regulatory framework of the opportunities for lifelong guidance (deadline - by 2013).

7. Recognition of qualifications

LLL is turning into a necessity in Europe due to the rapid rate of social, technological and economic changes. The development of LLL could be hindered by the lack of communication and cooperation between education and training providers and the authorities on different levels, by the lack of transparency, as well as by the lack of conditions allowing citizens to transfer learning outcomes from one education degree into another degree or qualification. Adopting an European Qualifications Framework ensures transparency in recognising qualifications acquired in the process of LLL.

The core of the EQF are eight reference points, related to learning outcomes described by eight reference levels. The process of developing a National Qualifications Framework in Bulgaria is still in its initial stage. The Framework is supposed to ensure transparency of the national system for qualifications recognition and outline its correspondence with the respective systems of the other EU member-states. The system for qualifications recognition in Bulgaria is still to a large extent fragmentary:

- in terms of general education – recognition of prior learning deals mainly with the system of formal education and is based on learning outcomes mainly related to content;
- in the field of vocational education – recognition of prior learning is limited to Art. 40 of the VET Act, where the procedure for certification of skills, acquired as a result of non-formal, informal, or on the job training is described;

- the recognition of learning outcomes between secondary and higher education is not well developed even for programmes of the same professional direction;
- the European instruments for qualifications recognition are only applied in the field of higher education, but are scarcely known in other education spheres.

Directions for future development:

- Development of National Qualifications Framework and regulation of the system for recognition of qualifications in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Activities:

- Describing national qualifications and structuring them in the NQF (deadline - by 2011);
- Selecting a place in NQF for the learning outcomes of general education according to the EQF degrees (deadline - by 2011);
- Defining clear paths between the sector qualifications and the EQF degrees (deadline - by 2013);
- Relevance of national qualifications levels to the degrees of the EQF (deadline - by 2011);
- Recognition of key and professional competencies acquired in previous education degrees (deadline - by 2013);
- Improving the State Education Requirements for acquiring qualifications in a vocation based on learning outcomes by ensuring flexibility and updating in terms of the changing demands of the labour market (deadline - by 2013);
- Completing projects for validation and certification of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, including training within the company (deadline - by 2013);
- Implementing and establishing an European Supplement to the Certificate for acquiring vocational qualification as an instrument of qualifications transparency (deadline - by 2011);
- Adopting a national programme for creating an integrated credit transfer system for higher and vocational education (deadline - by 2013).

8. Evaluating learning outcomes

Directions for future development:

Evaluating learning outcomes is a guarantee for the development of the lifelong learning process and has to focus on:

- Developing instruments for evaluation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved by non-formal and informal methods.
- Stimulating research and analysis of the measurement results in order to undertake actions for LLL development;
- Expanding the participation of employers' organisations in developing criteria for evaluation of lifelong learning outcomes;
- Updating the regulatory framework in order to specify the rights and obligations of interested parties (providers, consumers, employers) regarding the quality in the field of education and training; designing monitoring and control systems of the quality of education and training;
- Strengthening the capacity for measuring learning outcomes and education and training quality.

Activities:

- Developing and implementing criteria and requirements for LLL quality (deadline - by 2013).
- Developing mechanisms for independent external expert evaluation of adult training quality (deadline - by 2013);
- Developing and applying evaluation systems of learning outcomes, measuring the return on the investments made into the training (deadline - by 2013);
- Developing models for validation of competencies acquired through non-formal or informal learning (deadline - by 2011).

9. LLL – research and development

The scientific support of LLL is related to creating new knowledge as a result of research and development activities conducted by universities, scientific organisations and business on one hand, and to the scientific potential for conducting research and analyses for following the progress made in regard to lifelong learning on the other. The scientific support targets employers, LLL providers, learners, teachers and trainees.

Directions for future development:

- Distributing innovative knowledge, utilising the help of information and communications technologies and the modern audiovisual and multimedia education products on the different stages of education and training, but mainly through the higher education institutions and science organisations that provide new solutions to public and technological problems.
- Ensuring administrative capacity and financial resource for research and development activities in the field of education and training that would contribute to the development and sustainability of the process of lifelong learning.

Activities:

- Binding the policies in education and training systems to the policies for encouraging research in the National Strategy for Science, Research and Development (deadline - by 2011);
- Attracting researchers for taking part in designing policies for LLL development in regard to legislation, financial mechanisms, standards, the National Qualifications Framework, validation, etc. (deadline - by 2013);
- Supporting state and private research units, conducting research and analyses for scientific support of the development of education and training in order to achieve LLL (deadline - by 2013);
- Promoting the development of research evaluating the effectiveness of the means invested in LLL (deadline - by 2013);
- Stimulating development of research based programmes and project in order to guarantee sustainability of the LLL process (deadline - by 2013).

10. Financial resources of lifelong learning

According to NSI data, based on calculations made by Eurostat methodology the public and private expenditures as a percentage of GDP for the period 2000-2004 are as follows:

| Year/ Expenditures | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| State expenses / % / | 4,3 | 4,1 | 4,4 | 4,4 | 4,3 |
| Private expenses / % / | 0,6 | 0,6 | 0,6 | 0,6 | 0,6 |
| Total expenses / % / | 4,9 | 4,7 | 5,0 | 5,0 | 4,9 |

The public expenditures of Bulgaria for education comprised 4.2 % of the GDP for 2006; the same amount is approved for 2007. In the last few years there is a visible increase in absolute figures of the budget means allocated to the formal education system. Furthermore, since 2007 through programme financing there are also funds provided for projects in the field of school education: optimisation of the school network, extracurricular and out-of-school activities, upgrading of the technical equipment and facilities

of schools, etc. Private education financing for Bulgaria is around 0.6 % per year.

Financing for education and training has also been received from the European programmes “Phare”, “Tempus”, etc. Since 2007 Bulgaria participates in the European Integrated Programme “Lifelong learning” 2007-2013, which incorporates the Comenius – for school education, Erasmus – for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci – for vocational education and training and Grundtvig – for adult education.

Since the beginning of 2007 Bulgaria has access to financing from the European Social Fund through Operational Programme “Human Resources Development” 2007-2013. Priority directions for development are related to: encouraging economic activity of unemployed and inactive persons; increasing productivity and adaptability of the employed; improving education and training quality in accordance with the needs of the labour market; improving the access to education and training.

Financing lifelong learning activities should be based on sharing the expenses and profits between all interested parties in the system – providers, consumers and employers. **Co-financing by providers, consumers and employers will lead to higher effectiveness of the education and training measures in the context of LLL.** In terms of public finances, the measures of this Strategy should be planned and programmed according to the principles of effectiveness, efficiency and good management.

Outside the system of formal education, which presently is to a large extent financial responsibility of the state, various options for co-financing that could be used together or separately are possible, for example:

- Co-usage of the education and training infrastructure: using the existing school facilities for adult training or other measures in the field of LLL.
- Attracting private investments in LLL: training providers and enterprises share expenses for practical training of pupils/students and adults, through practical training at schools and in real working environment.
- Attracting private investment in the sector of general education, with a view to provide additional education services or extracurricular activities at schools.
- Implementing a system of crediting university and Ph.D. students in higher education, which would expand the access to higher education and the inclusion in the system, while at the same time freeing public resource for investment in the development of higher schools.

The Structural funds will grant financing to a number of activities related to LLL, under the three Operational Programmes - “Human Resources Development”, “Competitiveness” and “Regional Development”, as well as the Rural Regions Development Programme for the Republic of Bulgaria 2007-2013.

IV. INDICATORS FOR LLL PROGRESS MEASURING

The purpose of the indicators is to provide data for the current state of processes, to review the progress in regard with the set goals, in terms of planning future education, training and learning activities.

As an EU member-state Bulgaria is obliged to apply European indicators included in the Coherent Framework of Indicators and Benchmarks for monitoring the progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. For monitoring the performance of the national Strategy for Lifelong Learning the following indicators are used:

- Inclusion in pre-school education (percentage of children enrolled in kindergartens and preparatory groups/classes aged 3 - 6)
- Level of reading literacy – percentage of pupils with low level of reading literacy among the 15-year-olds (level 1 and lower on the PISA reading literacy scale)
- Yearly school leavers (percentage of people aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training);
- Young people who have completed secondary education – percentage of the people aged 20-24 who have completed secondary education;
- Tertiary graduates in mathematics, natural and technical sciences – graduates per 1000 people aged 20-29;
- International mobility of students and Ph. D. students studying in Bulgaria – percentage of mobile students and Ph. D. students (of their total number) according to the criteria country of citizenship and previous education;
- Inclusion in LLL - percentage of people aged 25-64 who have participated in education or training;
 - for a period of 4 weeks before the survey;
 - for a period of 12 months before the survey;
- Education structure of the population;
- Investments in education and training – total, both public and private;
- Share of GDP devoted to education and training – Eurostat methodology for calculating the financial expenditures for formal education;
- Ratio between the number of trainees and the number of computers in secondary education.

For completing the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the period 2008 – 2013 in Bulgaria two Action Plans, one for the period 2009-2011 and another for the period 2012-2013 will be drafted and adopted by the Council of Ministers.

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY

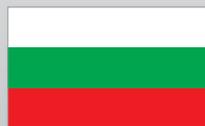
For the purposes of this Strategy **key terms in the field of vocational education and training have been used in accordance with the CEDEFOP terminology.**

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Access to education and training | Conditions, circumstances or requirements, stipulated in the regulatory framework and/or defined by the education/training institution governing admittance and participation to educational institutions or programmes. |
| 2 | Adaptability | The capacity of both organisations and individuals to adapt to new technologies, new market conditions and new work patterns. |
| 3 | Adult | Any person of 16 and more years. |
| 4 | Adult education | Education provided to adults and taking into accounts their specific characteristics as learners. It includes a set of activities used by teachers, trainers and other specialists to assist adult learners in studying by themselves, in a group and in education institutions. |
| 5 | Certification | The process of formally validating learning outcomes. |
| 6 | Credit Transfer System | System which provides a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements (from a course, training or a placement) and transferring them from one institution to another, using credits validated in training programmes. The credit transfer system supports the transparency and comparability of education and training pathways, curricula and systems. In a credit transfer system, a value is allocated to every learning unit (course, training or placement) that the learner is required to successfully complete, in order to pass a full training programme at a school or training centre, including examinations or other assessments. |
| 7 | Distance learning | A form of education where the teacher and the learner are not in constant immediate contact but the education is imparted at a distance through communication media: radio, TV, telephone, correspondence, computer or video. Distance learning uses previously developed study courses and packages with learning documents that include printed materials (textbooks and additional information), audio and/or video materials, discs as well as clear instructions for the organisation and the way the training has to be conducted. Learners study by themselves, choosing their own time, place and strategy of learning, while maintaining regular contacts with the trainer (instructor, tutor, mentor, course consultant). |
| 8 | Early school leavers | Young people aged 18-24 who have not completed secondary education and have not been involved in a form of learning for the last four weeks. |

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 9 | Education | Institutionalised process of teaching and acquiring general, special professional knowledge and skills developing the intellectual abilities of the individual. This process usually leads to acquiring an education degree or a vocational/professional qualification. |
| 10 | E-learning | Learning supported by information and communication technologies (ICT) |
| 11 | Formal learning /training/ education | Learning that occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school/ higher education institution/training centre) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to officially recognised document (diploma, certificate). |
| 12 | Informal learning | Intentional learning, non-institutionalised, less organised or structured; can include learning activities resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities, self-, family- or society-directed. It could lead to validation and certification. |
| 13 | Key competencies | The set of basic knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes supporting the professional and social realisation and integration. In the EU countries the following eight key competencies are defined: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competencies; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression. (Recommendation of the European Parliament of 18.12.2006, published in the Official Journal of the EU, 31.12.2006). |
| 14 | Knowledge-based society | A society whose processes and practices are based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge. |
| 15 | Learning | A cumulative process whereby individuals gradually assimilate increasingly complex and abstract entities (concepts, categories, and patterns of behaviour or models) and/or acquire skills and competencies. |
| 16 | Learning outcomes | Knowledge and skills acquired as a result of formal, non-formal and informal learning. |
| 17 | Lifelong learning | The process of acquiring knowledge and skills through formal, non-formal and informal learning during a person's life. It includes all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competencies and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. |
| 18 | Literacy | Education for acquiring reading, writing, mathematics knowledge and skills as well as elementary knowledge in the field of the humanities and sciences. |
| 19 | Non-formal learning | Learning which is embedded in planned activities inside and outside education institutions. It could include adult literacy programmes, social skills, work skills, common knowledge, etc. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It could lead to validation and certification. |
| 20 | Professional competencies | Ability to acquire knowledge, know-how and skills related to acquisition of a specific profession. |

| | | |
|----|---------------------|--|
| 21 | Vocational guidance | Vocational guidance provides information, counselling and advice to students and other persons with regard to the choice of profession and career development. |
| 22 | Recognition | A general term for validation and certification of knowledge, skills and competencies. |
| 23 | Training | Process of teaching and acquiring knowledge and skills for a specific professional, social and personal sphere, which takes place both in and out of education institutions. It can lead to validation and certification. |
| 24 | On the job training | Training in a real work environment under the guidance of a qualified trainer for putting into practice previously acquired habits and skills. It could take place fully on the job or be combined with external training. |
| 25 | Validation | <p>The process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competencies which people develop throughout their lives in different contexts, for example through education, work and leisure activities. It typically leads to certification – education degree of professional qualification.</p> <p>Certain type of validation procedures allow recognition of key competencies obtained or developed through non-formal and/or informal education. Knowledge and skills that are a part of vocation and/or individual modules can also be validated, which leads to upgrading competencies and credit transfer.</p> <p>Validation is one of the main mechanisms ensuring qualifications mobility and transparency.</p> |





This publication is supported by the Project 2007-3865/001-001 „Raising Awareness about Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria”, financed by the European Union and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria.