



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Education  
**Lifelong Learning Policy Development**

Brussels, December 2003

## **Implementing Lifelong Learning Strategies in Europe:**

### **Progress report on the follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution**

*Reply to the Commission questionnaire*

**BULGARIA**

**Commission Contact Persons:**

**Mr. Roger O’Keeffe (Roger.O’Keeffe@cec.eu.int)**

**Mrs. Luce Pepin (Luce.Pepin@cec.eu.int)**

# IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFELONG LEARNING

## CONTRIBUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

to the

Progress Report of the European Commission and the Member States on the follow-up to the Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning<sup>1</sup> and to the Commission's Communication "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality"<sup>2</sup>

Sofia, 27 May 2003

*The Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning invites Member States to "develop and implement comprehensive and coherent strategies reflecting the principles and building blocks identified in the Commission's Communication and involving all relevant players, in particular the social partners, civil society, local and regional authorities." The Council also asks Member States, "in conjunction with the European Employment Strategy, to mobilise resources for those strategies and to promote lifelong learning for all by setting targets for an increase in investment in human resources, including lifelong learning, and optimising use of available resources, developing initiatives to stimulate private investment in learning and considering a more targeted use of Community funding resources, including the European Investment Bank."*

Following the establishment of Lifelong Learning (LLL) as a concept that pushes ahead European policy in the field of education, opportunities for continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills are being provided for gradually into the strategic documents of the Bulgarian government. Oriented towards the specific national conditions, the trends of European educational policy are being reflected also into the normative acts that regulate different aspects of the systems of education and training. The labour market model increasingly determines LLL as an important factor in improving professional realization and in stimulating active citizenship. LLL prove to be a prerequisite for cooperation and free movement of labour force. Thus, it is expected to become a guiding principle for further development of education and training systems in Bulgaria.

---

<sup>1</sup> Council Resolution of 27 June 2002, no. 2002 163/1, OJ C163, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> COM(2002) 678 final (November 2001)

## I. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

*1. Describe the legislative and financial framework in which lifelong learning strategies are implemented in your country. In the case of regional governments or decentralised decision-making, please detail the responsibilities of the different levels of Government in this process.*

The legislative framework that will assure the implementation of the strategies on LLL refers to the field of education and training as well as to certain aspects of the social sphere. The principles laid down in the **Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria** (1991) concerning the free development of education (Art. 23) and the right of education for all (Art. 53) are further elaborated in a number of normative acts. The state encourages education by establishing and providing financial resources for schools, supports talented pupils and students, creates conditions for vocational training and retraining. State policy in the field of national education is accomplished by the Council of Ministers. The Minister of Education and Science is a central body of the government that governs, coordinates and controls the implementation of the state policy and EU-integration in the field of education and science (Rules of Procedure of the Ministry of Education and Science, Council of Ministers' Decree (CM Decree) No. 216 of 29 November 1999). Parallel to its' functions for coordination and implementation of state policy in the field of labour, social insurance and social aid, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) is responsible for training of employed and unemployed. Training of adults is a responsibility of respective branch ministries as well.

The legal basis concerning **the system of education** established and updated during the last few years is a major factor for assuring coherence between initiatives, processes and actions in respect of human resources development. It enlists: the Law on National Education (LNE); the Rules governing the application of the Law on National Education (RALNE); the Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus (LLS); the Law on Vocational Education and Training (LVET), the Law on Higher Education (LHE) as well as secondary legislation (CM decrees and ordinances) regulating the contents, organization, management and control of the secondary general and vocational education and training.

The LNE (the new law has been adopted in 1991, last amendments 2003) determines the status, functions and governance of the system of national education. The Minister of Education and Science is a specialized governing body in charge of **the system of national education**. Regional administrations for management and supervision over the system of national education operate to the Minister of Education and Science – school inspectorates. The Law ensures equal access to education by preventing from restrictions and privileges of racial, ethnic, gender, social, religious or civil-status origin – Art. 4, Para. 2. Art. 4 of the LNE provides for the opportunity of continuous acquisition of higher level of education and of increasing qualification of the citizens. This opportunity is a subject of further refinement in the RALNE (Art. 1 and 2, 1999, last amend. 2003) where citizens' right on education in the system of national education is provisioned irrespectively of the age.

Changes in Bulgarian education system directed towards acquiring new skills for all are legally determined in 1999 by the LLS and the LVET. The LLS (1999, last amend. 2002) defines the aims and the contents of the general education, among which creating conditions for development of necessities, interests and readiness for life-wide learning, training and self-perfection. This law assures the necessary level of schooling, succession and continuity of education (Art. 3, Para. 1), widening foreign language learning for all pupils, integrating ICT in schools.

The system of **vocational education and training** is regulated by the LVET (1999, last amend. 2003). The system of vocational education and training (VET) is envisaged to provide citizens with knowledge and skills necessary for their realization in the economy and other spheres of the social life by creating conditions for acquiring vocational qualification (Art. 2). According to the amendments in Art. 3 of the Law one of the major tasks of the VET system is to ensure continuous up-dating of the professional qualification.

The LHE (the new law has been adopted in 1995, last amendments 2002) determines the status, functions, governance and financial provision of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria (Art. 1). The state provides conditions for the free development of higher education by elaborating and implementing national policy for the system of higher education and by guaranteeing the academic autonomy of the higher education schools (Art. 8). The higher schools – state and private (Art. 12) – are universities, specialized higher schools and colleges (Art. 17). In a process of discussions is a new project for amendment of the law. The main goal is to assure further coherence between the higher education system of Bulgaria and the European trends in the field of access to quality training, possibilities for mobility (introduction of the ECTS) and transparency of the acquired qualifications (introduction of the European Diploma Supplement) – key requirements for facilitating the processes of mutual recognition of qualifications.

The introduction of the European Diploma Supplement is stipulated in a new draft of an *Ordinance adopting state requirements for the documents certifying education and training completed in higher schools* that is foreseen to be adopted in 2003. The Ordinance provides for transparency of the documents, clear indications concerning the contents of the study programmes, qualification and possibilities for further education. In 2003 an *Ordinance adopting state requirements for acquiring education through distance learning in the system of higher education* has been prepared.

The education for adults provided within the framework of the activities of the MLSP is supported at regional level by the Employment Committees. They elaborate regional employment plans – subject of approval by the MLSP that include training.

The financial framework of the **national education system** is stipulated in the LNE (Art. 36, Para. 1, Points 3 and 4) and in the Law on the State Budget for the respective year. Financial resources for the state-maintained kindergartens, schools and servicing units are provided by the state budget through the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Financial resources for the municipal schools and servicing units, for the implementation of the state educational requirements and curricula are provided for and controlled by the municipalities. The annual cost per preschooler and per pupil in state-maintained and municipal kindergartens, schools and servicing units is quoted by the MES in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance in compliance with the state educational requirement (LNE, Art. 42, Para. 1).

In the system of VET the state-maintained schools are financed by: 1. the state budget; 2. municipal budgets; 3. sponsorships, donations, testaments; 4. own incomes; 5. national and international programmes; 6. other resources (LVET, Art. 59, Para. 1). Furthermore, professional colleges and centers for vocational training collect taxes for training from legal entities (LVET, Art. 59, Para. 6).

State higher schools function by virtue of property and an annual state subsidy secured by the government (LHE, Art. 13 and Art. 91). They draw up, implement balance and report on their budgets (LHE, Art. 90). The Founding Members of the private higher schools opened at their request are responsible for its' overall activity, management and financial conditions (LHE, Art. 14, Para. 2). Pursuant to Art. 9, Para. 3, P. 7 of the LHE as from 1999 – 2000 academic year the students and the PhD-students in the state higher schools pay tuition fees determined by the CM on an annual basis.

As for certain groups of people (orphans, disabled persons, persons raised in social care institutions, PhD-students in their last two years of doctoral studies, students in the higher military schools, PhD-students and students accomplishing specialization admitted under international agreements where this issue is regulated on a basis of reciprocity) higher schools in their Rules of procedure can provision exemption or payment of minimum amounts of the tuitions.

The major financial instrument for implementation of training initiatives for employed and unemployed is the National Employment Plan elaborated by the MLSP in cooperation with MES, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health and the social partners.

***The elaboration of an overall strategy for LLL in Bulgaria is still a pending task. In spite of this, some of the basic principles of LLL concept have been implemented already into the legislation that regulates the state policy in the field of education and training.***

2. *Describe how your Government ensures effective co-ordination and coherence in policy between different Ministries and departments as far as the definition and implementation of lifelong learning policies are concerned.*

The coordination of the activities and functions between different institutions in elaborating the normative basis and the measures for policy implementation is ensured either by legal regulation, or by establishment of inter-institutional working parties finding solutions to certain problems that appear in the process of working.

In respect of the national education system, for example, the study programmes and the matriculation examinations for schools financed through the budget of the Ministry of Health or of the Ministry of Culture are adopted by ordinances of the Minister of Education and Science after having conform them with the respective minister (LNE, Art. 24, Para. 5).

In partnership with the MLSP, the branch ministries and the unions of the employers the policy of the MES concerning vocational education and training is being successfully brought in line with the necessities for new competencies on the labour market through adopting flexible study programmes and forms of training.

In the system of higher education the existing practice provides for either joint elaboration of normative acts, or procedure of coordination between all ministries concerned.

In addition, representatives of the different ministries, academic community and social partners take part in the work of the National Council for Tri-partite Cooperation created in 1992.

## **II. BUILDING-UP PARTNERSHIPS**

3. *Local level partnerships. Describe measures taken in order to foster local level partnerships in the definition of actions or projects intended to promote lifelong learning for all.*

4. *Social partners. Describe how the involvement of social partners in the definition and implementation of lifelong strategy and policies is being ensured.*

The cooperation with the local authorities and the social partners is inseparable part of the elaboration of the normative documents. Thus, necessary conditions for promotion of the joint work in the field of LLL have been ensured.

In the process of economic restructuring, as from the beginning of the 90s in the sphere of industry mechanisms for tri-partite cooperation have been introduced, an element of which is vocational training of the labour force. The tri-partite collaboration is based on the rules determined by the National system for social cooperation (1992).

In the LVET the assurance of conditions for cooperation between the institutions in the system of VET and the governmental and local authorities as well as the social partners has been stipulated (Art. 1, P. 3). As a state body for coordination of the institutions for professional guidance, vocational training and education the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training has been established to the CM (LVET, Art. 41, Para. 1 and 2). The Managing Board of the Agency is composed of a Chairman and 24 members representing the ministries; organizations of employers; organizations of workers and employees nationwide (LVET, Art. 44, Para. 1). Examples for cooperation between the branch ministries, local authorities and representatives of the organizations of employers and organizations of workers and employees nationwide are related to the elaboration of the list of professions for the system of education and training and to the accomplishment of the examination procedure for acquisition of professional qualification.

Within higher education sector partnership at regional level is ensured through initiatives of the higher schools. A *Concept for vocational educational standards* evaluating the quality of acquired qualifications at the exit of the training process has been developed directed towards active involvement of social partners in the reform aiming at quality assurance in higher education. This Concept has been discussed with the academic community at a conference in Sofia, 23 April 2003.

5. *Schools and Universities. Describe specific measures aimed at fostering the participation of schools and universities in lifelong learning programmes and projects.*

The Academic governing board of each Bulgarian higher school elaborates initiatives and undertakes measures to the effect of implementing the concept of LLL. For the accomplishment of these measures special institutional structures has been established to the universities forming a network that is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science.

### **III. INSIGHT INTO THE DEMAND FOR LEARNING**

6. *Describe how your Government ensures that everyone has access to the basic skills that should be provided to all citizens as a necessary foundation for any further learning.*

The access for all to basic skills is determined in the Constitution. In Art. 53, Para. 1 and 3 school education up to the age of 16 is defined compulsory and the basic and secondary education in the state-maintained and municipal schools is gratuitous.

The provisions of Art. 53 of the Constitution is further elaborated in Art. 7 of the LNE. These provisions guarantee the implementation of the basic principle of the “education for all.” For individuals over 16 years of age evening (night) schools is available (Art. 29).

In addition, pursuant to Art. 1 of the RALNE the systems of national education establishes the bases of the continuing education ensuring the acquisition of general principles of the human knowledge.

Special attention to the basic education, to its’ renovation and enhancement is given through the LLS. In compliance with this law an *Ordinance on the distribution of the school-time* has been adopted to the effect of achieving equal basic training by each pupil through successful completion of the general education minimum.

In the *National Action Plan On Education for All* developed by the National Institute on Education in compliance with the *Dakar Framework for Action* (Senegal 2000) a special program “Priority areas” has been included which aim is to create conditions for the implementation of a contemporary, quality and compulsory for all basic education.

7. Describe recent measures aimed at developing ICT skills for the general population or for specific groups of citizens, as a means to improve access to the knowledge society.

One of the measures undertaken by the MES in the system of secondary educational during the last year in respect of the development of ICT skills is the elaboration of a separate module called “Ethics and rights of the information society.” It has been included into the syllabus for the profiled classes on ethics and rights. This is the first Bulgarian textbook that facilitates the implementation of the syllabus for profiled classes on ethics and rights, orientated towards preparation of children for competent and responsible behavior in the Internet.

As a result of the joint project called “Internet and the rights of the children” initiated by the MES and by the State Agency for Child Protection, a web-site has been prepared and is functioning as of 2003 consisting of information resources and materials for pupils, teachers and parents both in Bulgarian and English languages (<http://www.sacp.government.bg/sacp/CIS>).

The aim of the project *Rules for safe conditions of work for the pupils with the school network and with the Internet* is “to ensure and to organize the use of the educational potential of the school network and of the Internet together with the system of measures for safety and security for the pupils.”

The MLSP has elaborated a National Program “Computer education for young people” (2002-2005), which aim is to improve the access to ICT for young people by attaining knowledge and skills for working with the new technologies and thus to improve their ability for employment and for professional development.

50% of the study programs in the lifelong learning centers to the universities are orientated towards increasing the knowledge and skills for working with ICT for specialists with higher education as well as for all participants attracted by the specificity of the university lecturers and the technological equipment of the programs. The draft of the *Ordinance adopting state requirements for acquiring education through distance learning in the system of higher education* provide active and purposive acquisition of skills for working with ICT as a means for educational communication.

8. What recent measures have been taken to promote learning at work place?

The relation between education and working environment is stipulated in LVET. Art. 31, Para. 1 of that law provides for implementation of practical learning such as “educational-training, educational-production and production-educational activities.” In addition, the schools may organize individually or together with legal entities production or provision of services while observing the state educational requirements for acquiring qualification by professions.

With the *Law on Crafts*, passed in 2001, the practicing of the crafts, the organization of the craftsmanship and craftsman’s training are regularized. Gaining professional skills during the process of education contributes to the more adequate professional realization and at the same time stimulates the continuous improvement of skills by the opportunity to attain a document for apprentice, journeyman and craftsman.

An important step in providing conditions for improvement of the staff training in the administration is the creation of the **Institute for Public Administration and European Integration**. The Institute functions from year 2000 and implements training of the administration employees, with which it contributes to the modernization of the administrative system. During February 2002 the Council of Ministers approved a *Strategy for Education of the Administration Employees*, which may be considered as a medium-term programme for increasing the administrative capacity considering the envisaged EU-membership. Basically, this Strategy defines training as an important precondition for creating a modern administration in Bulgaria. It stipulates that the employees should go through obligatory and specialized training.

9. *Have specific incentives (financial, fiscal, etc.) been recently introduced to help economic sectors and / or companies (in particular SMEs) to implement lifelong learning programmes and actions in your country?*

During the last year the MLSP of Bulgaria initiated several projects orientated towards improving the conditions of the labour market and stimulating learning at a workplace. In the projects that have been prepared the stress is put on training and re-training of unemployed and young people – one of the basic social problems in our country:

1. The aim of the **project “Initiatives of the labour market”** (BG 0102.05) is to increase the level of the private initiative, the opportunities for employment and adaptation of the work force and especially of the disadvantaged groups.
2. The **project “Vocational Training”** (BG 00004.03), started in January 2002, aims to improve perspectives for employment of disadvantaged groups by improving the access to vocational training answering to the demands of the employers.
3. **“Youth Employment Aptitude Enhancement and Entrepreneurship Promotion”** (2002-2005) is a project consisting of two modules: 1. Employment of young people with higher education in public administration aiming to provide young people with opportunities for employment immediately after their successful graduation; and 2. Youth Entrepreneurship Promotion aiming to facilitate the integration of young people in the professional and social life by increasing possibilities for training and employment with the active involvement of enterprises and employers.

10. *Describe recent measures taken to support the role of learning facilitators (teachers, trainers, adult educators, guidance workers, etc.) and their adaptation to the needs resulting from the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies.*

Financing has been assured for establishment of centres for professional and vocational development of teachers and centers for educational services and qualifications. The new structures have been set up as servicing units to the MES and their budgets are allocated for financing qualification and retraining of the teaching staff.

In the system of VET in the LVET the development of Centres for qualification of trainers has been foreseen. Their tasks will be related to update and widening of teachers’ and trainers’ qualification (art. 23, Para. 22).

In 2000 a PHARE project **“Improving Vocational Education and Training”** has been completed successfully. Its’ components were directed towards ensuring further qualification for teachers and at development of their skills to use up-to-date methods for teaching and at enhancement of their foreign language qualification in the special subjects.



In the field of higher education a few higher schools opened up “Master” – programmes and post-graduate qualification programmes for acquisition of knowledge in the specificity, methodology and problems in adult training. These programmes started in 2001 and in 2003 the first graduates will complete their training.

The qualification of teachers is included in two other projects – “Modernization of Bulgarian education” financed by a loan of the IBRD (in force as of 10 January 2001) and “**Promotion of continuous qualification improvement for vocational schools’ teachers**” financed by Community programme LEONARDO DA VINCI and coordinated by the National Institute on Education.

The component “**Teachers’ qualification**” of the project “**Modernization of Bulgarian education**” concerns acquisition of new competencies for the different groups of teaching staff related to the new state educational requirements and curricula and to the use of adequate teaching methods.

As a final result of the project under the Community Programme a framework strategy for improving the qualification of teachers in their respective field of professional profile in the classroom will be created. It is foreseen to develop a system for enhancing teachers’ qualification based on demands for training as well as a network of independent local providers of qualification courses able to organize up-to-date programmes of high quality to upgrade teachers’ qualification.

#### **IV. ADEQUATE RESOURCING**

*11. Has a target for investment in human resources been established by your Government and, in the affirmative, what is that target? What progress has been achieved so far as regards the achievement of this target?*

The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria has been developed under the motto “People are the Wealth of Bulgaria.” A key priority in this governmental document is “raising the standard of living and development of social capital.”

For the accomplishment of the goals in the social and educational sphere the Government foresees certain actions among which are:

- to create conditions for quick economic growth;
- to increase flexibility of the labour market;
- to ensure quality and up-to-date education and professional realization in the country.

The education is defined as a “decisive factor for cultural development of Bulgarian people and for the growth of the human potential.”

Important nationwide priorities for the sector “Education and Science” are:

- to ensure quality and accessible for all education;
- to raise economic and social status of the teachers and professors;
- to develop the system of qualification, retraining and continuous training.

Several major goals have been laid down: updating the study programmes and their harmonization with the demands of the labour market; creating conditions for wider use of ICT in the study process and access to Internet; assuring equal access to education for all without prejudices based on gender, ethnic origin or religion; developing the talents of each child and directing his/her potential in the respective field. Parallel to this, the requirements and the normative basis will be developed in coherence with the best practices of the European countries.

12. *Has new funding been accorded to, or existing funding re-directed towards, new priority sectors (e.g., pre-school learning, non-formal and informal learning, adult education, etc.)?*

In 2002 the amendments to the LHE provides for the opportunity to enrol students in “Master”-programmes in addition to the number of students determined by the system of student tuition fees (LHE, Art. 21, P. 11). These students pay tuition fee.

As examples for new funding allocated to the LLL sector the projects in the field of VET under the National PHARE Programme for Bulgaria can be mentioned.

The project financed under PHARE 2000 “**Renovating institutions for VET**” is still running. The main goal is to raise the quality of VET through providing up-to-date equipment and its’ effective use.

“**LLL and VET**” is a project of the MES approved under PHARE 2002, which aims at improving the adaptability and competitiveness of the work force through the system of lifelong training in compliance with the labour market dynamics and in support of the more general reforms in the sector of VET. One of its’ components refers to the training of trainers.

Under PHARE 2003 the project “**Professional Qualification**” has been elaborated. Its’ overall goals are to improve the mobility and competitiveness of the work force in view of the integration to the European labour market as well as strengthening the administrative capacity for management and quality assurance of VET in Bulgaria. In the process of the implementation of the proposed project, coherence between the policy of the MLSP and of the MES and NAVET is envisaged.

13. *Describe initiatives undertaken to stimulate private investment in education (e.g., public-private partnerships).*

14. *Give examples of private-public partnerships (PPP) in the field of lifelong education and training (e.g. joint funding to develop infrastructure and/or human resources).*

The LHE stipulates enrolment of students in university programmes based on contracts signed between the respective higher schools and the enterprises that correspond to the regional and specific economic demands (LHE, Art. 8).

In the VET system as examples for partnership between public authorities and private sector the centres for vocational training (CVT) and the centers for information and career guidance (CICG) can be pointed out. The CVT and CICG can be state-maintained, municipal or private as well as Bulgarian with foreign participation and foreign (LVET, Art. 22, Para. 1). Their activity is related to vocational training of adults and career guidance for pupils, students and adults.

## **V. FACILITATING ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

15. *Describe measures taken to improve access to learning, by removing the most important barriers to learning (age, social barriers, geographical barriers, motivation, etc.).*

One of the mechanisms to facilitate **access to education** is stipulated in Art. 31 of the LNE, where, in addition to the traditional day-type of training, an evening, part-time, by correspondence, individual, external, and distance types of training are provisioned.

**VET** is being developed following the principle of acquiring basic knowledge and skills that are further upgraded in the process of LLL with general vocational and specific knowledge and skills.

In view of the extension of the opportunities for training by professions as well as in view of the access to life-wide vocational training in 2003 another amendment to the LVET (31 March 2003) has been adopted. The right of the CVT to train and to certify vocational training has been regulated.

The measures undertaken so far at national level to the effect of facilitating the access to training include:

- Elaboration of a *National strategy for equal chance for disabled people*. Considering the specific necessities of disabled people for vocational training, the MES is ready to prepare modular study programmes. These specific programmes will allow training at different stages of professional activities and upgrade of knowledge and skills according to the abilities and necessities of the trainees.
- By virtue of the LVET the acquisition of professional qualification is regulated through framework programmes. Such a programmes provide opportunities for updating and enhancing completed professional qualification during the whole period of professional activity, without age restrictions. Secondary legislation acts regulate the terms and conditions for training and carrier development according to individual abilities and necessities of the trainees.
- State educational requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions are being elaborated. The requirements provide for the conditions for training to the end of acquiring professional competencies as a process that accompanies life-wide carrier development.
- The MES is an active participant in the elaboration of the International Francophone Agency project on development of the VET in the Central and Eastern European countries. Standards for acquisition of professional qualification and pilot introduction of bilingual training by professions are in a process of development. The expected results are related to extension of the group of trainees – young people and adults – as well as to recognition of professional qualifications in the European countries. The overall aims of the project are in coherence with the European Strategy for LLL – unification of the standards and of the study methods while taking into account the national particularities and good practices’ dissemination.

All formal restrictions before the access to higher education have been eliminated by the adoption of the LHE in 1995. The new changes in this respect as of 2002 allow access after successful passing of the matriculation examinations. Another component directed towards facilitating the access is the attention given to the development of distance learning by elaboration of criteria for maintaining its’ quality (the draft of an Ordinance on distance learning mentioned under point 7).

16. *Groups at special risk of exclusion*. Describe measures addressed at promoting lifelong learning amongst groups at special risk of exclusion from the knowledge-based society (migrants, people living outside urban centres or in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, single parent women, etc.).

The **project “Social integration”** (BG 0102.06) developed by the MLSP aims at facilitating social and economic integration of Roma population and other ethnic minorities, as well as of disabled and other groups of disadvantaged people by providing them with opportunities for training, employment and entrepreneurship. The main results of the project will be to overcome social segregation and to extend qualification of disadvantaged people. Special centres for information and training services will be established in order to support these social groups.

Another initiative of the MLSP directed towards assuring employment and social integration of unemployed persons is the **National Programme “From Social Aid to Employment.”** The ambition is to create working places for municipal- and state-driven activities, to raise the abilities of unemployed for employment by involving them into activities that will improve their knowledge and skills, and to enroll them in education for acquiring basic knowledge and professional qualification.

The access to higher education for groups in special risk of exclusion is regulated in the legislation by the LHE of 1995. In the new provisions of the Law that were under discussions in May 2003 it is envisaged to encourage higher schools to elaborate study programmes for distance form of learning geared to disabled people. According to the existing provisions Art. 70, Para. 2 of the Law stipulates for that: “Students, PhD-students and students undergoing specialization – orphans, blinds, deaf, I and II group disabled, mothers with 6-year-old children have the right on special relief regulated in the Rules of Procedure of the respective higher school.”

*17. Youth. What specific measures address improving the participation in lifelong learning of young people, not covered by the formal systems of education and training?*

In compliance with the normative provisions adopted with the amendment to the LNE in 2002 “the children with special educational needs and/or suffering from chronic diseases shall be educated in schools integrally.” When all possibilities for education in state-maintained and municipal schools are exhausted and upon receiving the will of the parents in written, “children with special educational needs and/or suffering from chronic diseases enter special schools and servicing units” (Art. 27, Para. 3 and 4).

In 2002 in the sphere of VET entered into force certain changes in the legislative basis related to facilitating the access to training of young people with specific educational needs: “for pupils with specific educational needs, vocational education and training shall be provided according to their respective disability” (LVET, Art. 32, Para. 1). The amendments to the LVET envisage ensuring VET for pupils raised in social-care institutions (Art. 32b), for pupils with deviant behaviour (Art. 32c) as well as for prisoners (Art. 32d).

In addition to the legislative provisions further measures for training of young people who are not covered by the formal system of education are elaborated under the YOUTH Programme as well as by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

*18. Ageing population. Have specific measures been taken addressed at improving the participation in lifelong learning for mature workers and citizens who have not had the benefits of post-compulsory education and who need to upgrade their competencies to remain in the workforce, or senior citizens preparing for retirement?*

The adults are not excluded as a specific group from the general conditions providing opportunities for education and training. In order to facilitate further their access to education in various universities and institutes extramural and distance types of studies are organized in the subjects “Marketing” and “Management.” The so-called “free faculties” to the different universities provide also good possibilities for adults’ training according to the necessities and experience of the trainees.

State-maintained universities organize continuous education and training courses at respective university degrees in various specialties. The most popular among them are foreign-language, marketing, ICT, banking, and public administration courses.

The private universities offer continuous vocational training and vocational education by professions taking into account the requirements of the study contents.

In the VET system by virtue of Art. 19, Para. 4 of the LVET the vocational schools and gymnasias may organize training also for persons after 16 years of age.

19. *How are guidance and counselling services being developed to meet the needs of specific target groups and to raise awareness of the benefits of learning?*

Career guidance services and consultations are mainly developed for the VET sphere. These services are normatively regulated by the LVET (Art. 5, Para. 1 of 2002) – “the career guidance provides information, consultations and counselling for pupils and other persons as regards their choice of profession and career development.” The career guidance is a task of the Centres for information and career guidance quoted above (Art. 21 of 2002).

Certain higher schools have established centres for career guidance as a result of projects under different European educational programmes. Nevertheless, the system for career guidance in the higher education sector is not thoroughly developed.

## **V. CREATING A LEARNING CULTURE**

20. *Describe measures taken to promote positive perceptions of learning and raising awareness of its entitlements and benefits, at pre-school, school and higher education levels, as well as in youth organisations and among the adult population.*

Creating a “learning culture” is related to ensuring of appropriate infrastructure, financing and opportunities for a continuous process of learning. The “culture of learning” is mainly associated with the school system, including the system of vocational education and training, and in most of the cases it has been examined inadequately, incompletely and without considering its’ interrelations with other social phenomena. Necessary finance resources should be allocated as well as a number of structural and institutional obstacles should be overcome to the effect of creating a “learning culture.”

In spite of this the percentage of participation in the system of higher education and of continuous training shows high level of motivation. As of the 80s the number of students has been gradually increasing and in 2001 the number of students enrolled into the higher schools is twice bigger than in the beginning of the 90s – in 1988/89 around 127 000 students have been admitted while in 2001 around 234 604 students have been studied (*Higher Education 2001*, Part II, Sofia 2001).

21. *How does the formal systems of education and training take account of the life-wide perspective and, in particular, how are entry, progression and recognition requirements in the formal sector (e.g. mechanisms for accreditation of prior learning, methodologies and systems for assessment and validation of competence) being adapted accordingly?*

The problem of certification of qualification acquired out-side the formal systems of education and training is a subject of wide discussions. National and regional conferences are being organized with the participation of the academic community and the society in order to promote the opportunities and perspectives of the LLL. The last major event in this respect was the international conference in Sofia “Lifelong Learning”, November 2002.

## **V. STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE**

*22. Describe the general framework for improving quality of lifelong learning provision and, in particular, for evaluating lifelong strategies, programs and projects in your country?*

The strategy on LLL is in a process of exploring and elaboration.

*23. Is there a mechanism to regularly review these strategies and to assess their relevance, effectiveness and synergy with other Government policies and initiatives (lifelong learning and employment, innovation, research and development, etc)?*

Until now there does not exist a unified coordinating mechanism for evaluation of the LLL activities in the system of higher education. However, it will be implemented as an integral part into the strategy mentioned above under point 22.