



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION
OF ADULTS

Country Report on Adult Education in BULGARIA

Helsinki, 2011



Please, feel free to check our website for the latest version of the country report via the following url or QR-code or contact us under [eaea-info\[at\]eaea.org](mailto:eaea-info[at]eaea.org).

<http://www.eaea.org/country/bulgaria>



Please cite this report as: EAEA (2011): *Country report Bulgaria*. Helsinki. www.eaea.org/country/bulgaria. Date of Access.



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Overview	4
Politics and Law	4
Future trends/key concerns/directions.....	5
Structure overview.....	6
Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education	6
Vocational Institutions and career-related training	6
Universities	7
e-learning.....	8
EAEA Members.....	8
References.....	8

Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria. It is divided into two sections. The section *Policy and Politics* gives an overview of the key policy currently in force, and also outlines the main legislation or political situation in the country. *Structure and Providers* gives a more detailed look at the organizational structures, and also outlines the main adult education providers, mainly looking at non-formal and informal learning.

We want to thank our members for their contributions to this reflection on the adult education situation in Bulgaria as far as possible as of 2010/2011. Inevitably there will be new things emerging within the ever changing situation of adult education, but we believe the majority of the information provided will be relevant and useful for the foreseeable future. However, to keep the resource accurate and up to date we are open to suggestions to improve the texts. If you feel there is something you can add about your country please contact us via email at eaea-info@eaea.org.



Overview

During the last decade the Adult Education Policy in the Republic of Bulgaria has been progressively developing. The prospect of **joining the European Union** (which came to force on the 1st of January 2007) had become a key incentive for development in many areas, including that of lifelong learning and adult education. However, according to the statistical office of the European Union - Eurostat, Bulgaria currently has one of the **lowest participation rates** in Lifelong learning among adult population (Lifelong learning here refers to those aged between 25 and 64 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey). [1]

Politics and Law

A **National Lifelong Learning Strategy** (2008-2013) has been developed and adopted by the Council of Ministers since the 30th of October 2008. It defines the conceptual framework for lifelong learning in both European and national contexts. The main priorities of Lifelong learning (LLL) in Bulgaria can be defined as [2]:

- 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**;
- and the **training of teachers**

The lifelong learning concept in this Strategy is based on two clearly distinguished groups of competencies that are seen to interact with each other, and which can be acquired simultaneously or separately. Firstly, there are **professional competencies**, which are related to the professional knowledge, skills and aptitudes required for work within a particular field. Secondly there are **key competencies**, which include the transferable or basic skills an employee may need in a variety of situations. These transferable skills include communication skills, skills for working with information technology, team work, self-training, particular methodologies, evaluation schemes, etc. [3]



The **Human Resources Development Operational Programme** (2007-2013) aims to improve the quality of life for people in Bulgaria through the enhancement of human capital, achievement of high employment levels, increasing productivity, and enabling access to high-quality education and lifelong learning. This operational programme is co-funded by the ESF and the state budget, and offers opportunities for adult training from literacy courses to the acquisition of key competences and professional qualifications. The main aim of this programme is to **increase the employment rate** by offering more flexible job opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurship. It also seeks to enhance **social and economic integration** for groups in unequal positions in the labour market, for example those with little education, the long-term unemployed or minority groups such as the **Roma** population. [4]

Since 2010 both professional qualifications and key competencies for adult learners can be obtained through a "**voucher system**", run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Employment Agency is also currently implementing three projects: "**Development**", "**Adaptability**" and "**I can**", which aim to ease the process for citizens to access learning opportunities through the Human Resources Development program's funds. It is hoped that around 100 000 adult learners will be able to benefit from these three programs. [5]

On a further point of law, the **Vocational Education and Training Act** [6] provides the legal basis for initial and continuing vocational training, with a focus on guaranteeing its quality in line with the demands of the labour market. It defines the functions of the vocational education and training system to prepare workers for an active part in both the economy and society, by generating the conditions for them to acquire and improve their professional qualifications. [7]

Future trends/key concerns/directions

Bulgaria is currently developing a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) based on learning outcomes, covering all levels of the education and training system and their corresponding qualifications. The Bulgarian government sees the NQF as a prerequisite for implementing the European Qualifications framework (EQF), and as such an important national priority. [8]

A further future direction the lifelong learning field is taking in Bulgaria is to increase the flexibility of access to learning opportunities, and promoting educational mobility for learners. Part of this will be focussed in a second-chance system for formal basic education, as well as working to improve recognition of non-formal and informal prior learning, and the development of a credit transfer system for Vocational Education and Training. E-learning and distance learning are also areas which may be developed, particularly in aiming to make the systems more attractive to learners.



Structure overview

The main types of institutions involved in adult education are **public and municipal centres**, including evening schools, and then a variety of **vocational schools**, colleges, training centres and information and guidance centres, and higher education universities.

Vocational schools offer various **evening** and correspondence courses for adults in fields such as management, hotel and catering, car mechanics, construction, agriculture, and transport.

The Human Resource Development Centre [9] organises, advises, coordinates and carries out projects and research in the field of education, vocational education and training, labour market and human resources in Bulgaria. This is in co-operation with the **Ministry of Education and Science** [10], the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** [11] and other institutions, corporate bodies and individuals.

The Human Resource Development Centre is also the co-ordinating body in Bulgaria of the **European Lifelong Learning Programme** and is working on projects in the field of education, training and the labour market. The centre works on the selection, evaluation, financing and monitoring of projects under the EU lifelong learning programme, and also offers consultancy to stakeholders interested in applying for the programme. [12]

Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

Vocational Institutions and career-related training

In Bulgaria, the two bodies responsible for **Vocational Education and Training (VET)** are the **Ministry for Education and Science** and the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**. The Ministry for Education and Science has the overall responsibility for the entire school system and is the main policy-making body with responsibility for the budget, and control over **Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET)**. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry for Education and Science are both responsible for adult education, often referred to as **Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET)**.

In terms of legislation, the most important acts are the **Vocational Education and Training Act** (1999), and the **Recognition of Vocational Qualification Act** (2008), which regulates the recognition of vocational qualifications, acquired in other EU member states or third countries in order to gain access to and practice within regulated professions. **The Employment Promotion Act** (2006) is



another important act as it sets general policies for employment, including the methods to gather information about employment, and the promotion of employment in Bulgaria. [13]

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training [14] works to assure and maintain the quality of the vocational education and training of young people and adults. It aims to do so according to the labour market needs, to develop the competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy. The Agency also co-operates with social partners in implementing coordinated **policies** for lifelong learning, continuing vocational training, and in introducing successful European practices.

The main aim of Agency is to provide access to work related training for the **unemployed**, and expand the access to vocational education for all citizens, according to the needs of the labour market. It is currently also working to develop the **State Educational Requirements (standards)** for acquiring qualifications.

Universities

Several Bulgarian universities have their own **open-education**, or continuing education centres, for example:

- The Centre for Continuing Education in New Bulgarian University offers education in programmes and courses for qualification and re-qualification, master classes, and preparatory courses for admission. The Centre also devises courses and programmes upon request by companies; and organises seminars, schools, and summer schools. [15]
- **The Centre for Open and Continuing Education [16] (COCE) at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UACEG)** in Sofia organises open and continuing education courses for professionals and students in new areas of science and technology which are seen as having a practical interest.
- **The Centre of Continuing Education** is a supporting unit in the structure of the **Agricultural University - Plovdiv**. Its major mission is to provide lifelong learning possibilities for graduates and present students, and for other specialists who can acquire key competencies in the areas of agriculture and ecology, or economics and tourism. The Centre aims to provide the best possible specialised training in the area of agriculture by organising courses (of between 30 to 150 hours) in compliance with the Regulations governing the European Structural Funds.

Students are also offered training programmes for acquiring additional qualifications in: professional pedagogy, agricultural law, economics and



international trade, journalism, patent and licence policies of companies, etc. Preferential conditions are provided, and training runs in parallel to the studies for acquiring a BSc or MSc degree. The Centre also organises short and long-term courses for post-graduate studies to university degree holders. [17]

e-learning

The non government sector and private companies offer distance courses in different areas that aim to reach various target groups. Some of the qualitatively developed distance education courses in this sector are offered by:

- **Network of Innovative Teachers**, [18] where currently more than 20 000 Bulgarian teachers are involved. The Network also provides several distance courses in the English language, and works to development e-learning content.
- **Future Now Ltd.** [19] offers distance courses in foreign languages, e-learning for teachers, civil education, Bulgarian language courses and Maths for secondary school students

In Bulgaria there are a also number of independent private providers, and NGO's which focus on e-learning. Some of the proposed courses are part of European projects, or are developed by the companies for corporate training of the personnel.

EAEA Members

NGO "House of science and technology"

- **'House of science and technology'** has a long tradition of working within the socio economic field, through training, organizing and conducting language training, computer courses, and professional and administrative courses. Another area of activity is socially minded work on the development of civil society and democratic learning practices. They also participate in discussions on important issues about the region in the Regional Committee on Employment Advisory Council, which deals with isseus such as tourism, and energy efficiency in public forums. [20]

References

[1]. Eurostat, Life-long learning, 2011, available on:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/dataset?p_product_code=TSDSC440



[2]. National system overviews on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms, 2010, available on:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_BG_EN.pdf

[3]. National system overviews on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms, 2010, available on:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_BG_EN.pdf

[4]. Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, 2011, available on: <http://www.eufunds.bg/en/page/11>

[5]. Wereurope, Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria, 2011 available on:
http://www.wereurope.eu/download/LLL/Abstract_LLL_BG.pdf

[6]. Vocational Education and Training System in the Republic of Bulgaria, 2011, available on:
http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/en/top_menu/vocational_education/presentation_VET-system_BG.pdf

[7]. Description of the VET System in Bulgaria, 2011, available on:
<http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/implementing-the-framework/bulgaria.aspx>

[8]. Preparation of the 2010 Joint Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme Guidance Note for the 2009 national reports, 2010, available on: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/natreport09/bulgaria_en.pdf

[9]. Preparation of the 2010 Joint Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme Guidance Note for the 2009 national reports, 2010, available on: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/natreport09/bulgaria_en.pdf

[10]. Human Resource Development Centre, 2011, available at:
<http://hrdc.bg/files/public/HRDC/kontakti%20hrdc-en.pdf>

[11]. Ministry of Education and Science, 2011,
<http://www.minedu.government.bg/en/news-home/>

[12]. Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2011, available at:
<http://www.mlsp.government.bg/en/>

[13]. Human Resource Development Centre, 2011, available at:
<http://hrdc.bg/page.php?98>



- [14]. Description of the VET System in Bulgaria, 2011, available at:
<http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/implementing-the-framework/bulgaria.aspx>
- [15]. National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, 2011, available at:
<<http://www.navet.government.bg/en/nappo>>
- [16]. New Bulgarian Universtiy , 2011, available at:
<http://www.nbu.bg/index.php?l=847>
- [17]. Centre "Open and Continuing Education", 2011, available at:
http://www.uacg.bg/UACEG_site/acadstaff/viewDep.php?fdID=71&lang=en
- [18]. Agricultural university plovdiv, 2011, available at: <http://www.auplovdiv.bg/en/content.php?id=29>
- [19]. Network of Innovative Teachers, 2011, available at:
<<http://www.teacher.bg/>>
- [20]. Ngo "House of science and technology", available at: <http://www.dnt-vratza.com/>