

**Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe:
the Contribution of the Education System**

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Lifelong Learning in 2010: The Role of Institutions in Bulgaria

LLL2010 SP5 Country Report

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Lifelong Learning in 2010: The Role of Institutions in BULGARIA
LLL2010 SP5 Country Report

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The Role of Bulgarian Educational Institutions for Promotion of Access of Adults to Formal Education



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Chapter 1:

Profile of the Bulgarian Educational Institutions

1.1. Target groups for access strategies

- *Early school leavers*

In recent years in Bulgaria the number of *school leavers* is still relatively high compared to the average numbers in other countries of the European Union. The fact that there are quite a few children who leave school at a very early age is even more disturbing. Some of them do not even enroll in school at all.

According to data of the National Statistical Institute, in recent years the number of school leavers is as follows:

Year	Total percentage of all students	Total number	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Post-secondary vocational colleges
2003/2004	3,1	31 552	9 221	11 292	11 010	29
2004/2005	3,0	28 897	7 433	10 859	10 521	84
2005/2006	2,9	27 255	7 113	10 197	9 873	72
2006/2007	3,24	29 348	7 822	11 557	9 544	425

Source: Education in the Republic of Bulgaria, NSI, 2008, p. 106-107.

It is evident that the percentage of middle school leavers is the largest. The fact that following the trend of decrease in numbers of school leavers during 2004 and 2005, an increase in these numbers during 2006-7 is observed is alarming.

The National Programme for a more comprehensive access of students of mandatory school age is implemented in order to overcome the problem with school leavers. Free transportation, textbooks and snacks are provided for pupils from small towns and villages. Mandatory education for children in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten groups, as well as for those in school, has been introduced since the academic 2003/2004 year. This measure is especially important for children from Roma and Turkish ethnic minorities, because pre-school education gives them an opportunity to learn the literary Bulgarian language.

According to data from Eurostat, the percentage of *early school leavers*¹ in Bulgaria from 2001 to 2005 has remained relatively high (over 20%) in relation to the total number of individuals of the 18 to 24 year age group. The value of this indicator in 2006 was 18% and in 2007 – 16,6%. In the Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria the 10% level of this indicator is planned to be reached in 2015, which is also the goal of the European Union member countries in the context of the European Employment Strategy. (Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2008-2015, p. 61.)

The main reasons for school drop-out are:

- *economic* – low income families; unemployed parents and low economic status of the family; commercialization and increase of cost of the education, etc.;
- *cultural* – the traditions, customs, values of the different ethno-cultural groups; lack of interest of the parents in their children's education; insufficient parental control, etc.;
- *personal* – lack of motivation for education, negative attitude towards school, difficulties in learning;
- *organisational-administrative* – inconsistent policy for solving the problems of the school leavers; lack of an adequate system of control in the schools; insufficiently developed forms and methods for supporting students who are at risk of dropping out of school.

The access to secondary school education for children from towns and villages is considerably different. Many villages do not have secondary schools. On the average village children attend school three years less than their peers from the cities. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of adequate transportation and related expenses. The fact that in recent years the number of children living in rural regions who complete their secondary school education is decreasing is alarming.

¹ Early school leavers are individuals between the ages of 18 and 24, who have not completed secondary education, and do not study in the formal educational system, and do not have access to education which can enable them to acquire secondary school diploma or professional qualification degree.

- ***Ethnic minorities***

According to last census data (National Statistical Institute, Census, 2001, <http://www.nsi.bg/census/census.htm>) of the population between the ages of 25 to 64, the ethnic Bulgarians are the most educated ones, 23.5% of whom have with higher education, 53.0% have secondary education, 20.7% have middle school education, and only 0.4% are illiterate. 53.0% of the Turkish ethnic population have middle school education, 23.7% have secondary school education and 2.7% have higher education. The percentage of the illiterate Turkish people between the ages of 25 and 64 is 3.5%. The most unfavourable educational structure is this of the Roma ethnic minority. According to the census of 2001, the Roma population in Bulgaria is 370 908, or 4.79% of the total population. There are very few Roma who have completed higher and secondary education – only 7.2%, middle school - 44.9%, and primary school – 27.4%. 7.8% of the Roma have no education and 12.7% are illiterate. The percentage of the illiterate adult Roma during the period between the last two censuses has increased with about 50 percent.

- ***Long-term unemployed***

A clear trend of lower unemployment rates can be observed in recent years in Bulgaria. Data on unemployment rates in the country for 2007 and 2008 are given in the table below.

	2007	2008
Unemployment factor - %	6.9	5.6
Unemployment factor (aged 15 to 64) - %	6.9	5.7
Unemployment factor (aged 15 to 24) - %	15.1	12.7
Long-term unemployment factor - %	4.1	2.9
Discouraged individuals - total – thousands	205.4	151.9
Discouraged individuals (aged 15 to 64) – thousands	201.1	149.9

The total number of unemployed in 2008 was 199 700, 103 900 of whom were men and 95 800 are women. The number of the long-term unemployed was 103 400, 52 100 of whom were men and 51 300 women. The long-term unemployment factor is 2,9%, 2,7% for men, and 3,1% for women.

Since 2006 a selection method is applied among unemployed individuals in order to improve their access to education, which aims to include them in professional qualification trainings. The trainings are organized by the National Employment Agency and priority is given to long-term unemployed, uneducated individuals, people without professional qualification, young people, people with disabilities, etc. These trainings are made possible by the implementation of literacy, qualification and re-qualification programmes, such as:

- *From Social Welfare to Employment, Beautiful Bulgaria Project;*
- *National Programme for Employment and Professional Training for People with Disabilities; National Programme “Computer Training for Young People”;*
- *Project for School Leavers (Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2008-2015. (p. 21)*

- ***Disabled pupils***

In recent years the number of children in specialized schools has decreased. In the academic 2001/2002 year the total number of pupils in specialized schools was 17 563, and during the academic 2006/2007 year – 9532.

The number of children and pupils with special educational needs, of resource teachers and of other specialists who support integrated education has increased as a result of implementing activities aimed at establishing a supportive environment. During the academic 2005/2006 year 1538 children and pupils were integrated in school and supported by 223 resource teachers, compared to over 4000 pupils and over 900 teachers and other specialists during the academic 2006/2007 year. Twenty-eight resource centers were established in the country. They support the integration and education of children and pupils with special needs. Children

with special needs are enrolled in 770 comprehensive schools and in 183 kindergartens throughout the country (*Equal Opportunities Strategy for People with Disabilities 2008-2015*).

Despite the positive trends, compared to other European countries, the percentage of pupils enrolled in specialized schools, without any opportunities to integrate in the society is still very high.

- ***Orphans***

Each year, around 300 young people leave the institutions for children without parental care after they turn 18. Only about a quarter of these children have completed their secondary education. The rest are with very low education or are even illiterate.

1.2. Funding sources for formal and non-formal education, and prison education

1.2.1. Funding of formal education

- *Primary and secondary education*, including the education at prisons, is funded by the state budget

- *Vocational education*

The state and the municipal vocational schools, the centers for vocational training and the centers for qualification of trainees are financed by the state budget, the municipalities, donations from different sources, by international programmes and other revenues. The educational programmes which do not comply with the state educational requirements are financed by physical and legal persons according to a signed contract.

- *Higher education*

The state universities and higher schools are financed mainly by the state as well as by the student taxes and different projects. The students in the state higher schools pay taxes which are determined by the Council of Ministers, and whose amount is up to 30% of the normatively fixed expenditure for the particular professional field. The lowest taxes are in the fields of social sciences (between 140 and 200 Euro per academic year) and natural sciences (between 150 and 250 Euro per academic year). In engineering the students pay about 250 Euro per academic year. The highest taxes are paid by students in medicine and arts – between 400 and 500 Euro per academic year.

The budget of the private higher educational institutions is formed by the students' taxes as well as by donations and different projects. The students in the private higher schools pay taxes which are determined by the corresponding higher schools. The average fee at private higher schools is about 1000 Euro per academic year.

1.2.2. Funding of non-formal education

After the passing of the *National Strategy on Continuing Professional Education* for 2005-2010 (2004), action plans are passed which map out the implementation of specific initiatives in the area of non-formal professional education, as well as, their funding institutions are passed each year.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the ministry which is mainly responsible for the financing of the non-formal (professional) education. It uses three main sources of funding:

- *State budget funds*

The Employment Agency is the implementing agency which redistributes and manages the funds. Lists of the training institutions and the relevant professions are submitted to the

employment offices, for referral of the unemployed. The participation of the training institutions is carried out by tender. After completing the course the unemployed trainees receive a professional qualification certificate for their elected specialty. Besides professional courses, language courses are also carried out. According to the Employment Promotion Law (article 69), the trainees are not only exempt from paying fees, but also receive scholarships, as well as funding for transportation and lodgings.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy funds non-formal education also through projects which it implements. For instance, in 2009 the Ministry organizes, carries out and finances trainings within the following projects:

- *Re-Socialization of Prisoners through Training for Professional Qualification* – 468 prisoners will be trained by attending literacy courses, qualification courses and computer literacy skills courses.
 - *Private Business – Change of Profession* – 600 people will be trained.
 - *We will Succeed Again* – 1000 people will be trained.
-
- *Human Resource Development Operational Programme and PHARE Programme Funds*
- The National Employment Plan for 2009 provides for trainings for 20 000 people with state budget funds and for twice as much trainees - over 47 000 – with funds from the Human Resource Development Operational Programme and PHARE Programme.
-
- *International projects funds, such as:*
 - The Bulgarian – Austrian educational project: *Young Entrepreneur*;
 - The Bulgarian – German project: *Promoting the Professional Education and Employment of Adults*.

According to the 2009 Action Plan in pursuance of the *National Strategy on Continuing Professional Education* for 2005-2010, the state budget funds are allocated for the non-

formal education, as well as the budgets of the *Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics and Energetics, and also by the Implementing Agency for Stimulating Small and Medium Sized Enterprises*.

The non-formal training is also funded by the *enterprises* themselves.

According to the data from CVTS-2 and CVTS-3 for the period 1999-2005, the percentage of training enterprises increased negligibly – from 28% up to 29%; there is also an increase in the participants in CVT courses and in the enterprises providing CVT courses. However, the number of hours in training per employee remained unchanged – 4. At the same time the percentage of enterprises with a training budget diminished from 15% down to 6% and of the enterprises with a training centre - from 7% down to 5%.

The 2009 Action Plan in pursuance of the *National Strategy on Continuing Professional Education*, stipulates that medium-sized and large enterprises co-finance jointly with the European Social Fund and the state budget the training of 38 000 people.

1.3. Background information on availability of free childcare or reduced childcare fees for socio-economically disadvantaged groups

According to the amendments made in 2009 in the Local Tax Law, the National Assembly entitles the municipalities to determine the amount of all local fees and taxes, including the nursery and kindergarten fees being part of them. The monthly fees for day nurseries and kindergartens in Sofia (the biggest municipality in Bulgaria) are 40 leva (20 Euro), and for the weekly nurseries and kindergartens - 50 leva (25 Euro). These fees are very low, compared to the state subsidy – “Since January 1st 2009 the state subsidy per child is 1480 leva for the daily kindergartens” (Bisserka Ilieva, municipal councilor, http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php).

In addition, there are number of concessions that are provided for socio-economically disadvantaged families:

- a) The fees for single parents are reduced by 50 percent.
- b) If two children from one family are accepted in the same or different municipal kindergartens, the fee for the second child is reduced by 50 percent.
- c) Fees are waived in the following cases:
 - children whose parents have I or II group disability, children whose parents are unknown, orphans, children whose parents have perished in work accidents and natural disasters, children whose parents have died during official duty;
 - the third and each subsequent child of parents with many children;
 - if the child is absent from kindergarten, their parents do not pay a fee for the time period while they are absent, provided that they have warned the director in advance.

As a whole, the nursery and kindergarten fees in the country are very low, and the fees for socio-economically disadvantaged families are further reduced.

1.4. Background information on availability of free access or reduced fees for formal and non-formal education for socio-economically disadvantaged groups

Schools that provide primary, middle and secondary education are a core element of the formal educational system. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria education is mandatory up to the age of 16. Secondary education lasts 11 or 12 years – from the age of 6/7 till the age of 18/19 and is free of charge for the whole period of studies. There are a number of concessions that are normatively fixed:

- free textbooks for all first grade pupils;
- free textbooks for ethnic minorities children from second to fourth grade, as part the measures stipulated in the *National Programme for Full Access of*

Students of Compulsory School Age 2005-2008, passed by the National Assembly. These measures are still applied at the present moment;

- free snacks for children from first to fourth grade as part of the measures stipulated in the *National Programme for Full Access of Students of Compulsory School Age 2005-2008*;
- free transportation for children from small towns and villages where there are no schools to bigger towns with schools as part of the measures stipulated in the *National Programme for Full Access of Students of Compulsory School Age 2005-2008*;
- providing financial aid to children from socio-economically disadvantaged families in the amount of 80 leva (40 Euro) in the beginning of their first year in school;
- giving monthly allowances per child (child allowances) until he/she completes secondary education, but not if he/she is over 20 years of age. (Monthly allowances are given to families with an average income per family member for the preceding 12 months, which is less or equal to 300 leva (150 Euro), provided that the child: a) is not living in a state institution; b) regularly attends school until he/she completes secondary education, but not if he/she is over 20 years of age, unless this is impossible due to health reasons; c) lives permanently in the country).

The monthly allowances given by the state, are rather symbolic in terms of the costs necessary for raising a child. The amount of monthly child support is as follows:

- for the first child – 25levs (13 Euro)
- for the second child – 25levs (13 Euro)
- for twins - 37,5 leva (19 Euro) per child

With the exception of secondary education all other levels of formal education are paid: vocational centers, post-secondary vocational colleges, universities (higher schools), post-graduate specialization, Masters programmes.

According to the Higher Education Act (Article 68) some disadvantaged groups are accepted on "simplified terms provided that they have successfully taken part in the admission examinations:

- people with permanent disabilities and diminished work capacity of 70 and over 70%;
- war veterans;
- orphans;
- mothers with three or more children.”

The law, however, does not exempt the above mentioned groups from paying tuition fees. Article 68 is quoted in the rules and regulations of many universities and higher education schools, the latter having the right to give additional concessions to such groups. For example, the Southwestern University “Neofit Rilski” exempts the groups mentioned in article 68 from paying tuition fees. The rules and regulation of universities and higher education schools also stipulate some forms of support for the students:

- „social” scholarships in cases of proven low family income;
- scholarship for good grades;
- preferential treatment in terms of dormitory accommodation.

Funding for non-formal education is provided from the: a) state budget, b) business organizations, c) students’ tuition fees.

1.5. Distinctive features of contexts for learning in your country that impact on access and social inclusion issues

One major institutional factor affecting the access to education, is the setting up and maintaining of a wide network of educational institutions, offering varied and flexible forms of education. From this point of view, one can claim that in Bulgaria there are relatively well developed institutional prerequisites for the development and promotion of adult education.

1.5.1. Primary and secondary education

- *Evening schools*

According to the Law of National Education evening and mixed schools are opened for students above 16 years old. In the academic 2005/2006 year there were in Bulgaria 25 evening schools with 2618 students. The students who graduated from evening schools have the same rights as the graduates from the daily schools.

- *Schools at prisons*

Part of the formal educational system are the schools at prisons where students above 16 years are educated in all grades of basic and secondary schools (for more details see 1.6.1.). In 2006 there were 6 such schools with more than 450 students. Both the evening schools and the schools at the prisons are state owned and financed.

1.5.2. Vocational education

The Law of Vocational Education and Training from 1999 defines the different educational institutions which can provide adult vocational education - vocational schools, vocational high schools, vocational colleges, centers for vocational training, centers for qualification of trainees. Ministries, municipalities, employers' organizations, trade unions and single employers are also entitled to organize training for professional qualification. The Law envisages the following programmes (as well as their corresponding entry requirements) for training of individuals older than 16 years: 1) 1 year Programmes A for initial vocational training for people who have completed at least 6th-grade; 2) 1 year Programmes B for initial vocational training for people who have completed either a secondary education grade or a full secondary education; 3) 4 or 5 year Programmes C for vocational education for people who have completed basic education; 4) 2 year Programmes D for vocational education for people who have completed secondary education; 5) Programmes E for continuing vocational training whose duration is stipulated with specific documents related to vocational education.

All these programmes are organized as qualification courses. The forms of training and their duration are determined by the training institution and can be coordinated with the warrantor of the vocational education. The programmes A, B, C and D are specified for each profession and are harmonized with the state educational requirements for professional qualification. The remaining programmes are specified with the documents related to vocational education. The vocational schools and the vocational gymnasiums are entitled to carry out training in these programmes. The organization as well as the material and financial provision of the training are arranged with a contract between the school director and the financial provider. The state educational requirements for professional qualification are elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the branch ministries, the employers' organizations and the national trade unions. All the educational programmes for people older than 16 years which do not comply with the state educational requirements are approved by the National Agency for vocational education and training.

- *Vocational high schools*

Adult education is carried out throughout the country where there are vocational high schools. In 2008 professional qualification courses for adults have been conducted in 187 vocational high schools (out of a total of 405). These courses are organized mainly for the unemployed and are funded by the state.

- *Vocational training centers*

Vocational training centers are part of the formal education system – 678 centers were licensed by the end of 2008.

Vocational training centers teach pupils over 16 years of age and function according to the Vocational Education and Training Law. The Vocational training centers issue certificates for vocational qualification in 4-different degrees in ascending complexity, variability, and personal responsibility and in accordance with the state educational requirements. Vocational training centers are licensed and coordinated by the National Agency for Vocational education and training (NAVET) established with the Vocational Education and Training Act in 1999; it is a Council of Ministers' body.

The state and the municipal vocational schools, the centers for vocational training and the centers for qualification of trainees are financed by the state budget, the municipalities, donations from different sources, by international programmes and other revenues. The educational programmes which do not comply with the state educational requirements are financed by physical and legal persons according to a signed contract.

1.5.3. Higher education

- *Colleges*

Colleges offer a Baccalaureate degree education. In 2008 there were 41 colleges in Bulgaria, 10 of them independent, and the remaining 31 part of the structure of higher educational institutions. Nine of the independent colleges are private. 10% of all students attended colleges in 2008.

- *Education in higher schools*

Students in higher schools can chose among full-time, part-time, evening and independent forms of education. Higher institutions offer distance education, as well. In 2008 the total number of Bulgarian students in higher educational insitutions was 264 463; 78 787 participated in part-time and evening training, 9 897 in distance education, and 935 were independent students.

According to article 70 of the Higher Education Act, students can elect a second major which they can study simultaneously with the first one and thus receive diplomas for both specialties.

- *Centers for updating qualification and for re-qualification at the higher education schools*

According to article 43 of the Higher Education Act, the higher educational institutions are entitled to conduct trainings for updating the qualification. On these grounds all higher education schools offer different programmes and a large part of these activities is institutionalized and carried out by different units – centers for updating qualification and for re-qualification at the higher education schools.

1.5.4. Developed network of non-formal education institutions

A wide network of institutions specialized in non-formal education is operating in the country. They offer predominantly vocational training. Language and computer courses are also offered (see 1.6.2.).

The main problem in terms of access to education is that there are still no established procedures for the recognition and accreditation of non-formal education in the process of transition to formal education.

1.6. Brief introductory overview regarding the status and extent of prison and non-formal education

1.6.1. Prison education in Bulgaria

A) Organization of prison education

An organized process of general and vocational training of prisoners is carried out in the Bulgarian prisons. Most of the prisoners are illiterate, with low educational level and lack of professional qualification.

Schools in prison are opened and closed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) upon the proposal of the Ministry of Justice. Funding for the educational activities, with the exception of the school in the reformatory home "Boychinovtsi" is performed by the same Ministry. The reformatory school "Boychinovtsi" is funded by the Ministry of Justice.

General and vocational-technical training in schools is conducted according to curricula and programmes of the Ministry of Education and Science, which also carries out the pedagogical and methodological monitoring and control of the educational process. The organization of the educational process is regulated by the Penalty Enforcement Law. Documents for

completed education, as well as for acquired specialty and qualification of the prisoners are issued according to the standard forms in country.

The number of pedagogical staff in the schools ranges between 100 and 120 people, and minimum 1/3 of the staff has earned a qualification degree in the respective specialty.

Those wishing to obtain or continue their education must submit a request accompanied by the transcripts of their last completed class, a medical certificate and a current report, based on the personality assessment of the prisoner. Those who have life sentences cannot participate in the educational process, as well as those who are under strict confinement until their status is changed.

Class work in prisons is placed on the same footing as other work that prisoners do – 8 hours of class work is equal to 8 hours in production and customer service work.

There is no established system that can monitor the professional realization of those who get out of prison. The information received is rather random. About 10 people have completed their secondary education at prison schools, acquired higher professional qualification, and have discontinued their criminal lifestyle.

B) Schools in prisons

At the present moment there are six schools that operate in the Bulgarian prisons:

- *Evening vocational school at the prison for women and girls in Sliven*

The school offers education to students from 1st to 12th grades, and students from grades 5 to 12 receive also vocational training in clothes production. During the last five years the average annual number of students attending the school was 80-90. During the academic 2006-2007 year 112 students attended the school and 56 have successfully graduated.

In recent years the following trends have emerged:

- a relatively constant number of prisoners are entering school - about 35% of the female prison population each year apply to school;
- a relatively high number of illiterate prisoners or ones with low educational status are included in the educational process;
- about 50% of the prisoners entering school have primary education – 1st to 4th grade;
- the lowest percentage of school leavers are in secondary school – 11% on average;
- about 25 % of the ones who are interested in studying leave school.

Some of the main reasons for female prisoners to drop out of school and not finish it are:

- their low basic and functional literacy – the highest percentage of school leavers are from first to fourth grade – on average 32%;
- long periods of interruption of education, which leads to secondary illiteracy and inability to learn;
- lack of learning habits and insufficient motivation;
- the value system of the prisoners, for a large part of them education is not part of their life priorities;
- about 18% do not finish the school year due to their release from prison.

- *Evening vocational school at the prison for repeat offenders in Lovetch*

The school offers education to students from grades 1 to 12, and students from grades 5 to 12 receive also vocational training in mechanical engineering and construction. Over the past five years the average annual number of students was between 90 and 100. During the academic 2006-2007 year 100 students attended the school and 53 successfully graduated

from it. The percentage of prisoners attending the Lovetch prison school is higher than that in other prisons.

In recent years the following trends have emerged:

- a relatively steady admissions rate;
 - the learning facilities are insufficient – there are not enough classrooms and teaching materials;
 - there is a relatively large number of school leavers;
 - the students that drop out of school are mainly from the introductory course levels, and a large percentage of them leave during their first month at school.
- *The evening vocational training school at the prison for first time offenders in Stara Zagora*

The school offers education to students from grades 1 to 12, and after they complete fifth grade the students receive also vocational training in construction, mechanical engineering and furniture production. Over the past five years the average annual number of the students was between 300 and 330. During the academic 2006-2007 year 271 students attended the school and 199 have successfully graduated from it.

During the academic 2003/2004 year the school opened four new introductory level classes at the Cherna Gora prison dormitory school at the prison in Stara Zagora.

The percentage of students from this school who left on their own is the highest in the upper classes upon their admission in 9th grade. The main reason being - difficulties in learning.

- *Secondary school with professional qualification profile at the prison for repeat offenders in Vratsa*

The school offers education to students from grades 1 to 12, and after they complete fifth grade students receive also vocational training in furniture production. Over the past five years the average annual number of the students was between 110 and 130. During the academic 2006-2007 year 109 students attended the school and 76 have successfully graduated from it.

The facilities at this school are in poor condition – even the heating in the classrooms and the workshops is not sufficient. In order to provide adequate vocational training, the school will need more advanced contemporary equipment for practical exercises in the workshops. Here, as in other prison schools, most of the admitted prisoners do not have any learning habits.

- *Middle school with vocational training at the prison in Sofia (Kazichene prison dormitory)*

The school offers education to students from grades 1 to 8, and after they complete fifth grade the students receive also vocational training in metallurgy. Over the past five years, the average annual number of the students was between 60 and 70. During the academic 2006-2007 year 63 students attended the school and 36 have successfully graduated from it.

Here are some data about this school:

- 45-50% of the prisoners are deprived of education;
- about 25-55% do not finish the school year;
- the main reason for giving up school is the poor command of Bulgarian language (most of the prisoners are of Roma origin).

- *Secondary comprehensive school “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” at the reformatory school for juvenile delinquents in Boychinovci*

The school offers education to students from grades 1 to 12. Over the past five years the average annual number of the students was between 80 and 100. During the academic 2006-2007 year 83 students attended the school and 40 have successfully graduated from it. After the students become of legal age, the School Board can propose upon authorization by the prosecutor in charge, that the minors continue their education and remain in the reformatory until the age of 20.

In recent years the following trends have emerged:

- short stay of minors at "Boychinovtsi" reformatory school, which impedes learning;
- the students are absent for long periods of time from school due to the investigation process;
- no incidents of students who have applied to withdraw from school;
- very few students who are released from the reformatory school continue their education.

The main problems in the implementation of the educational process stem from the students' lack of skills and learning habits and the difficulties they encounter during the learning process.

1.6.2. Non-formal education in Bulgaria

Non-formal education and training is provided by enterprises, community centers (*chitalishta*), NGOs, foreign cultural centers, private educational units.

During the last years at the state level target oriented programmes with LLL modules have been developed: National Plan for Combating Poverty and Isolation, National Programme for Roma People Qualification and Literacy, National Programme for Training of Disabled People, National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

According to the Employment Promotion Law (2001) the professional training for adults is organized not only by the Ministry of Education and Science but also by the Employment Agency. About 28% of the enterprises carry out non-formal continuing professional education.

According to the data from the first Adult Education Survey “employer-provided activities account for almost 70% of all non-formal activities in Bulgaria (the weighted EU average is almost 40%) while non-formal institutes provide about 15% of activities” (Boateng, 2009: 8).

Based on the regulation of article 40 of the Law on Vocational Education and Training, a procedure was initiated for recognizing the results of non-formal learning – a prerequisite for enhancing the popularity and quality of vocational training and for promotion of lifelong learning. Unfortunately, there are still no developed mechanisms for the recognition of the results of non-formal and individual learning in the formal education system on a national or institutional level (this goal is set in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning to be reached in 2013, see 1.8.)

The Community centers (chitalishta) play a crucial role in relation to the personal and citizenship perspectives on LLL. Being unique traditional self-managed units in Bulgaria,

they function as “training fields” for acquiring skills for managing collective activities. In the smaller towns they are the only organizations that provide access to libraries, internet and other types of information. Given their multitude (there are 3 450 chitalishta listed in the register of the Ministry of Culture), location and institutional sustainability, they may be regarded as a unique national resource for the implementation of various educational initiatives, including LLL.

Some community centers (chitalishta) conduct qualification courses for adults following curricula with internationally recognized certificates. In recent years, the modern information and communication technologies have been introduced and utilized in the community centers. Such examples are the 25 IT training centers established under the “Chitalishte”² project in small and remote settlements licensed by Microsoft and Cisco Local Academies and 2 Regional Cisco Academies. The trainees who pass the full on-line training course receive internationally recognized certificates and are successful on the labor market. Most of the community centers organize courses concerning different aspects of the work and social activities.

The non-government sector in Bulgaria has the following main characteristics:

- young, actively developing sector;
- 96% of the existing NGOs are established after 1989;
- in the period 1999 – 2006 the number of the NGOs increased 2,5 times;
- more favourable regulatory system for NGOs was developed after 2000 (a special Act for Non-Commercial Public Bodies was adopted, tax reductions were introduced);

² *Development and Citizen Participation through the Network of “Chitalishta” Project* (1997 – 2004) of the Ministry of Culture and UNDP. The project’s goal was to promote the process of transformation of the “chitalishta” into modern community centers by building their institutional capacity and developing new models and practices.

- NGOs activities cover different areas; their main activities are concentrated in the following fields: social sphere – 21%; training and research – 14%; community development – 12%; business organisations – 11%; environment – 9%.

Experience shows that the institutions (organizations) conducting non-formal training can be very flexible in their choice of form, content and means of education. Preferred forms of education are: seminars, short courses, lectures, club activities, consultations. In content, they are different - they provide new information on alternative forms of employment; conduct motivational courses. The topics range from: acquiring basic computer literacy skills, using the Internet and various software products, language training to alternative agricultural production (e.g., apiculture, viticulture), etc. Most of the training courses are targeted at the employed: people with different social status, occupation and income, but also at the unemployed, unqualified people or ones with low qualification, people at risk or disadvantaged groups. Non-formal training is usually more inexpensive and is conducted in the locality, which makes it more easily accessible for people who have mobility difficulties, especially in smaller towns. Non-formal education is not always directed towards helping people to acquire a profession and to prepare them for the labor market, but also towards increasing the social activity of the population in the new market conditions and the dynamically growing economy.

1.7. Summary of most significant findings from SP3 that impact upon access and social inclusion

1.7.1. Policies of Bulgarian educational institutions regarding access to education of disadvantaged groups (findings from SP3)

According to the results of the survey conducted in the framework of SP3, more than half of the studied 56 educational institutions declare that they actively look for and support representatives of disadvantaged groups (see Figure 1).

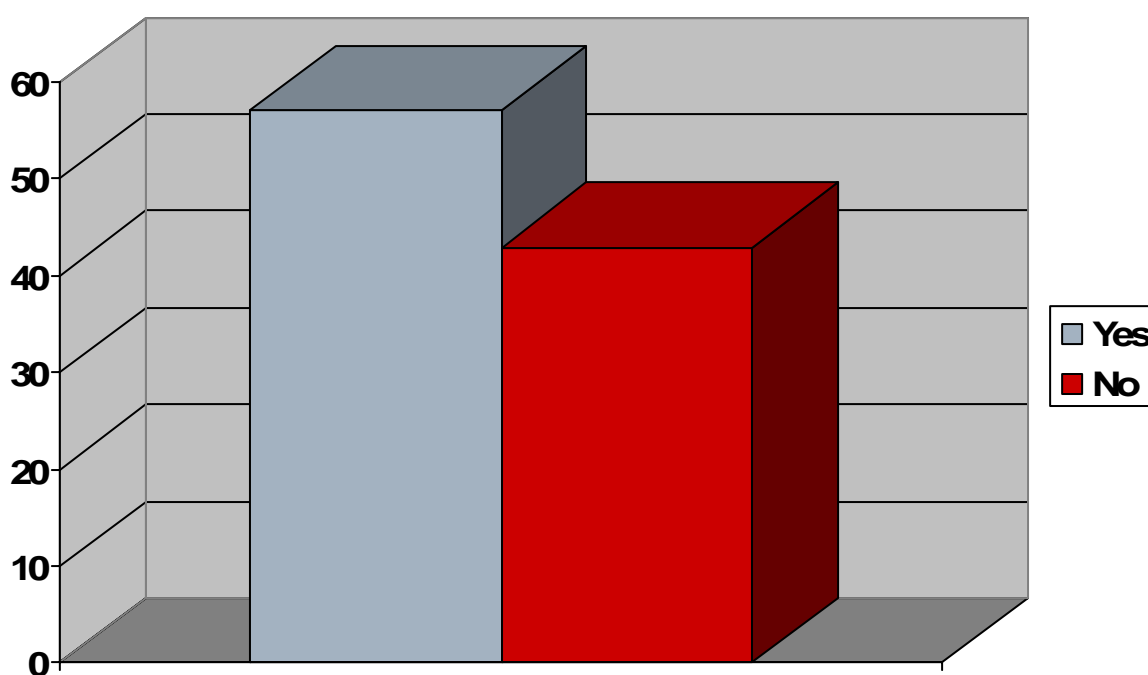


Figure 1. Percentage of answers of Bulgarian educational institutions to the question “Do you actively recruit disadvantaged groups?”

However, a deeper analysis shows that the declared support for disadvantaged groups is not really reflected in the concrete policies and practices being conducted. None of the surveyed institutions organizes remedial classes for the representatives of disadvantaged groups of adult learners, and only 1,8% of them offer special grants. The most widespread means for attracting representatives of disadvantaged groups consist simply in reducing fees and other expenses, and the organizing of preparatory courses, but even these forms are practiced by only a small portion of educational institutions (see Figure 2).

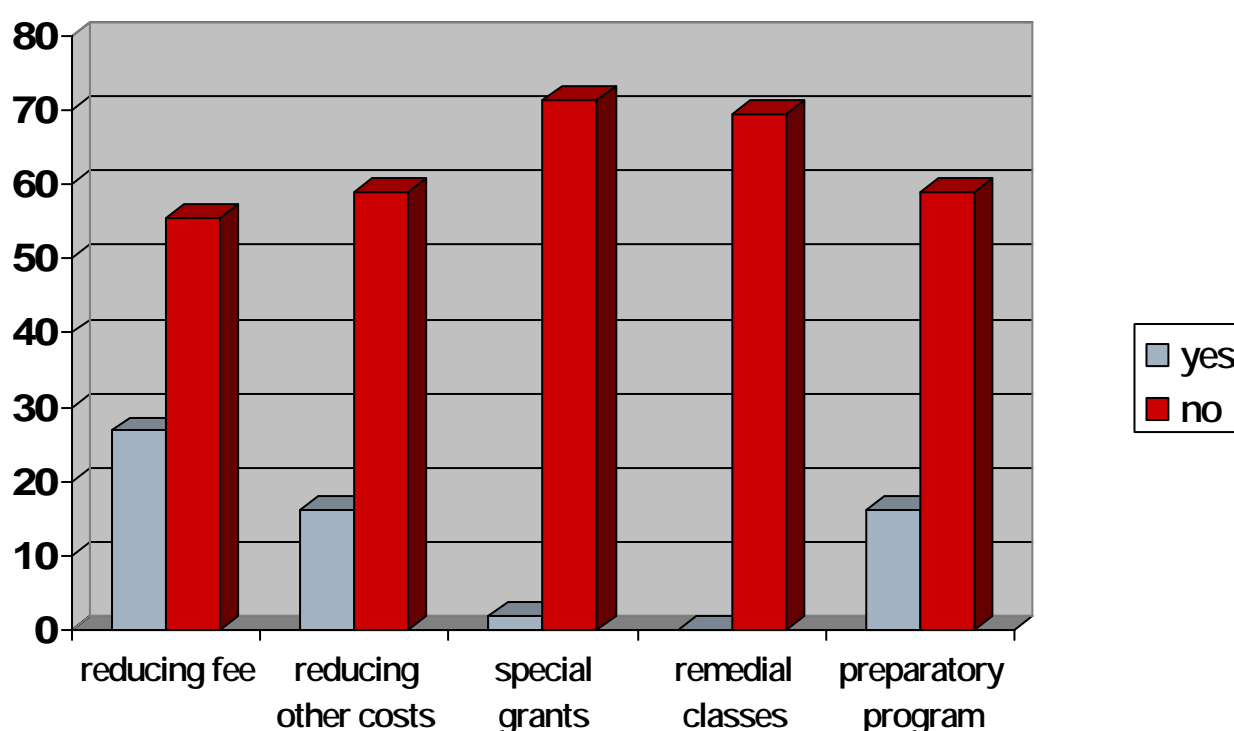


Figure 2: Percentage of use of different means for attracting disadvantaged groups by Bulgarian educational institutions (without percentage for “no answer”)

It is a well known fact that the inclusion of adults in the formal education system usually requires surmounting various difficulties, including psychological ones. That is why the provision of proper and timely psychological support and consultations for adult learners is very important for their adaptation and success in the educational process. But in this respect

as well, Bulgarian educational institutions do not create a stimulating environment for adult learners: only approximately one fourth of them offer special social services (see Figure 3).

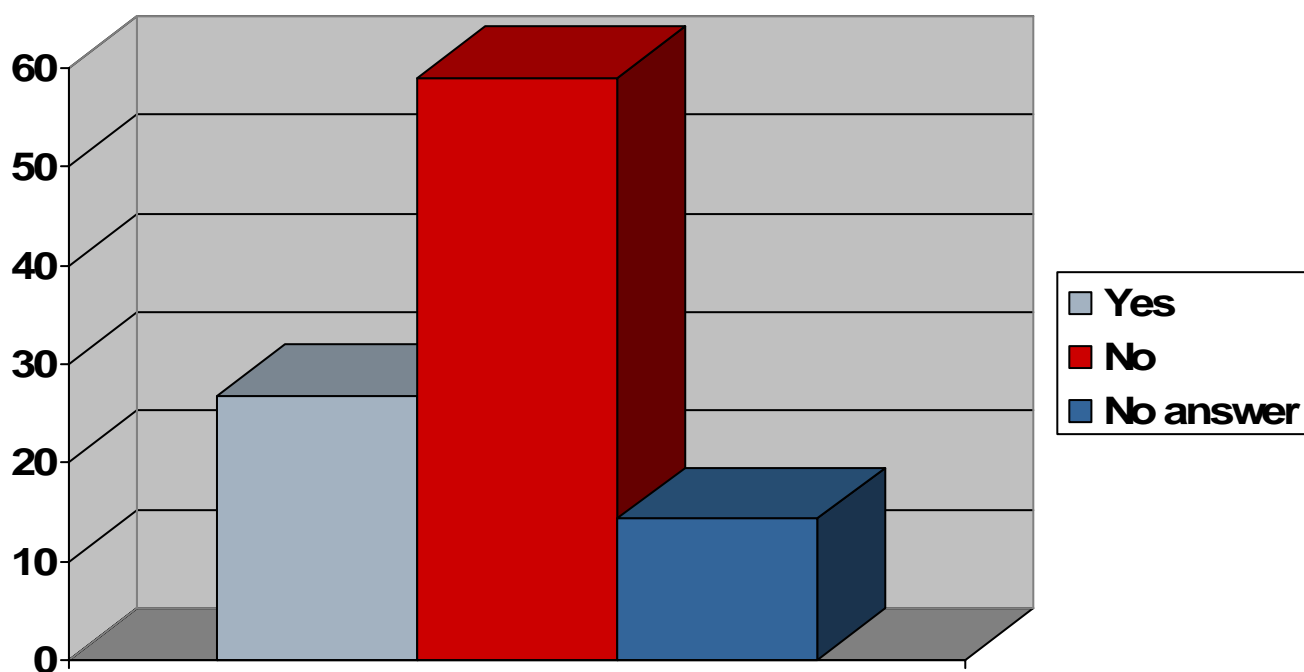


Figure 3: Percentage of Bulgarian educational institutions offering social services (including psychological, counselling and disability services)

With regard to broadening access to education, Bulgarian educational institutions rely mostly on organizing initiatives such as open house and open lesson days (see Figure 4). But these events are targeted at all social groups, not to disadvantaged groups in particular. In general, the policies of Bulgarian educational institutions for enhancing access to education are not centred on enhancing the access to education of disadvantaged groups.

Indicative in this respect are data showing that 60% of the surveyed institutions do not plan to broaden participation of vulnerable groups in the future (see Figure 5).

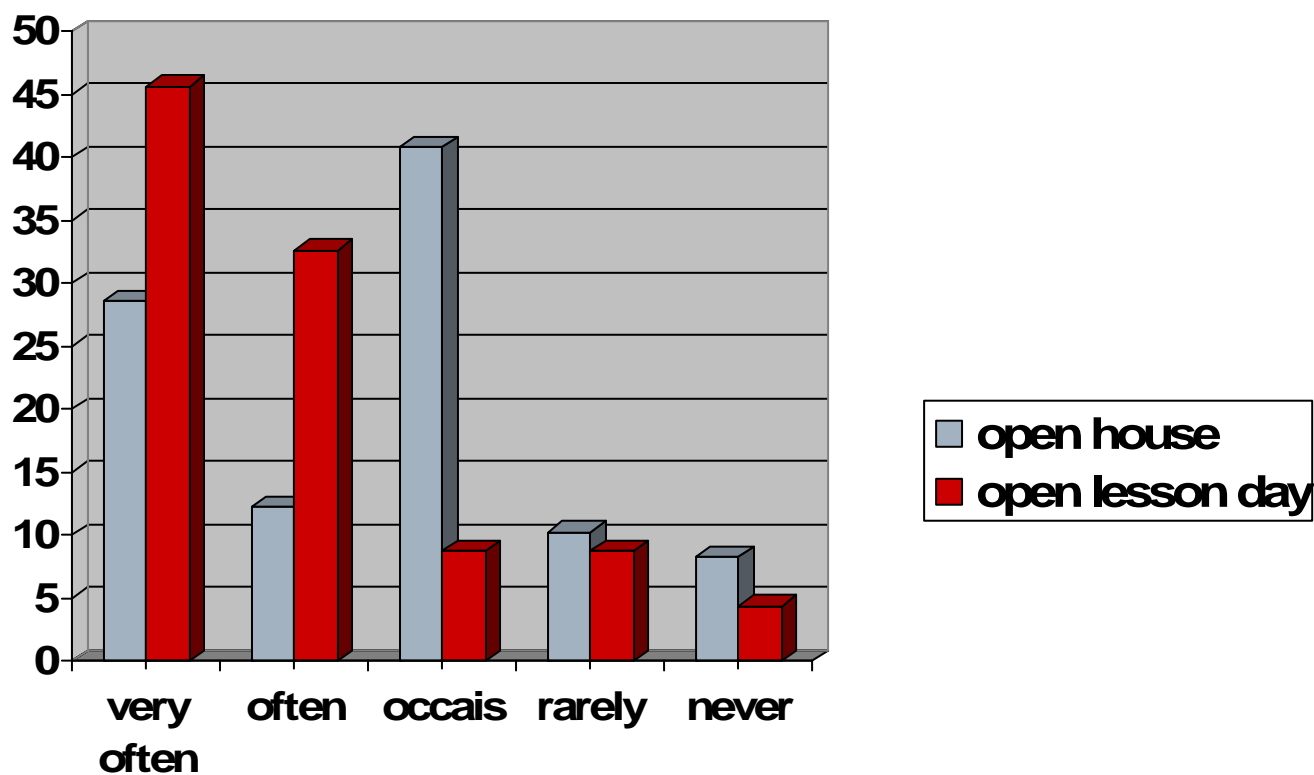


Figure 4: Frequencies of organizing activities such as open house and open lesson days by Bulgarian educational institutions

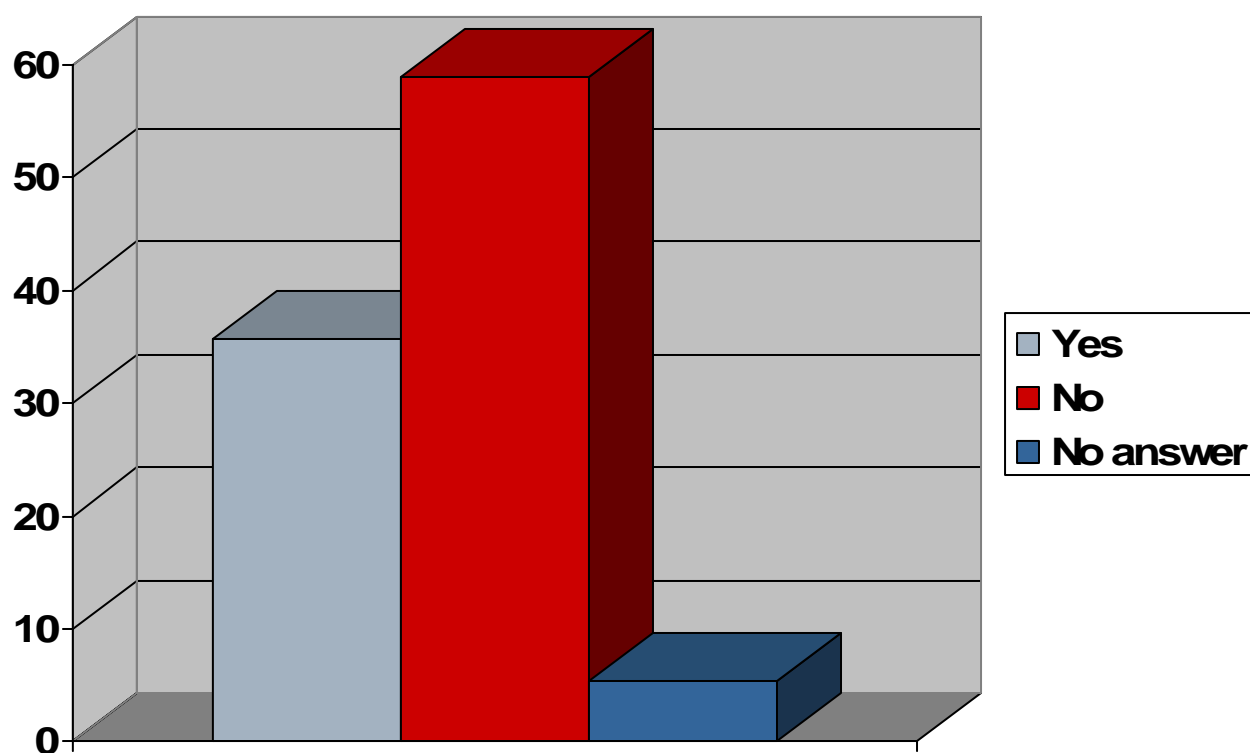


Figure 5: Percentage of Bulgarian educational institutions planning to broaden participation of vulnerable groups in the future

The general conclusion that the presented data clearly lead to is that most of the surveyed Bulgarian educational institutions do not conduct systematic or targeted policies for enhancing access to education for disadvantaged groups.

This generalized picture of the policies of Bulgarian educational institutions as regards stimulating access to education of disadvantaged groups acquires specific features when it is differentiated by educational levels. For instance:

- 69,2% of ISCED 5 level institutions and 43,5% of ISCED 2 level institutions reduce enrolment fees in order to increase access for underrepresented groups;
- 69,4% of ISCED 5 level institutions only occasionally provide open house days, unlike ISCED 2 level institutions where 43,5% provide them very often;
- 82,3% of ISCED 5 level institutions in Bulgaria do not have any preparatory programmes to increase access for traditionally underrepresented groups;
- 100% of ISCED 5 level institutions have an access service;
- No remedial classes occur at any ISCED level institution in Bulgaria;
- 54,3% of ISCED 5 level institutions and 59,3% of ISCED 2 level institutions reduce other costs such as exam fees, books;
- 15,9% of ISCED 3 level institutions reserve places for disadvantaged groups;
- 18,3% of ISCED 2 adult learners and 12,7% of ISCED 3 adult learners cite childcare reasons as a barrier to participation in education.

These results should be looked upon as preliminary and as an incentive for future deeper analyses; there are several important considerations for this:

1) A limited number of educational institutions have fallen in the sample of our study – only 56. Moreover their distribution by educational degrees is uneven: our sample comprised 5 institutions at ISCED levels 1 and 2; 20 institutions at ISCED level 3; 20 institutions at ISCED level 4; and 15 institutions at ISCED levels 5 and 6.

2) The educational institutions included at ISCED levels 1 and 2 are only 5 in number, and very specific ones: these are prison schools. That is why their characteristics do not apply to the other educational institutions at the same educational level.

***1.7.2. Results of SP3 in the light of the interviews
with government representatives and schools officials***

As could be expected, with regard to access to education of disadvantaged groups, it is rather problematic in Bulgaria to achieve a satisfactory synchronization between the real needs of society and the adaptive reactions of institutions. The main factors here are the shortcomings of policies offered at national level, but also the local practices regulated by these national policies and effectuated by the institutions of formal education.

For instance, despite the obvious need for better access to education and social inclusion of ethnic minorities, the Law on Higher Education does not stipulate special facilitation for these groups, which should include such forms as quotas for the training of teachers and professionals with a more pronounced social influence (for instance specialists in the field of law, social work, psychology, work with young people, etc.). Nor are any other incentives envisaged in the laws, although the problem is quite clear and recognizable for specialists directly engaged in developing a state policy in this field.

Nevertheless, at the level of formal education institutions, specifically of higher schools and universities, individual attempts can be seen at partial facilitation of the educational integration of minorities. Examples of this are the initiatives of the University of Veliko Tarnovo, where the specialty “primary school teaching in the Roma language” was established for the representatives of the Roma minority; and those of Thracian University, where the specialty “teaching in the maternal language” was introduced, likewise predominantly for the needs of the Roma minority.

In this context it should be pointed out that in university circles there is a view, not a groundless one at that, that the “quota approach” is not of the most effective, nor a very fair one, inasmuch as it places the representatives of the different ethnic communities in

practically unequal conditions (of competition); the solution of the problem is seen rather as to be found in other types of support.

In principle, the reduction of enrolment fees for representatives of disadvantaged groups is one of the possible solutions with regard to their access; this applies mostly to the sphere of higher education, since at lower levels education in Bulgaria is free of charge. Here, however, there are restrictions stemming from the legally guaranteed autonomy of higher schools and universities: state organs cannot intervene in any way in their functioning.

Two other aspects of the optimization of access, of which government experts are well aware, are remedial classes and state assistance in caring for the children of learners. The first aspect has been set for consideration and resolving in the National Programme for School Education and Pre-school Upbringing (2006-2015), but more concrete results have not yet been achieved. As for the second, there is awareness of its major importance, but more active attempts at accomplishing it have not yet been undertaken.

In positive contrast to this backdrop, part of the higher schools show visible progress in such important fields as specialized services that facilitate access to the school, preparatory courses for candidate students, and the so-called “open house days”. Southwest University in Blagoevgrad provides a typical example of successful development in such activities. It is an established practice there for special centres to be opened during the application period, where, in addition to acceptance of application documents, preparatory courses are organized, including preliminary entrance examinations that provide applicants with valuable additional experience before the real exams; starting from this year, the university conducts open house days in order to reduce the distance to potential applicants.

Such initiatives are developed in a number of other formal education institutions (elementary and higher). But it should be made clear that most of these are not specially addressed to disadvantaged groups or to adult learners, but are oriented to the potential “learner in general”. It is also certain that a considerable part of these initiatives are, overall, at a relatively early stage of development, as confirmed by quantitative data about access of adult

learners to the formal education system obtained in a survey of 1030 adults studying in the formal education system (SP3). That is why, as a conclusion to the analysis given in the last pages, we will adduce the part of the findings that are relevant to SP5, and add to them a brief commentary.

In presenting the general impression, we must emphasize above all the unevenness of institutional support for adult learners across all its dimensions. While the lower levels of education (including secondary) are free of charge, at the level of higher education public support for enrolment costs is negligible (only 2,3% of students receive such); moreover, in their absolute amount these costs are not negligible at all, and can become a real barrier for some people to continue their education. A similar situation exists regarding the so-called extra costs related to the purchase of necessary books, other learning materials, transportation costs, etc. (1%).

Conspicuous in this context is the weak, or at best uneven, development of the two categories of services that – each in its way – could potentially alleviate the problems of people desiring to continue their education. The first category comprises the services that can directly alleviate the financial burden of learners and their families, but this class of services has not yet become adequately disseminated: student grants for students (only 6,4% of learners have made use of this option); student loans (used by 0,9%); paid leave (6,4%); educational leave benefit (3,6%); and travel allowance (5,2%).

The second class comprises services that promote increasing the quality of life and thus alleviating the general load of learners. This category is subdivided into two groups: one, the smaller, is the group of relatively weakly developed services; the other, larger subgroup is that of public services that are relatively widespread in society. In the less developed category we may place: child care, 0,7%, organized transport, 3,4%, and legal service, 6,5%. If public support for adult learners in the Bulgarian educational system can boast of some achievements, they are certainly in the second subcategory: Internet access, 51,9%; libraries, 65,2%; study advice service, 68,7%; dormitories, 27,3%; sports accommodation, 43,9%;

student cafeterias 38,3%; medical services, 20,8%; career services, 22,6%; social services, 16,5%.

1.8. Brief summary of major national policy documents on access to education

In recent years in Bulgaria a series of national policy documents was developed, that are directly related to improving access to education. The conclusion may be drawn that at national level the needed policies for ensuring equal access to quality education have really been formulated. But two basic problems can be distinguished. The first is related to the practical implementation of the national policies and their transformation into concrete institutional strategies for all institutions engaged in educational activities. Although for most national policy documents concrete action plans have also been devised, these plans are likewise at national level. Most educational institutions practically remain passive performers of top-down initiatives; they do not consider access to education to be part of their mission and fail to become active participants in this process. The second problem stems from the fact that the term for accomplishing some of the activities that are decisive for broadening access to education has been moved ahead to the year 2013.

The major national policy documents which refer to access to education are:

- ***Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion. Republic of Bulgaria 2005***

The memorandum was prepared jointly by the government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the European Commission in connection with the preparation of Bulgaria for full participation, after the country's accession to the EU, in the open method of coordination on social inclusion issues. The Memorandum defines decreasing the level of dropout from secondary schools (safeguarding youths from dropping out of school and their reentry into the educational system) as one of the main goals in the fight against social isolation. The document envisages focusing special attention to measures for increasing attendance of pre-

school institutions for children of disadvantaged groups, as well as measures for increasing the attendance of ordinary schools by children with physical disabilities.

- ***National Programme on School Education and Preschool Upbringing and Instruction 2006-2015***

The National Programme on School Education and Preschool Upbringing was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2006. The Programme identifies two basic goals of educational policy: equal access to education and quality education. Equal access to education is conceived of as access of all children to education of comparable quality.

The large number of children not encompassed and dropping out of school is identified as a basic problem of school education. That is why in the Programme policies are developed for limiting the number of non-encompassed schoolchildren and dropouts; these policies include a wide range of measures to neutralize the impact of various negative factors leading to children dropping out of school. In addition to measures for keeping children of compulsory schooling age, the programme envisages a system of measures to be developed for reintegrating the children who have already dropped out; these measures include adapting school curriculum, alternative forms of teaching, launching “Second Chance” pilot schools.

The measures for decreasing the number of non-encompassed schoolchildren and dropouts include: a) a change of the education structure, b) measures regarding children for whom Bulgarian is not the mother tongue, and children with special educational needs.

A) The introduction of a new education structure aims to overcome the basic shortcomings of the educational structure now in force, i.e. the existing inequality between schoolchildren in different kinds of schools caused by the different general education minimum they assimilate there; the fact that the system is not passable; the lack of guarantees for fulfilling the constitutional requirement that education is compulsory till the age of 16, as stipulated in article 53 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the lack of an exit from the

system when that age is reached; inadequate conditions for developing the potential of each child in taking into account its interests and aptitudes.

B) Active social activities and measures include ensuring:

- free access to the contents of schooling by providing free textbooks and teaching aids for schoolchildren in the primary course (1st to 4th grade);
- free snacks for schoolchildren in the primary course (1st to 4th grades) and possibilities for eating in school;
- free transportation for schoolchildren going to school in another settlement;
- forms of semi-boarding-school learning;
- a more rigorous tying of the obtainment of welfare to school attendance of children.

C) In order to socialize children for whom Bulgarian is not the mother tongue and better integrate children with special educational needs, the Programme envisages:

- broadening the encompassment of such children by the kindergarten system and rearing them in an environment in which they can have daily social contacts in Bulgarian;
- making parents better informed about the benefits of attending kindergarten;
- creating an accessible physical environment and a possibility for learning on the basis of individual programmes for children with special educational needs;
- providing special textbooks, teaching aids and teaching means;
- training teaching staff to work with children with special educational needs;
- systematic control over the activity of diagnostic commissions for complex pedagogic assessment at the regional education inspectorates that direct children to specialized schools.

The Programme envisages that these measures will be applied together with activities for increasing the motivation and interest of children in schooling, and with targeted work with children in risk of dropping out, including psychological support for them.

- ***National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, 2008***

The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning was adopted by the Council of Ministers in October 2008. The Strategy envisages measures intended for all degrees of education, including education of adults and employed.

One of the two priority lines of the Strategy is improving opportunities for access to lifelong learning. Outlined are two directions of work for ensuring real, effective, and equal access to learning for all: a) increasing the degree of participation as a whole, and b) improving the balance among participants, mostly with respect to disadvantaged groups and people of advanced age.

The Strategy envisages the following basic activities for improving access to lifelong learning:

- Creating conditions for including all children in the educational process, starting from pre-school age, and keeping them in schooling at compulsory school age; special attention is to be given to children in risk groups and to Roma children in particular (term: by 2013);
- Creating a supportive environment for vocational training of schoolchildren with special educational needs (term: by 2013);
- Introducing a new educational structure and system for standardized external evaluation and achieving entry into secondary and higher education and entry into the labour market (term – by 2013);
- Developing and implementing plans and programmes for training people employed in the state and private sector; improving the links between business and learning (term– by 2013);

- Decentralization of the supply of different possibilities for education and training by stimulating the territorial and branch development of a network of educational and training institutions (term – by 2013);
- Developing distance learning as a means for improving access and support for participants in this form of learning (term – by 2013);
- Validating and certifying the results of non-formal and independent learning (term – by 2013);
- Providing a suitable architectural and psychological environment for schooling of people with special needs (term – by 2013);
- Improving the teaching methods and curriculum for vocational education and training (term – by 2013);
- Establishing a module system for obtaining qualification. Building a system for accumulating and transfer of credits in the sphere of vocational education and training (term – by 2013);
- Improving the material-technical basis and using modern information technologies in educational institutions (term – by 2013);
- Developing financial/credit instruments and incentives for facilitating access to education (term – by 2013);
- Normative regulation of new opportunities for access to lifelong learning (term – by 2013).

- ***Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2008-2015***

The strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2008; as the first direction of work in the field of education and training, it identifies the improvement of access to education and training, decreasing school dropout, and integration into the labour market of early leavers from education. For this, action in two lines is envisaged: a) dropout prevention, and b) second chance for young dropouts.

A) In order to prevent dropout from the education system, the following measures are envisaged:

- enhancing the role of pre-school upbringing and training, especially among ethnic groups (term – by 2010);
- integrated training of children with special educational needs (term – by 2015);
- creating a modern, stimulating learning environment with extensive application of information and communication technologies and with highly qualified teachers (term – by 2015);
- improving professional orientation activities (term – by 2015);
- implementing programmes and projects for fuller encompassing of schoolchildren of compulsory school age, including measures such as free snacks for children in the primary stage, free transportation, and forms of semi-boarding-school training, as well as free textbooks and teaching aids, etc. (term – by 2010).

B) In order to overcome the negative consequences for dropouts from secondary education, measures for giving them a second chance are envisaged, specifically through:

- training literacy for early dropouts from education (term – by 2015);
- professional orientation (term – by 2015);
- training in key competencies like entrepreneurship, computer skills, and foreign languages (term – by 2015);

- broadening the range of services provided for people looking for work, both as regards learning opportunities and by subsidizing first employment for people who have undergone vocational training in the form of traineeship at workplace (term – by 2010);
- including unemployed people with low education and without qualification in the labour market by providing opportunities for training at workplace (term – by 2010);
- implementing projects for young dropouts whereby their social adaptation will be promoted and their fitness for employment will be enhanced by providing vocational training in professions that are in demand on the labour market (term – by 2010).

In order to improve access to education and training for adults, control will be exercised that the regulations ensure adequate opportunities and incentives for persons with low or no education to obtain vocational qualification degrees.

- ***Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Schoolchildren of the Ethnic Minorities (2005-2015)***

The strategy was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2004; it has two priorities: 1) full integration of Roma children and schoolchildren through desegregation of kindergartens and schools in the separate Roma neighbourhoods and by creating conditions for equal access to quality education outside those neighbourhoods; 2) optimization of the school network in municipalities with small and widely dispersed settlements.

The Strategy defines as a primary strategic goal “guaranteeing the right of equal access to quality education for children and schoolchildren of the ethnic minorities.” For achieving this goal, activities in the following directions are envisaged:

- creating a special “Educational integration of children and schoolchildren of the ethnic minorities” fund;
- including school boards and civic organizations in the development, implementation, and monitoring of educational integration programmes;

- including children and schoolchildren of the ethnic minorities in out-of-class and out-of-school forms of learning;
 - encompassing disadvantaged children and schoolchildren of the ethnic minorities in semi-boardings-school forms of training;
 - assisting socially weak children and schoolchildren, in ways that include provision of textbooks and teaching aids.
- In the *Law on Integration of Disabled People (2004)* there is a chapter on education and professional qualification of people in disadvantaged condition. Adults with disabilities have the right to take part in educational programs free of charge.
 - *Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2006-2007*

One of the operational goals of the plan is “guaranteeing access to quality education for disabled persons”. It envisages:

- encompassing every disabled child in pre-school and school age in the education system with the aid of resource centres;
- developing and introducing into practice educational programmes for disabled children housed in special institutions: a) providing adequate specialized staff; b) providing training for resource teachers;
- continuing the operation of the Programme for Employment of Teachers in Training Disabled Children.

- ***Strategy for Providing Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons 2008-2015***

Among the main goals of the Strategy is providing “guaranteed access to quality education for disabled persons.” The Strategy defines specific measures for different educational degrees.

In secondary education, it envisages continued application of policies for inclusive education for children with special educational needs by means of:

- a unified methodology for complex pedagogic evaluation and recommendations for children with special educational needs;
- positive attitudes of various communities (teachers, schoolchildren, children, and parents) towards inclusive teaching;
- created conditions guaranteeing integration of children with special educational needs into kindergartens and general education schools by building a supportive environment, which includes: accessible architectural environment; teams of specialists; diagnostics, counseling, and rehabilitation activity; special learning-technology means and equipment, didactic materials, teaching aids, etc.; individual educational programmes;
- optimizing the special schools system;
- creating conditions for access to education for disabled children housed in specialized institutions.

In the sphere of higher education, the Strategy envisages updating learning teaching plans in all pedagogic specialties in order to raise the qualification of future teachers for work with youths with special educational needs.

- ***National Programme for Fuller Encompassment of Schoolchildren of Compulsory School Age***

In connection with overcoming the problem of schoolchildren dropping out of school, a National Programme for Fuller Encompassment of Schoolchildren of Compulsory School Age is being conducted; it was proposed by the Council of Ministers and passed by the National Assembly.

- Being implemented currently is an ***Action Plan for Decreasing the Number of Non-encompassed Schoolchildren and Dropouts in Compulsory School Age (2007–2009)***

For the purpose of providing free transportation of schoolchildren living in small and dispersed settlements to central schools, in the school year 2004/2005, 219 school buses were provided for the municipalities. Until the school year 2004/2005, free textbooks and teaching aids were provided for all children subject to compulsory training in preparatory groups in kindergartens, and in preparatory grade and first grade in schools. Since the school year 2005/2006 free textbooks are also provided for schoolchildren in second, third, and fourth grade. Since the school year 2004/2005 all children in the primary stage of schooling (1st to 4th grade) are given free snacks and a glass of warm milk.

In the school year 2003/2004, compulsory education was introduced for children in preparatory groups and preparatory class in kindergartens and schools. This measure is especially beneficial for children of the Roma and Turkish ethnic minorities, since pre-school training provides them the opportunity to acquire habits for schoolwork and for assimilating literary Bulgarian. According to data of the Regional Inspectorates for Education, in the school year 2004/2005, 91% of the children subject to preparatory groups or classes (12 131 children) completed them.

- ***National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training 2005-2010***

The National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training for the period 2005-2010 was adopted by the Council of Ministers in October 2005. The strategy aims to create and improve the conditions for obtaining, broadening, and developing vocational qualification of the work force in order to improve fitness for employment, a professional career, and individual development. The Strategy defines five priorities:

- facilitating the access to further vocational education;
- improving the effectiveness in coordination among the institutions;
- providing high quality;
- increasing investments;
- research on further vocational education.

- ***National Strategy for Introducing Information and Communication Technologies in Bulgarian Schools***

The main goal of the strategy, which was adopted by the Council of Minister in 2005, is the effective use of modern information and network technologies for raising the quality of education and enriching the contents of teaching. Another specific goal of the Strategy is defined as “achieving equal opportunities in the use of ICT for all schoolchildren, regardless of their social and cultural environment, ethnic origin, or health condition”.

- *National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2005*, aimed at abolishing discrimination and improving the status of women in all social spheres, has been functioning since 2005. Regarding education, the following measures are envisaged in the action plan:

- introducing gender education in the curriculum of the higher schools for teachers' qualification;
- dissemination of the existing programmes in gender education;
- changes in the state requirements for textbooks so as to exclude all illustrations and texts implying gender discrimination.

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Стратегия за осигуряване на равни възможности на хората с увреждания 2008-2015 г., [Strategy for Providing Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons 2008-2015.]
www.minedu.government.bg

Chapter 2:

Actors' Voices (16 Individual Interviews)

**Directorate “Policy in Vocational and Continuous Education”,
Ministry of Education and Science
Interview with VD (Director)**

STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Is there a central committee in your government department with specific responsibility for:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

If yes, are there representatives from the at risk target groups involved in these committees?

Yes, there is such a committee. It is called Consultative Council to the minister of labour and social policy in cooperation with the minister of education. The Consultative Council is the highest level but it includes directors of directorates connected with the training of underrepresented groups, literacy,

vocational training, etc. in addition, there is inter-institutional groups; these are working groups dealing with specific issues. Working groups may include experts from the Ministry of economy and energy and also NAPOO. In this respect, we cooperate actively with NSI. Last year (2008) an investigation of Eurostat was completed; we use its data in our work. Especially on the theme of “Literacy”, there are 15 million BGN from Structural funds allotted to literacy of ethnic minorities. The Consultative Council and the inter-institutional for lifelong learning and the other national strategies (respective year plans) which are the meeting point of the work of the two ministries. The Consultative Council is composed of the ministers of the two ministries and directors of directorates; the working groups of the ministries include representatives of the ministries and representatives of other institutions which are involved in the problems of LLL, e.g. NPO, syndicates. In fact these working groups are indicated in the Strategy. They deal with a range of issues – literacy, qualification of personnel, vocational training of adults, etc. Representatives of the target groups at risk are not included.

What are the obstacles to establishing any of these committees in your government ministry?

At this stage, there are no obstacles. A series of documents which comprise the different strategies shows the willingness and engagement of the state with the problems of LLL and the qualification of personnel, and also literacy and social inclusion of minorities.

Is there a position of responsibility in your government department, specifically to develop and monitor implementation on these issues:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy

- e) the non-formal education sector

This has been legislative ensured by means of a Strategy for encouraging employment, and also the Professional education act which was amended in 2008.

In other words, if progress is not made in these areas who takes responsibility to drive things forward?

The responsibility lies with the ministries.

Are there any specific structures for communication at a strategic level between regional, local and national level with regard to:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

There is a permanent link between the different levels – national, regional; this is achieved by means of the branches of the ministries at regional level. MES has Regional inspectorates of education – 28 – located in the former regional towns. MTSP has regional offices of employment and labour bureaus. So there is interaction and dialogue along the vertical.

Does your government ministry provide any support for individuals with specific responsibility for developing adult education services at a local or regional level, i.e., Adult Education Organisers?

Adult education organizers are in fact the vocational high schools. Our directorate is not specifically engaged in the qualification of teachers, methodological assistance through RIO to vocational high schools. The

directorate develops state educational requirements for professions on the basis of which the textbooks for vocational education are written.

Good practice: *For two years, electronic textbooks for profiles have been produced. They allow distance learning and self-study; respectively larger number of adults is included. The aim is to have electronic textbooks for all 134 professions. Since 2007, 2 projects for professions have been approved. In 2008 10 more professions were approved. In 2009 we plan to have 15 more professions. This is a new practice; we have just started; it depends on financing to a great extent.*

Ordinance No 10 of December 2006 for the granting of professional qualification of “Assistant-teacher” (in power of 13.02.2007).

Are there structures for dialogue and a common strategy on any of these areas, between government departments of Education, Justice and Employment? How can this dialogue be improved?

Every year the minister of education approves a plan for admission of prisoners for professional studies. Prison schools are managed by the Ministry of Justice but the approval of this state plan in terms of numbers is done by the minister of education. This is done every year before 30 March. In this plan which is coordinated with the Consultative Council and with the minister of justice the number of students is specified for the following school year in all study forms – day, night, correspondence, adult education. There is a new tendency to increase the number of students in all groups – in the lower level (up to 8th year) and in the upper level of vocational training (post 8th year).

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Is there a national and/or government strategy for:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

If yes, are there specific targets set for progress in this strategy?

Yes, there is a National Strategy for LLL. In fact the basic documents treat all aspects – social inclusion, access of underrepresented groups, literacy, LLL. These documents are National Programme for school education and preschool education (2006-2015), National Strategy for continuing vocational training (2005-2010), National strategy for LLL, Strategy for employment (2008-2015).

In the abovementioned documents, there are measures directed at vulnerable groups including ethnic minorities. In the Strategy for LLL there are measures for all levels of education, including adults and employed.

The idea of the Strategy is to be the basic document on which other similar strategies could be produced – for higher education, professional education, i.e. narrower strategies in the frames of single area or system. Even sector strategies are foreseen. Specific objectives have been outlined. The Strategy for continuing education is accompanied by a plan. Such plans exist for all years since 2005, i.e. there are 4 plans so far. The plan for 2009 is accepted.

If yes, is there specific funding allocated for progress on key elements in this strategy?

For each strategy in the respective action plans, there are arranged sums and ways of financing – the republican budget, European projects, bilateral projects.

What percentage of your government department budget goes on adult education: a) formal education, b) non-formal education?

Such a distinction is hard to make. MES is responsible for all forms of education (general and professional) and vocational training in all forms day, night, correspondence, distance learning.

Please comment on measures taken by national government to support adult learning outside the major cities in your country.

Adult learning is supported in the whole country where there are vocational high schools. Last year, out of 405 vocational high schools in total, at 187 courses for vocational training of adult learners were carried out. These courses are paid by the state; they are predominantly for unemployed individuals.

NATIONAL POLICY: FORMAL SECTOR

Is there any State incentive for third level institutions training teachers to reserve places specifically for underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that they can be teachers at a) elementary school level, b) high school level?

In connection with integration in the higher education system, practices at two universities can be pointed out – VTU and Thracian. Since the 2003/2004 academic year a programme “Initial school pedagogy and Roma language” was opened at the University of Veliko Turnovo. In it, students of Roma origin are admitted. At the Thracian University, there is a programme “Mother tongue study” in which Roma students are admitted. The idea is to accept students from minority communities but there is no limitation (in the sense that only Roma individuals are admitted).

Otherwise there are no stimuli for teachers who teach Roma classes or at Roma schools. There are no stimuli for higher schools with quotas for admittance of individuals of ethnic minorities. In the Higher Education Act, there are reductions of fees of different groups but these reductions are related not to the university but to the disadvantaged groups.

What obstacles and/or opportunities in your opinion exist to development of such an incentive?

For the time being, such support does not exist at state level.

Is there any State incentive for third level institutions training teachers to reserve places specifically for underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that they can enter courses for professions of particular influence in their local community such as a) law, b) social work, c) youth work, d) psychology, e) other?

The answer is the same as to the previous question. On the part of the state, there are no stimuli for these educational institutions.

What obstacles and/or opportunities in your opinion exist to use of the school building after school hours for adult education courses?

There are no obstacles. The advantages are that if courses are paid, school income would increase. It is a good thing is buildings should be used more intensively.

Are there particular gaps in employment and training for adults that you envisage developing in the near future?

One of the risks is the discrepancy between employers and the preparation of the individual. If the individual's preparation does not match the employer's requirements, the problem is in quality of training at the vocational school or the

training centre. Professional centres are licensed by NAPOO but they are not financed by the state; education is paid there. One of the issues of education at professional centres is that there is no system of external evaluation. At profile high schools quality is controlled by RIO, by the respective expert of vocational education and training. At professional colleges after secondary education, they are autonomous; as in the case of professional centres there is no external evaluation; a quality assurance system is not developed. Another issue is that there is no information on the graduates with vocational qualification. At professional high schools, a register of those who were appointed at jobs after graduation is kept – whether they have started work or went on to university.

NATIONAL POLICY: NON-FORMAL SECTOR

Which government department has the main responsibility for funding non-formal educational organisations?

The character of these organizations is that they are outside the state sector.

How would you compare the status and development of the non-formal education sector compared with 5 years ago? Has it expanded or increased over the last 5 years? Why?

It has definitely expanded because there are many NGOs and more opportunities for financing, a developed net with the participation of NGOs from abroad, i.e. at international level. The themes connected with ethnic minorities in the sector of NGO there are many projects although the state organizations also possess many documents, including “Strategies for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities” (2005-1015) adopted by MES with two important priorities: firstly, full integration of Roma children and students by means of desegregation of kindergartens and schools in the isolated Roma

quarters and creation of conditions for equal access to quality education out of them, secondly, optimization of the school network in municipalities with small and scattered towns including by means of supporting centre schools, for guaranteeing quality of education.

What is your opinion on future developments regarding National Government support for *personal development* classes in order to reach those groups most alienated from the traditional mainstream education system (e.g., early school leavers, long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities)?

They are connected with projects of NGOs. I do not know them in detail.

What is your opinion on future developments regarding National Government support for *community development* classes in order to reach those groups most alienated from the traditional mainstream education system (e.g., early school leavers, long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities)?

Again, they are connected with projects of NGOs; I think they are important.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

What are the main obstacles to establishing a mechanism for the recognition of prior non-formal learning and work experience in order to open access for adults to the education system?

The basic obstacle is in the provision of administrative capacity at national and regional level. By now the basic way of recognizing is by an examination which is in fact a narrow concept. At the moment, work on validation has begun; projects are being developed. In this respect, we are trying to amass experience from France which is a leader in the validation of prior experience and education; they are recognized on the basis of a document, certificate, etc.

How can these obstacles, in your view, be overcome?

The introduction of a broader framework of validation (not only by examination) will become possible by means of introducing regional commissions which will be engaged with the control of documents submitted by candidates.

What plans need to be developed for further flexibility of accreditation systems by the State?

In the system of secondary education, there is no accreditation. Schools are opened by the minister when they meet certain requirements connected with material resources, school documentation, teachers, etc. some years ago, there were ideas of accrediting vocational schools because all middle professional schools became equal to technical schools; but it was not realized.

This is a process characteristic of higher education.

FUTURE PLANS

What, in your opinion, is your government department's priority issues to improve access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation?

One of the priorities is the case of students with special educational needs; the provision of vocational training of children with physical or chronic impairments. Of course, it is related to professions which do not hamper their physical and health condition. Children with mental handicap in the norm for example in the 9th year cover the material in one year while handicapped children are taught for two years.

Children with illnesses and defects are admitted despite the requirements; for them there are 6 places in each class. These rules are treated by the Rules of admittance at state and municipal schools.

What changes do you hope will be achieved in 5 years time to promote access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation?

Creating normal conditions for study and work, suitable architecture, increasing the number of resource teachers (a good practice). They have been employed for three years and their statute is connected to the idea of introducing a system of integrated education (children with special educational needs are integrated at normal, mass schools). Resource teachers provide liaison between handicapped children and teachers; they accompany impaired children and facilitate their stay at the mass school. In all 28 former regional centre towns there are such resource centres. At the moment, in the country there are 7500 students with special educational needs and 1033 resource teachers.

What changes do you realistically expect will be achieved in 5 years time to promote access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation?

- reserved places yes or no
- free childcare
- access officers in each third level institution
- outreach strategies for each community

The National programme for school education and preschool education (2006-2015) lays down that all students will be included, including children with special educational needs in the preparatory year. In this way, their socialization is achieved. The national programme contains additional teaching hours for the children who need additional help.

Please list your priority target groups to improve access to third level education.

These are ethnic minorities, children with special educational needs and school drop-outs.

What are the biggest obstacles to progress regarding promotion of access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, as well as social inclusion, lifelong learning, literacy and the non-formal education sector?

One of the great obstacles is poverty which will probably increase because of the economic crisis. Another obstacle is the attitude and thinking of parents. Often because of religious or aesthetic reasons parents do not allow children to attend school; no matter how much teachers work, it is difficult to overcome this problem. A serious obstacle is the lack of special architectural environment and facilities for impaired children. On the whole schools have no funds to support their libraries and textbook supplies. The Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities (2005-2015) adopted by MES takes into account many of the problems but the situation is changing economically and these documents should be updated.

Additional questions based on SP3:

For the increasing of access of traditionally underrepresented groups, in this country, there is a tendency of institutions of basic and higher education to lower entrance fees. Please describe the way government facilitates these good practices.

Secondary education in the country is free. Higher schools' fees are similar; they differ with regard to the field of study but the differences are small. As a whole, fees for higher education studies are not high. This is true of the Bachelor's level. Master's level studies are more expensive. Fees at state higher schools are low; it is hard to lower them further.

In this country, there is no institution at any educational level does not have additional classes. Bearing in mind that some of the adult learners who are at basic education level consider the education programme too difficult, how in your opinion should we design a national policy supporting adult learners by means of introducing additional classes at all educational levels?

This problem has still to be addressed. It is addressed in the National programme for school education and preschool education (2006-2015) but there is no solution yet.

There is a tendency for the institutions of basic and higher education to decrease the expenditure on books and examination fees. Please describe the way government supports good practices.

Examination fees are characteristic of higher education, so I cannot give an answer.

Some institutions of secondary education in this country reserve places for groups in underrepresented situation. In your opinion, what type of national strategy of preserving the

places for underrepresented groups should be designed by the government at the secondary and tertiary levels?

This issued is addressed in the Rules for admission of students at state and municipal schools where the number and the required documents which should be submitted are set.

Adult learners with basic and secondary education point out that the care for their children is an obstacle to their participation in the educational process. How could national policy support adult learners who are looking after children, especially with regard to basic and secondary education?

This issue is important but has not been addressed.

In your opinion, what is the most effective way for increasing the access of disadvantaged groups to formal education?

- ✓ reducing the enrolment fees
- ✓ awarding grants to students from these groups
- ✓ organizing classes for helping disadvantaged students
- ✓ organizing preparatory classes
- ✓ reserving some places for students from these groups

Each of the abovementioned methods is effective because relates to different aspects of the teaching process or expenditures: at the entrance or in the course of study. So I cannot point to the most effective one. They all should be applied as a set.

In your opinion, what is the fairest way for increasing the access of disadvantaged groups to formal education?

- ✓ reducing the enrolment fees
- ✓ awarding grants to students from these groups
- ✓ organizing classes for helping disadvantaged students

- ✓ organizing preparatory classes
- ✓ reserving some places for students from these groups

All, with the exception of the last measure. I do not think there should be separate quotas.

Which underrepresented groups do you think are the most endangered, i.e. risk social exclusion?

- ✓ representatives of minorities
- ✓ socially underprivileged
- ✓ single parents
- ✓ school drop-outs
- ✓ unemployed
- ✓ orphans
- ✓ former prisoners

The most endangered groups are the representatives of minorities and early school drop-outs. There are problems with the group of unemployed and former prisoners.

Do you have a policy and programme especially directed at risk groups:

- ✓ representatives of minorities
- ✓ socially underprivileged
- ✓ single parents
- ✓ school drop-outs
- ✓ unemployed
- ✓ orphans
- ✓ former prisoners

For the representatives of some risk groups there are developed policies and programmes. In connection with ethnic minorities, for example, at VTU and other higher schools, there are study programmes which educate Roma individuals to work in Roma environments. Parents get child benefits for children

under the age of 18. Children from socially deprived families get scholarships from the state for the whole period of study (both at secondary and tertiary level). Students in year 1 to 4 get free textbooks but poor pupils in year 1 also get 80 BGN as initial financial aid. For single parents, there are no special measures. For early school drop-outs, there are vocational high schools which are free; there are professional centres licensed by NAPOO (the latter are paid). For colleges – state or private – students pay fees. The problems of the unemployed are dealt with by the bureaus of labour and the employment offices. There are training sessions, retraining courses which are financed by various projects. Orphans are taught at schools for children without parental control. They get social scholarships. Prisoners are educated at prison schools. These schools are under the aegis of the ministry of justice but the numbers of students are set by the minister of education.

GOOD PRACTICES

A. ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOKS ON PROFESSIONS

Electronic textbooks are being introduced by directorate “Policy in vocational education and continuing education” at MES. Electronic textbooks on professions are approved in a public competition.

For two years, electronic textbooks are being produced; they allow distance learning. (p. 3)

Objectives of the practice: Distance learning and self-study aiming at broader inclusion of adults in LLL.

Electronic study courses on schools subjects of the required type of study or modules for professional training on professions are an effective method of teaching and learning and

are a way of “bringing studies closer to the home of the learner (National strategy for LLL 2008-2013).

Electronic study courses are designed on the basis of teaching contents of the required professional study of the approved curriculum for the respective profession. It is necessary:

- √ For the profession to be in the list of professions for professional education, article 6 of ZPOO;
- √ For teaching contents to comply with an approved syllabus for the respective subject/module;
- √ For the study subject to be theoretical or practical;
- √ For the teaching contents to comply with the requirements of the national examination programme for state examinations for acquiring qualifications for professions;
- √ For the structure of the electronic course to comply with the approved syllabus for required professional study on the respective subject;
- √ For the teaching contents to be presented in a structured form in sections and topics;
- √ For the teaching contents to be developed on the topics set by the syllabus;
- √ There are questions/tasks for individual work/tests for self-evaluation on each topic;
- √ At the end of the electronic course, the expected learning outcomes are enlisted – knowledge acquired and skills mastered;
- √ Further readings for additional information and literature on the separate topics is given.

Target groups: Individuals studying at professional high schools which are 405 in the country.

Funding sources: Funding is done by MES. Electronic courses are deposited at directorate “Policy in professional education and continuing education” at MES on a diskette or CD

together with information on the participant/participants (address, phone, and e-mail, and full name, institution for professional education or training). The electronic courses are evaluated by the competition commission formed by the directorate “Policy in professional education and continuing education” and appointed by the minister of education. The electronic courses rated first and second get financial awards and the e-courses themselves are used for the purposes of professional education and continuing education.

History of the model: The design and implementation in practice of electronic courses on professions is connected with the Plan for action on the National strategy for continuing professional training (2005-2010). So electronic textbooks are a practice, envisaged in the Strategy for the period 2005-2019. The first competition at directorate “Policy in professional education and continuing education” was announced in December 2007. This practice has been in existence for two years.

Since 2007, projects for 2 professions have been approved; for 2008 10 professions were approved. For 2009, we plan to produce electronic textbooks for 15 professions more. This is a new practice related to financial support. (p. 3)

Number of participants: About 10 000 students at professional high schools will study with electronic textbooks annually after their full implementation.

Location: Electronic textbooks on professions are produced in different locations in the country, by different authors or teams, but are evaluated in Sofia, at MES. The responsibility for them lies with directorate “Policy in professional education and continuing education” at MES.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The main weakness is connected to the fact that the approval of electronic textbooks is a slow process which is coordinated at different levels:

...the process is slow; it is necessary to produce such electronic textbooks for all 134 professions. (p. 3)

Priority needs for expansion of the model:

...for 2009 we plan to produce electronic textbooks for 15 professions. (p. 3)

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Effectiveness of electronic textbooks on professions can best be evaluated by means of the results of teaching of students. Students receive well the practice with electronic textbooks according to opinions of their teachers. In addition, we cite some opinions of teachers at professional high schools shared on the website of MES in connection with the first competition for electronic textbooks on professions announced by MES in December 2007.

Opinions: About: Competition for the best electronic study course on a school subject from the required professional studies or module for professional study of a profession.

10 December 2007, 16:09, by [a_iya](#):

It is necessary to have competitions of this kind because in this way the level of teaching of our students will rise considerably or at least will become equal to that of students across Europe. Another strength of the competition is that we can see the level of teaching at other schools and to impose a relatively common criterion for teaching.

12 December 2007, 20:51, by [veska_petkova](#)

I think that without electronic courses we will hardly cope. A change of the way of teaching is necessary. I suggest we should have similar competitions more often, for example every 3 months because many colleagues would participate. But the preparation for the competition requires time and teachers are quite busy.

25 December 2007, 22:00, by [mimi57](#)

It is wonderful that such competitions exist but not in such short time. We hope this will continue in 2008. It is useful for comparing the levels of teachers and also for the equalising the levels of knowledge of students.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: Recession does not influence the introduction of electronic textbooks because for them there are planned funds in the budget. They are user-friendly (students at professional high schools) because in this way users save money on buying textbooks from bookshops. The electronic textbook is cheap, useful, mobile. This is the reason for its acceptance and positive evaluation by the target groups.

B. BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMME “PRIMARY SCHOOL PEDAGOGY AND ROMA LANGUAGE” – VELIKO TURNOVO UNIVERSITY (VTU)

Objectives of the practice: Integration of Roma people into the system of higher education:

In connection with the integration of unprivileged groups (ethnic minorities and underrepresented groups) in the higher education system and their preparation for primary and secondary school teachers, two universities may be pointed out: VTU and Thracian University. In 2003/2004 academic year VTU opened a programme in Primary school pedagogy and Roma language in which Roma students are admitted. (p. 5-6)

The programme is new in the country. Graduates get a Bachelor's degree and pedagogical qualification. Graduates may practice teaching, educating, methodological and organisational-managerial activities at primary Roma schools; they may work as consultants at centres dealing with Roma children.

Target groups: Roma ethnic groups in the country holders of secondary school certificates.

Funding sources: Roma students are taught on scholarships from various NGOs. VTU does not grant scholarships and does not cancel fees for Roma students.

History/background of the model: The programme has existed since 2003/2004 academic year at VTU in professional area “Pedagogy”. It is accredited with a “very good” grade until 2013. It is established by a Roma professor who has studied at different universities. He has published in the area of Roma people and their socialisation. At present, he is head of the programme.

Number of participants: 30 young women and men are admitted annually. In 2008/2009 30 Roma students were also admitted.

Location: Professional area “Pedagogy” at VTU:

Formation of total score:

- a) doubled grade from competitive entrance examination
- b) grade in Bulgarian language from school certificate
- c) grade in history from school certificate the total score is formed as a sum of all abovementioned components.

Competitive entrance examinations:

- Bulgarian language and literature or History of Bulgaria
- Test of speaking-communicative skills (in Roma language)

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The basic problems of the realisation of the programme are connected with the keeping of its stability and the attraction of Roma students because the educational level of Roma people is too low – only about 7% of Roma students have finished secondary education.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The need for extension of the programme is determined by the fact of 330 schools in the country in which over 50% of the students are Roma.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Number of registered students, number of graduates who began work (at respective schools).

C. RESOURCE TEACHER

Objectives of the practice: Creation of normal conditions for study and work of children with special educational needs; support of a system of integrated teaching of children with special educational needs at normal, mass schools.

The resource teacher creates organisational connections, interrelationships and interaction with:

- children and students with special educational needs at kindergarten, class and school as well as all children and students in groups at kindergarten and the class;
- parents;
- teachers, educators, and resource teachers from the same kindergarten and the same school, as well as other kindergartens and other schools;
- managerial and administrative staff of kindergartens and schools;
- experts at regional inspectorates of education and at the Ministry of Education and Science;
- experts in the area of education in the municipality and other representatives of institutions of local authorities;
- higher schools, institutes and offices for teacher qualification;
- representatives of public organisations and organisations of juridical persons with non-profit goals, etc.

The work of resource teachers is connected with:

...the idea of supporting the system of integrated education. Resource teachers make liaison between children with special educational needs and teachers; they

accompany children with impairment and make their stay at mass schools consecutive. (p. 9)

Target groups: Children with impairment.

At the moment in the country there are 7500 students with special educational needs and 1033 resource teachers. (p. 9)

In addition to the teams for complex pedagogical evaluation created at all regional inspectorates of education, there are teams of experts at kindergartens and schools where children with special educational needs are integrated. Such teams are formed at special kindergartens and schools where children with impairment are educated.

Funding sources: The training of resource teachers is financed by the ministry of education. It has developed work profile of the resource teacher. Regional inspectorates of education offer methodological support. Resource centres exist in regional towns.

In 2005 the “Teachers of children with impairment” programme includes 174 unemployed teachers and other 176 individuals. The funds spent are 560 000 BGN. For the first quarter of 2006, the programme employed for one month 221 teachers; 200 012 BGN have been spent. Teachers work by special rules for children with impairment.

History of the model: Legislative changes of 2003 and the implementation of National plan for integrating children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases in the education system imposed the training and introduction at schools of the “resource teacher” profession. The idea of integration of children with impairment in mass schools has become a part of educational policies and practices in Bulgaria. Before, these children were placed at assistance schools for children with impairment. The new approach is that they should be adapted and integrated more successfully if they are in an environment of normal physical and mental development. The “resource teacher” profession exists in all 28 former regional towns where resource centres are established.

Number of participants:

At the moment in the country there are 7500 students with special educational needs and 1033 resource teachers. (p. 9)

Location:

In all former 28 regional towns there are resource centres. (p. 9)

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: Resource teachers make liaison between children with special educational needs and teachers; they accompany children with impairment and make their stay at the mass school.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: Creating opportunities for children with special educational needs to be integrated in mass schools.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The results of children who study with resource teachers and those who stay at special assistance schools.

Perception regarding the impact of the recession on this model: Recession will have a negative impact because funds are needed for the teaching of children with special educational needs.



**Directorate “Policy in Vocational and Continuous Education”,
Ministry of Education and Science
Interview with SN (Expert)**

STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Is there a central committee in your government department with specific responsibility for:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

If yes, are there representatives from the at risk target groups involved in these committees?

This is the Consultative Council consisting of the two ministers – of Labour and Social Policy and of Education and Science. At expert level, there are working groups engaged with the abovementioned issues. In the working groups, there are representatives also of the Ministry of Economics and Energetics, NAPOO, NSI.

There are no representatives of the target groups at risk.

What are the obstacles to establishing any of these committees in your government ministry?

There are no such obstacles.

Is there a position of responsibility in your government department, specifically to develop and monitor implementation on these issues:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

This process is monitored by means of a number of laws – The Professional Education Act which was amended in 2008, The Higher Education Act, The Act on encouraging employment; many decrees, statutes, strategies, national programmes; plans coming with the strategies.

In other words, if progress is not made in these areas who takes responsibility to drive things forward?

The responsibility is on the part of those who take decisions, i.e. the members of the working groups at the ministries.

Are there any specific structures for communication at a strategic level between regional, local and national level with regard to:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

The Ministry of Education and Science executes communication by means of its RIO (regional inspectorates on education), and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – by means of regional offices on employment and the employment services. In this way, the ministries give their directions for work, management documents and decisions; they also get feedback from the regional services and offices. It can be said that an exchange of opinion and coordination is supported.

Does your government ministry provide any support for individuals with specific responsibility for developing adult education services at a local or regional level, i.e., Adult Education Organisers?

Yes. At RIO there are experts who are responsible for vocational education and training. Training seminars are carried out; the experts perform methodological and executive functions with regard teachers of vocational training. The conditions for professional internships at enterprises and firms are monitored – whether they comply with the requirements. Also, the Department develops State Educational Requirements for professions; on their basis, textbooks for vocational education, including electronic ones, are written.

Are there structures for dialogue and a common strategy on any of these areas, between government departments of Education, Justice and Employment? How can this dialogue be improved?

In fact, one of our joint themes is on schools in prisons where, in addition to the general education courses, the prisoners learn a certain profession. The schools are located in the prisons but the minister of MES signs the plan for registering students. The actual vocational training is within the scope of the responsibilities of our Department because the teaching is done according to SER prepared by the Department. We also work together with the labour services, and employment offices, because the literacy courses for unemployed and illiterate persons, most of whom are Roma, are taught at the schools by teachers from the education system with syllabi and textbooks approved by MES. In connection with “employment”, we work together with NAPOO which licenses vocational centres; but we have many joint actions, including National Strategy for continuing vocational training 2005-2010 developed jointly with NAPOO and MTCP.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Is there a national and/or government strategy for:

- a) social inclusion
- b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups
- c) lifelong learning
- d) literacy
- e) the non-formal education sector

If yes, are there specific targets set for progress in this strategy?

Yes. There is a National Strategy for Lifelong Learning of 2008.

The most important documents connected with social inclusion, access for traditionally underrepresented groups, literacy, lifelong learning are:

- √ *National Programme for school education and preschool education 2006-2015;*
- √ *Strategy for employment 2008-2015;*
- √ *National Strategy for LL 2008;*
- √ *National Strategy for continuing vocational education 2005-2010.*

Each document is a specific policy directed at social inclusion and continuing education of different groups, including underrepresented groups. In all documents, there are measures envisaged, directed at vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities.

If yes, is there specific funding allocated for progress on key elements in this strategy?

Yes. Each strategy is financially supported; the sources of the necessary funds are pointed out.

What percentage of your government department budget goes on adult education: a) formal education, b) non-formal education?

I am not sure is such a distinction can be made.

Please comment on measures taken by national government to support adult learning outside the major cities in your country.

Adult education is carried out with the active support of several ministries and working groups; they implement different plans and goals (in particular, MES, MTSP, Ministry of Justice). Each of the abovementioned institutions has its own regional offices and structures; so adult education in small towns is carried out in the same way as in the major cities.

NATIONAL POLICY: FORMAL SECTOR

Is there any State incentive for third level institutions training teachers to reserve places specifically for underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that they can be teachers at a) elementary school level, b) high school level?

At higher schools training teachers, there are no places (quotas) reserved for representatives of ethnic minorities. This is provided by the Higher Education Act and the regulations of universities are in line with the law; the practices of registering students do not digress from this provision. At some universities, there are various solutions of this problem – by means of training teachers to work with ethnic minorities or preparing representatives of the ethnic minorities themselves.

At South-West University, there is a Centre for Continuing Education which has a pedagogical orientation; it trains Roma assistant

teachers and also performs teacher training for teachers who work in Roma communities.

At Thracian University, the Pedagogical Faculty has a Centre for Continuing Education which offers qualification of teachers of Turkish language and also a one-year-long specialization for further professional qualification for resource teachers (good practice).

Centre for Continuing Education – good practice (at SWU and Thracian University). Mission: to carry out long-term educational, research and applied work in the area of adult education. It executes continuing education of teachers, students and other experts. Forms of education – full time and by correspondence.

MES supports the preparation of assistant teachers (good practice). This is a position related to MES's Strategy for educational integration of ethnic minorities.

What obstacles and/or opportunities in your opinion exist to development of such an incentive?

No such stimuli have been envisaged at state level.

Is there any State incentive for third level institutions training teachers to reserve places specifically for underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that they can enter courses for professions of particular influence in their local community such as a) law, b) social work, c) youth work, d) psychology, e) other?

No such stimuli are offered.

What obstacles and/or opportunities in your opinion exist to use of the school building after school hours for adult education courses?

In practice, schools are juridical persons and with the implementation of the system of delegated budgets schools are interested to carry out more activities which would bring income. From this perspective, school buildings can be used for adult education; everybody can win from that.

Are there particular gaps in employment and training for adults that you envisage developing in the near future?

It is a serious flaw that formal education of adults is still paid; training at vocational centres requires investment on the part of employers or individuals. Employers are not always interested in investing in the training of their staff because they prefer to hire individuals who already possess certified education and qualification, corresponding to the position for which they are appointed. Thus, often people want to increase their qualification but have no money for that. The proportion of individuals who have dropped out from the education system before finishing their education is big – 16.6% (National Strategy for LLL). Those people are predominantly of Roma origin. Thus, a major obstacle for them to get a job (requiring a qualification) is created. They are destined to occupy the low and lowest levels of society. In a situation of crisis, such as the present one, state and employers can spend fewer funds for training and qualification. A vicious circle is thus created.

NATIONAL POLICY: NON-FORMAL SECTOR

Which government department has the main responsibility for funding non-formal educational organisations?

There is no such governmental institution. Non-formal education is not financed by the state.

How would you compare the status and development of the non-formal education sector compared with 5 years ago? Has it expanded or increased?

At the moment, there are many firms and institutions offering educational opportunities – private colleges, centres, NGOs. Especially big is the number of the most often sought courses such as computer studies and language studies (because these are the requirements for the higher positions). It is possible to say that people realize the importance of educational and vocational qualifications and are motivated to keep them at a high level.

What is your opinion on future developments regarding National Government support for *personal development* classes in order to reach those groups most alienated from the traditional mainstream education system (e.g., early school leavers, long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities)?

The National Programme for LLL focuses on these issues but there are no adequate practical actions yet.

What is your opinion on future developments regarding National Government support for *community development* classes in order to reach those groups most alienated from the traditional mainstream education system (e.g., early school leavers, long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities)?

These are the target groups of various governmental programmes, in particular the adopted strategies for continuing learning and LLL. But as I have already said, there are no practical actions encompassing the majority of these groups yet. The employment offices organize literacy courses in school buildings; there are resources from structural funds but there are still many individuals who remain with low education and low qualification.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

What are the main obstacles to establishing a mechanism for the recognition of prior non-formal learning and work experience in order to open access for adults to the education system?

The main obstacle is the existing belief that “examination” is the best and most efficient form of proving qualifications and knowledge. There is a conviction that the proof of qualification and knowledge by certificates and other forms of presenting prior learning would lead to unreal recognition of qualifications.

How can these obstacles, in your view, be overcome?

By including more experts in this area, counting expert experience from countries where the system of validation is more developed.

What plans need to be developed for further flexibility of accreditation systems by the State?

In our education system, vocational centres are licensed by NAPOO. This is a form of accreditation because in order to carry out vocational training the institutions must comply with certain requirements. Private schools must be accredited before they start their operation; many documents are required; thus they prove their preparedness to teach; that includes the qualification of the teachers. The municipal and state schools are part of this system together with vocational high schools are controlled by MES. They are inspected by RIO which give them methodological support. Universities and colleges after secondary level are in the system of higher education which has a National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency.

FUTURE PLANS

What, in your opinion, is your government department's priority issues to improve access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation?

Priorities are related to target groups described in detail in the National Strategy for LLL, in particular ethnic minorities, people with special educational needs, unemployed, illiterate, socially deprived individuals. This subject matter is dealt with by the Regulations for admitting students at state and municipal schools where the number of physically impaired persons is specified.

What changes do you hope will be achieved in 5 years time to promote access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation?

With the unfolding of the National Strategy for LLL, with the implementation of the plans for action in line with it, I hope real advance will be achieved because the measures envisaged are progressive.

What changes do you realistically expect will be achieved in 5 years time to promote access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation?

- √ reserved places yes or no
- √ free childcare
- √ access officers in each third level institution
- √ outreach strategies for each community

Reserved places as a quota exist at schools after year 7. Otherwise, there are no quotas for higher schools envisaged by the HEA. There are certain provisions such as reduced semester fees. There are social scholarships given in case of low family income. Free child care (kindergartens) is provided for socially deprived families. Access to educational institutions in compulsory age – 16 years – is guaranteed; parents are even liable to sanctions if they do not send their children to school. After the age of 16 up to 18 or 19, education is free.

Please list your priority target groups to improve access to third level education.

These are the children with physical and mental damages, socially deprived, ethnic minorities, school drop-outs.

What are the biggest obstacles to progress regarding promotion of access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, as well as social inclusion, lifelong learning, literacy and the non-formal education sector?

In the first place this is the poor interest of parents (Roma) in their children's education. This is a mass phenomenon which can be observed in different regions and towns. Lack of good living conditions of these children – of ethnic minorities and socially deprived families – lack of positive parental model. On the part of the state, probably the measures for keeping children at school must be strengthened by supporting the form of all-day teaching and opening various forms of optional studies in which Roma children would be interested. In 2005, MES adopted the Strategy of educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities (2005-2015) in which different measures are envisaged.

Additional questions based on SP3:

For the increasing of access of traditionally underrepresented groups, in this country, there is a tendency of institutions of basic and higher education to lower entrance fees. Please describe the way government facilitates these good practices.

Studies at state and municipal schools is free. Higher schools have autonomy and MES does not interfere with it.

In this country, there is no institution at any educational level does not have additional classes. Bearing in mind that some of the adult learners who are at basic education level consider the education programme too difficult, how in your opinion should we design a national policy supporting adult learners by means of introducing additional classes at all educational levels?

Additional classes are important. Partially, this problem is solved by means of all-day teaching and the role of teachers-educators. This is an effective form in the case of Roma children. In many places this form cannot be realized because the number of educators depends on the number of students; in villages, because of migration, there are too few children and educators cannot be appointed. So with the introduction of centre schools, with the bussing of children, this problem is partially solved.

There is a tendency for the institutions of basic and higher education to decrease the expenditure on books and examination fees. Please describe the way government supports good practices.

In school education and vocational training, the state finances the whole process of preparation and qualification.

Some institutions of secondary education in this country reserve places for groups in underrepresented situation. In your opinion, what type of national strategy of preserving the places for underrepresented groups should be designed by the government at the secondary and tertiary levels?

The regulations on the acceptance of students at state and municipal schools treats this question. I have already answered it.

Adult learners with basic and secondary education point out that the care for their children is an obstacle to their participation in the educational process. How could national policy support adult learners who are looking after children, especially with regard to basic and secondary education?

It is certain that if childcare is offered – free of charge – more parents would continue their education. However at this stage this is not provided.

In your opinion, what is the most effective way for increasing the access of disadvantaged groups to formal education?

- √ reducing the enrolment fees
- √ awarding grants to students from these groups
- √ organizing classes for helping disadvantaged students
- √ organizing preparatory classes
- √ reserving some places for students from these groups

By setting a special quota with places reserved for them when many new individuals from ethnic minorities would want to register as students.

In your opinion, what is the fairest way for increasing the access of disadvantaged groups to formal education?

- √ reducing the enrolment fees
- √ awarding grants to students from these groups
- √ organizing classes for helping disadvantaged students
- √ organizing preparatory classes
- √ reserving some places for students from these groups

By organizing preparatory courses when they can show what they have learnt.

Which underrepresented groups do you think are the most endangered, i.e. risk social exclusion

- ✓ representatives of minorities
- ✓ socially underprivileged
- ✓ single parents
- ✓ school drop-outs
- ✓ unemployed
- ✓ orphans
- ✓ former prisoners

Representatives of minorities, school dropouts, unemployed, former prisoners.

Do you have a policy and programme especially directed at risk groups:

- ✓ representatives of minorities
- ✓ socially underprivileged
- ✓ single parents
- ✓ school drop-outs
- ✓ unemployed
- ✓ orphans
- ✓ former prisoners

For the representatives of minorities at VTU, Thracian University, Sofia University, SWU, there are CCE in which pedagogical experts are trained for work in Roma communities or Roma individuals are trained as teachers (VTU). For socially underprivileged, there are social scholarships and preferences for placing in student housing. With regard single parents, there is no social policy or programme. For school drop-outs, there are opportunities at vocational centres (paid, licensed by NAPOO), vocational high schools (state, free of charge) and colleges (private and state, fees). For unemployed, there is teaching or retraining

in programmes under structural funds; information for them is spread through the bureaus for unemployment of MTSP (regional) and employment offices (regional). Orphans are placed at schools for children without parents' control and are given special stipends. Former prisoners have had opportunities to attend prison schools which are managed by the Ministry of Justice. After coming out of prison, their educational opportunities are the same as those of other people but practice shows that most often they join groups educated by various non-governmental organizations.

GOOD PRACTICES

A. ASSISTANT TEACHERS

Objectives of the practice: Acquiring of qualification by Roma young men and women which contributes for:

- improving attendance of school by Roma children,
- active participation of parents in the process of education and integration,
- desegregation of education and participation in the education process of Roma children at Bulgarian schools.

According to the work profile of the assistant-teacher approved by MES in 2003, some of the new responsibilities include:

- support of teachers in the teaching to children and students for the achievement of the required level of mastery of Bulgarian language;
- support of communication between teachers and students;

- cooperation in the interaction with parents;
- participation in the educational process and extramural activities under the guidance of a teacher;
- assistance of teachers in the choice of appropriate methods, approaches and materials for the teaching process.

Work profiles of assistant-teachers of non-governmental have a different focus. They are usually called mediators or school coordinators/advisers; the focus is on the social rather than pedagogical functions.

The training of assistant-teachers includes theoretical preparation, practice at schools and joint training with teachers. It is a priority of NGOs with the participation of RIO at MES.

MES supports the preparation of assistant teachers, a position which is connected with the Strategy of MES for the educational integration of ethnic minorities. (p. 5)

Target groups: Roma young men and women with completed secondary education. The selection is done by regional inspectorates of education, municipal experts, principals of schools and non-governmental organizations.

Assistant teachers depend on whether there are Roma children (and their number) at the respective Bulgarian school or class because according to Bulgarian legislation it is a question of parents' decision whether a child will be registered at a school. Parents decide if the child will attend a Roma school or will be included in programmes for attending a Bulgarian school. In addition, assistant-teachers are not present at every school and every region. In other words, the presence of the assistant-teacher is not a compulsory element of the school environment of Bulgarian schools. At the same time, MES has a Strategy for educational integration of children of ethnic minorities (2005-2015) which highlights the need and sustains the introduction of assistant teachers in the regions where there are Roma children.

Funding sources: The salaries of assistant teachers are provided by:

- non-governmental organizations which work on projects on desegregation;
- Centre for educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities at the MES which finances projects for schools and municipalities. The Centre was established with the purpose of executing the National Strategy for educational integration of children of ethnic minorities;
- municipalities.

History of the model: The beginning was laid by a project of non-governmental organizations for “desegregation of Roma schools”. The goal was to have students from Roma quarters to be transported to the central parts of towns where they would study together with children of ethnic Bulgarians, Turks, etc. The project began in the town of Vidin in the 2000-2001 school year and later was continued in 6 other towns – Montana, Plevan, Sliven, Haskovo, Stara Zagora and Sofia. The idea of the initiative and its financing came from the Programme of Roma participation of Open Society Institute in Budapest. In parallel, a desegregation project is realized in Samokov and Kjustendil financed by SEGA Foundation and the British Council. The objective of the projects for desegregation is the creation of ground for intercultural education in which students of different ethnic groups study at common schools and teachers helped by assistant-teachers (representing the same ethnic group of the children) contributing to the integration of minority children and respect for their ethno-cultural differences. The essence of the project (directed at overcoming of educational deficits of Roma people) embraces the need for stirring up the Roma community as an active subject – parents, assistant-teachers and children.

The next step in the establishment of the “assistant-teacher” is the Strategy for educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities (2005-2015) whose priorities are the full-fledged integration of Roma children and students by desegregation of kindergartens and schools in the separated Roma quarters and

the creation of conditions for equal access to quality education outside them. For the purpose of implementing these measures, there is a five-year National Action Plan (June 2005) which foresees concrete actions, division of responsibilities, evaluation of the necessary finances and expected outcomes. As a result of the measures undertaken for the execution of the first priority of the Strategy in the 2005-2006 school year, the following results have been achieved:

- 106 assistant-teachers support educational integration of Roma children at general education schools;
- 150 assistant-teachers have passed training courses at higher schools.

The Strategy has no budget financing. In order to support its implementation, a Centre of educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities at MES which finances projects for schools and municipalities.

Number of participants: About 30-40 per year.

Location: At present, assistant-teachers work in most regions in which there are Roma schools.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: The preparation and work of assistant-teachers contributes to:

- the building of broad cooperation between institutions and organizations at local level engaged with the issue;
- the formation of teams of teachers and assistant-teachers;
- the formation of social skills for work with Roma families;
- the application of modern interactive methods.

The appointment of assistant-teachers creates new opportunities for education and employment. It facilitates the formation of interest in education in young Roma people. Education is a prerequisite for studies in the programme “Primary school pedagogy with Roma language” (VTU).

In the process of integration of Roma children in concrete schools, there are various problems which affect the interrelationships Roma – Bulgarians, teachers – Roma children, Roma parents – teachers. In many cases, Roma assistant-teachers cannot solve them on their own.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: In Bulgaria, there are 330 schools in which 50% and more of the children are Roma. Because of that, it is necessary:

- investments on the part of the state;
- extensive work with Roma parents;
- continuing the process of desegregation of education at Roma schools and integrating Roma children in Bulgarian schools.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Comparison of learning achievement of Roma children at integrated and segregated schools

This is done in two detailed publications of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC). The first one is of 2002 representing the “first steps” in this direction (BHC, The First Steps, Sofia, 2002). On the basis of interviews with leaders of project, representatives of regional inspectorates of education, parents of children included in the project, principals of schools, Bulgarian parents of children of host schools, Roma activists, Romas working in the administration, the activities, problems, obstacles, advantages¹ and practices are analysed.

The other publication is of 2005 (BHC, Non-governmental projects for desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria, Sofia, 2005). In it, BHC presents the project and its effectiveness. It is shown by defining learning success of

¹ A special place is reserved for the criteria for success [Kanev, K. (Ed.) The First Steps. 2002, 119]: number of participants and number of children remaining in the educational ghetto, success of children, outreach of schools in the town or municipality, effective support of Roma children at the host schools, attracting Roma parents to the process of desegregation, provision of extramural activities, provision of support of local authorities, financial effectiveness.

students included in the desegregation projects in the six towns and the ones who remained at segregated schools.

**B. ONE-YEAR LONG SPECIALIZATION STUDY
FOR FURTHER PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION
IN TURKISH LANGUAGE AT THE CENTRE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION
AT THRACIAN UNIVERSITY IN STARA ZAGORA**

Objectives of the practice: Integrating into the system of higher education of teachers of Turkish language.

The specialization study is done at the Centre of continuing education (CCE) at the Pedagogical Faculty of Thracian University.

The mission of the Centre is to carry out long-term teaching, research and applied work in the area of adult education. The Centre performs continuing education for teachers, students and other specialists as part of their professional and career development.

The objectives of the Centre are:

- to train teachers and other individuals at career age in the context of the idea of lifelong learning;
- to offer further teaching to individuals at pre-career age in connection with their future professional qualification and development;
- to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of Bulgarian education in line with European standards and norms.

CCE organizes and executes teaching in direct and indirect form for additional professional qualification, long-term postgraduate qualification, special courses, short-term thematic courses and individual consultations.:

- a) Special studies for further and/or new professional qualification (length of 12 months with 220-600 hours);
- b) Postgraduate specialization study in a given study field and professional-pedagogical specialization (length 12 months with 205-230 hours);
- c) Special courses for further professional preparation (length 1-3 months with 30-220 hours);
- d) Short-term thematic courses and individual consultations (length 1-3 days with 8-24 hours).

After successful completion of the given form of qualification, the participants receive certificated approved by MES – certificate, diploma, etc.

The forms of qualification studies are offered at the Pedagogical Faculty, at municipalities or at schools. It is possible to have qualification courses designed with regard of the customer's needs.

The one-year specialization course for further professional qualification in Turkish language includes 3 semesters. The curriculum includes disciplines such as Turkish language, language teaching methodology for bilingual children in primary school, methods of teaching Turkish, ICT and Internet at school, text and communication in the education process, methods of active learning – interactive methods and techniques, theory and practice of didactic tests, technology of educational research, educational projects, pedagogical management.

Specialisation courses are organized with a minimum number of 12 candidates. Individual specialization is organized after negotiating and approving of an individual study plan.

Target groups: Holders of higher education degrees in pedagogy, students at Thracian University.

Funding sources: Fees are paid by students at the CCE: fee per specializing student 450 EURO, student – 230 EURO.

History/background of the model: Specialisation courses are offered since 2002 when CCE was established by a decree of the Council of Ministers.

Number of participants: 25-40 individuals are educated annually.

Location: Centre for Continuing Education at Thracian University, Stara Zagora.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The specialization programme educates pedagogical cadres engaged with the teaching of Turkish at schools. Thracian University is located in a region with a concentration of Turkish population which is interested in studying Turkish language.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The continuation and extension of this practice is determined by the Turkish minority in the country, especially in South Bulgaria.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Number of specializing students enrolled who began working at respective schools.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The crisis has influenced negatively the paying capacity of people; this has lead to decreasing the potential of individuals who despite their willingness to continue their studies cannot do that.

**C. ONE-YEAR LONG SPECIALIZATION STUDY
FOR FURTHER PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION “RESOURCE TEACHER”
AT THE CENTRE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION
AT THRACIAN UNIVERSITY IN STARA ZAGORA**

Objectives of the practice: Including in the system of higher education of resource teachers whose work is directed at working with children with physical and mental impairment at mass general education schools instead of special schools.

The one-year long specialization for obtaining the professional qualification “Resource Teacher” is 3 semesters long. The curriculum includes disciplines such as special psychology and psychodiagnostics, special pedagogy, integration and social adaptation of children with special needs, integral education, teamwork, sign language and ductile speech, Braille script, ethnic pedagogy.

The courses are organized with a minimum number of 12 candidates. Individual specialization studies are organized after negotiating and approving an individual study plan.

Target groups: Individuals with pedagogical education.

Funding sources: Studies are paid by the individuals enrolled in the course. Fee per student – 300 EURO.

History of the model: The specialization course has been offered since 2002 when the Centre was established.

Number of participants: 30-40 individuals are taught annually.

Location: Centre for Continuing Education at Thracian University, Stara Zagora.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The training of a sufficient number of teachers who can work with children with impairment is a way of realizing the idea of integration of impaired children in mass schools.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The extending of the preparation of resource teachers will allow more children with impairment and special learning needs to be integrated in mass schools.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The basic criteria for assessing the results of the specialization study are the number of graduates who began working at schools and also the results achieved by the children working with resource teachers in comparison with those who remain in special schools.

Perception regarding the impact of the recession on this model: Recession will influence negatively because it influences peoples' income. That will impede some of those willing to enroll for further teacher training because it is paid.

Basic School with Vocational Technical School

at the Prison Dormitory

Interview with SI (Director)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

A general picture of the Bulgarian penitentiary system will show that the average number of imprisoned persons per year is about 11 thousand, distributed in 12 prisons and one reformatory.

The first educational institution to be opened in a prison was the school at the Boychinovtsi Reformatory for male juvenile offenders. After 1956 the number of such schools grew to 10. After 1989 about half of them were closed down. By May 2009 there were 6 schools operating in prisons, of which 5 secondary and one primary.

The basic school in Kazichene was created around 1980 and was initially attached to the prison dormitory in Kremikovtsi, founded in the early 1960s (1960-62). The school in Kremikovtsi was in a lovely building of an original style of architecture, especially built in the 1980s to house the school, but in 2002, in order to meet other needs of the prison, the school was transferred to the prison dormitory in Kazichene.

Prison schools, as all educational institutions, underwent considerable changes with the start of social transformations after 1989. But their case was additionally complicated, inasmuch as they, as institutions, are subordinated to the Ministry of Education but are located within

prisons, which are institutions subordinated to other ministries: before the changes this was the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and after, the Ministry of Justice. This had an unavoidable impact on the discipline and ways in prison schools, which were inevitably influenced – for better or for worse – by the general democratization in society. Moreover, by an amendment to the law on national education, the maximum age of compulsory education was reduced to 16. Hence, school attendance for prisoners, who are generally above that age, has become entirely voluntary. That is why the administrations of both institutions - prisons and schools attached to prisons - are emphasizing the need for motivation and incentives for prisoners to continue their education and attend school. The very first result of this situation was a drastic decrease in the number of schools – dropping from 10 in number - one in each large prison, to 5 at present. Moreover, each of these schools has a specific characteristic, mainly because of the specific regime for serving sentences in each prison. In the transitory type of prisons, of which the Kazichene prison dormitory is one, the regime is milder: the prisoners have the right to go out to work and go on home leave, which gives them a wider choice of ways to spend their time.

The basic school in Kazichene goes up to 8th grade; it has had a contradictory history. It was founded about 1980 at the dormitory in Kremikovtsi. The two prison dormitories – that in Kremikovtsi and Kazichene – are formally branches of Sofia Prison. The prison regime in Kremikovtsi is more closed, which has definitely had an impact for greater participation of prisoners in education. At one point, as many as 150 – 160 persons were going to school there. As mentioned, a special building was built for the school. In 2002, due to some other considerations, the school was moved to the Kazichene prison dormitory.

At the new location the number of students dropped to about 50-60 persons per year. Being a transitory prison, its main objective is the re-socialization of prisoners for life outside after their sentences are served; the opportunity prisoners here have to go outside the prison to work contributes greatly to this goal. The prisoners in Kazichene are more mobile. The relatively short prison sentences – up to 5 years – does not make it possible to cover the whole education cycle of the school. Together with the general decrease of average educational level for the entire population of Bulgaria, the low level is evident most drastically in such places, and the efforts of the administration and the teaching staff are directed mostly to making the students literate.

This picture leads to the general conclusion that teaching in prisons has declined after the 1990s. At present, however, a stronger desire is evident for rethinking the educational traditions and seeking ways of reviving prison education – such is the ambition of the Central Prison Administration, the separate prison administrations, the social workers responsible for prisoners, and the teachers themselves; this revival of teaching is done by introducing teaching options in the smaller prisons as well, by the accelerated learning of the primary school material for 1st to 4th grade through so-called education modules.

- **Target groups**

Male prisoners above the age of 16 without completed basic education. The majority of these prisoners are of the Roma or Turkish ethnic minority, and are illiterate – with primary or secondary illiteracy. Since these are prisoners in a transitory type of prison, their remaining prison sentences are up to 5 years. Participation in the education process is entirely voluntary, so that the question of motivating the prisoners to go to school is of foremost importance.

- **Funding sources**

The school functions under the Ministry of Education and the municipality. That is where the resources for teachers' salaries and office materials come from. The rest of the costs – stationary and maintenance (electricity, water, heating) – are assumed by the prison. As in all Bulgarian schools, textbooks are free.

- **Institution's mission**

This is a small school – it teaches 60-70 persons a year from grade 1 to 8. This amounts to about 10% of all prisoners. In fact, a far larger percentage of the prisoners are in need of schooling – 40-50%, but school attendance in this prison is entirely voluntary, since under the current law, education is compulsory only up to the age of 16. In this situation, the efforts of the teaching staff is to build enduring motivation in prisoners to get an basic education, which will give them greater opportunities to get additional vocational training afterwards and get employment after release from prison.

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

In order to stimulate prisoners to attend school, the teaching process is organized in taking into account their working hours in the mornings. That is why classes are held between 3 and 7 PM. According to another rule, hours in class are counted as working hours, and when a prisoner goes to work, two days are counted as three days of the sentence he is serving.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN PRISON (FORMAL EDUCATION)

BACKGROUND FEATURES OF THE PRISON

In the Kazichene prison dormitory there are about 650-700 prisoners. This prison, similarly to the prison dormitory in Kremikovtsi, where the school was located until 2002, is part of Sofia Prison and is of a transitory type.

Because they are differentiated, the prisoners are. The ones here are of transitory type, while there they are [offenders who have committed] premeditated crimes, first time offenders – in Kremikovtsi they are first time offenders with grave crimes. While Sofia Prison is mostly for recidivists. They are differentiated... so they won't influence one another, there are certain things taken into consideration for this. The Kazichene prison is of a transitory kind. If I have to tell you what transitory type means... for instance a prisoner is serving a 10-year sentence... they first send him to the Kremikovtsi prison dormitory, which is of a closed type, he goes to Kremikovtsi, serves a certain part of the sentence there, let's say about 50%, 'the balance' as they call it here, and then, in order to re-socialize him, and so that he will be closer, they transfer him to us, this being a transitory type prison. This means they're on a more liberal regime, they have the right to go out to work with work crews, to go out. Because it's quite a different situation when he has a 10-year sentence and they let him go out, clearly, he's sure to escape... That's why there's a transitory type. We have people from almost everywhere in Bulgaria here with us. From different prisons, since they have the right to a transitory type when

they've shown good behaviour, there's a commission that decides. We, for our part, meet the needs of the prisoners [to be educated] – whoever wants to. (p. 1-2)

The priority task of the transitory type of prison is to prepare prisoners for life after they are released from prison:

Here it's an open type, a transitory type, which means that each week or once a month he has the right to home leave – Saturday and Sunday. Freedom! This is the trend, because, if you keep a person in a closed type of prison all the time, when he gets out, he... The point is to incorporate him into society. Because the aim is, when he gets out, to re-incorporate him, because what will become of him if you don't incorporate him? (p. 22)

EDUCATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN PRISON

Education in prison has some specific features; it is subjected to more rules and restrictions, but, as in all spheres of public life, it changed radically after 1989. That explains why the respondent often makes comparisons between the two periods.

I'd like to share with you that until 1990 the prisons were under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, now they're under the Ministry of Justice. After that article 39 of the Law on Execution of Penalties was amended. What I mean is that only 4 or 5 schools remained out of 10 to 14. In general this article 39 of the law that I'm talking about stated that: those imprisoned under the age of 40 are subject to obligatory training. But this is in contradiction with the Law on National Education [now in force], where [education] is compulsory up to the age of 16. That is why now we enroll the prisoners in school if they desire it or at the recommendation of the social workers. You can't oblige a person who's 35 years old, or 40, or even 25, to go to school. (p. 2)

Further on the respondent comes back to this point:

But we can't force him to, like I told you. That was until 1990 – they would march in formation into the classroom, it was a bit like in the army. But now with democracy... I was against it myself. You can take a horse to the

water, but you can't make him drink. The prisoner must be persuaded. If a person is not persuaded that he must do something... He must feel the need – not give him water when he's not thirsty. That's always been my rule, and I reckon that better results are achieved when he has some desire for it. (p. 13)

Everything indicates that this drastic reduction of the number of schools is to some degree a result of the change from compulsory to optional education for prisoners. On the other hand, new forms of more intensive teaching in the primary school level are sought for or being rediscovered.

The people are... these are people with primary or secondary illiteracy, in other words, who have never been enrolled in school – this is one group, but there's another, who have gone to school for a while. Just now we're preparing modules, their approval by the Ministry of Education is forthcoming, so that they [prisoners] can get a recognized primary education [up to 5th grade] in a shorter time. For instance in one year, for one module, 1st and 2nd grade is recognized. This possibility used to exist. Just to give you an example, I want to go back in time – they used to study the material for 1st and 2nd grade, studying the 1st grade material during the first term and the 2nd grade during the second term. But this was abolished with the new study programmes, now everything proceeds normally. (p. 3)

As regards the school at the Kazichene prison dormitory and the prisoners attending it, the picture is this:

The school capacity is small. When we moved the school here, there were between 60 and 70 students a year, from 1st to 8th grade. (p. 3)

We cover the needs of those aged 20 to 40, only men. These people are meant for a transitory type prison, they have served part of their sentence somewhere, and here the penalties are up to 5 years, with a remainder of the sentence up to 5 years. (p. 3)

Otherwise the requirements regarding the teaching process do not differ from those in ordinary schools:

We teach the general education subjects, the compulsory general education subjects. I could even show you the teaching programme, we teach them. (p. 4)

We try to be up do date, to meet the requirements. Because we study on the basis of teaching programmes that come from the Ministry, the 1st to 8th grade subjects. Compared with other schools, we don't study B category subjects... We have a special teaching programme. But apart from that it's like the normal thing. But physical education, work education, music – these subjects are not taught. On the other hand we have more intensive study of Bulgarian language. Why? I'll tell you right off. Because we're dealing mostly with Roma (Gypsies, actually, because they, the Roma, feel offended when you call them that), with Gypsies and Turks. So the emphasis is on Bulgarian language. (p. 3)

On the basis of long years of experience as teacher and director of the school, the respondent shares with the interviewer a classification of sorts that he has made of prisoners according to their attitude to education:

If I must characterize them, there are three categories of prisoners, at least I divide them into these groups – there are people who want to learn. This group is the smallest in our school, but they have the desire and they feel, they sense that it's something they need. For instance, especially since last year, when having an 8th grade education became a requirement for obtaining a driver's license. This attracts them... this stimulates them. Especially those who have 7th grade, who have 6th grade education. They have just 2-3 years left, at least that much [education] they can finish. So he has a perspective, that's good. But this kind of people is few. The other group, the largest one, among those who should be going to school (because those who should be going are a large group, a terribly big percentage), the large group is of those who are hesitating. As long as I talk to the guy, motivate him, together with the social worker, he's willing. When he leaves, when he goes out, he meets somebody: Why, give it up, chuck it! And they make him hesitate. And there's another group, people who are definitely against it. Give me money, don't give me schooling! Don't give me advice... And the incentives for reducing the

sentence and all that... it was a good thing that they require completed 8th grade for being a driver, for taking a course in driving. (p. 8-9)

As for the school environment, it is comparable to the environment in other formal education institutions.

It's true that, after moving from Kremikovtsi, where there was a special building for the purpose, the school is now housed in a renovated dormitory, which was originally built for the youth festival in 1968. Moving was necessary in order to solve other problems of the prison, but the respondent took the liberty of expressing his disagreement and disappointment, even bitterness at the thought of so much effort made in vain:

I'll tell you outright why it was done – in order to improve the living conditions, because in Kremikovtsi they have shacks, the living conditions are very bad in the prison. So, in order to improve the living conditions of the prisoners, the school was moved to Kazichene, in order to vacate the building with a view to improving the conditions. I don't know how far the situation has improved. The classrooms were turned into cells! Unfortunately! (p. 11)

At present the situation has been normalized:

The environment is that of a school, there are specific classrooms, very well equipped with everything needed. A quite normal teaching process. (p. 6)

A school library is maintained as well:

We have a school library with all the school literature needed for literature classes from 1st to 8th grade, we maintain it.

Interviewer: And do they borrow books?

They do, we give them, they show some interest. (p. 3)

The specific tasks of teaching prisoners begin with determining which grade they will be in:

We, the class tutors and the leadership of the school, it is our duty to find out – because they've studied up to some grade – to select people for the grades. The social worker gets the address of the respective school, we send them a letter and we get an answer. For instance, Ivan Stoyanov was in the fifth grade in such and such a year. No matter how illiterate he is, because he has probably forgotten what he learned if he hasn't practiced it, but because he

has completed the fifth grade, I am fully justified to enroll him in the sixth grade... I've been in the system for 30 years and I've always said... that this is... I don't know, a mistake on the part of justice, that's what I feel it is. Because you can't bring a man to court if he doesn't have documents about his education level. But they accept whatever they [the accused] say – and that's that. And usually they [the accused] hide the facts, it's not real. This causes us a lot of difficulties. Because, okay, a person stands before the court, but why don't they ask him to show some kind of certificate, I feel this is necessary, why don't they demand of him, so that in his file and his card it will be written that Ivan Stoyanov has completed, let's say, the seventh grade or has incomplete fifth grade. They simply don't know what kind of person is facing them... there should be a space for filling in his education. There is, they do ask, but whatever the defendant says, that's what they write down on his card. That's why we make them take a test, we test them, so as to see approximately what their situation is. We have the permission of the Ministry, [tests] are administered to the persons for whom no documents can be found, because there are many schools that no longer exist, in other cases they don't remember where they went to school. And the test is administered. It's easy to see when a person has been to school, when he can handle a text, when he can read, when he understands what he is reading. Because they read a lot now, but they don't know what they are reading. (p. 4)

A specific feature of the teaching, according to the respondent, is the need, sometimes the imperative need, for an individual approach and working individually with the student.

The practice is, practice consists in this, that the classes are reduced here. They range from two persons – that's the rule according to law – to fourteen. But with the introduction of delegated budgets, we couldn't even teach three or four or five people and make up a class, for the simple reason that we can't support them. And since last year, classes must have at least ten-twelve-fifteen persons if they are to cope. The practice – the practice is to work individually. Individual work is done with each prisoner. For the simple reason that they are at different intellectual levels, and have graduated at different times, their levels of knowledge differ. So you have to approach each one

individually. With one of them we start from this point, with the other from that point, that's the solution – working individually. The practice is to emphasize on individual work with the prisoner. (p. 6)

I told you, each teacher in the course of work... works individually with each separate guy, it's all in the form of individual work depending on how far each of them has advanced in his development for the given class... My colleagues know the boys – five or six boys in a class, they know how far each of them has gotten, I've even recommended that they keep a record in a notebook. We know – he's gotten that far with Ivan, that far with Stoyan, this one can do this, that one can do that. At the end of the year, they [the teachers] now write references at the end of the school year, which are given to the social worker; after all, he has a say in this. We constantly keep in touch with the social worker. (p. 12)

In this connection it should be noted that there is no option of being a private student, for such a practice would make the existence of a school pointless:

To get an education in our country, the requirements are as set down in the Law on National Education. He cannot not go to school, he cannot sit for tests like a private student, when there is a school at hand... there is no practice of people appearing before me as private students, for the simple reason that there is a school. In this way we... how should I put it, we would be making the school pointless. Since you have the possibility, you come regularly to study. Because the results are much better when the student assimilates a bit each day. (p. 6)

Since, according to the Law on National Education, education is optional and not compulsory for people who have attained the age of 16, and since the Kazichene prison dormitory is of a transitory type with a more liberal regime, the most often used incentive for prisoners to get educated is tying work hours to schooling hours.

Bulgaria is one of the few countries, I think it is only Bulgaria and Mexico, where, when you work 2 days, they are counted as 3, only Bulgaria and Mexico, I'm not very sure. Bulgaria is one of the few countries, there are very few places like that. So the other incentive that makes them come to school

if they're not at work is that hours of class instruction are counted as work hours. For instance, there are 32 hours of class instruction a week, we recognize, we mark down that they have attended 32 hours, divided by 8 – that's four working days. But only if he has a conscientious attitude to the teaching process and attends school regularly. Those are the incentives. (p. 2)

Later on this rule is mentioned again:

Yes. Hours in class are equated with working hours, divided by eight and as many days as that makes. This is one of the incentives. (p. 5)

Both the organization and the timing of class sessions – everything is arranged in taking into account working hours:

They go to work. We have taken that into account in timing the schooling process in the interval, which is four or five hours of class instruction, set from three to seven or seven thirty. That is when they usually come back from work. We also stimulate them to go to work, because... the money after all. In western countries, I must say... when we've met with Swedes, Norwegians – they've told us that there they pay the prisoner to study. We don't have such a practice, we're a poor country, but since we can't pay, we at least give them the opportunity [recognition of hours of class instruction as working hours]. (p. 2)

But I should immediately add that for them work is the priority, because it is paid, they need money, some of them are heads of families and support them... That's why it's arranged that way, our regime takes into account, that's how we've done it, so he'll have the chance of going to work, getting back, resting for a while, even changing his clothes if needs be, washing up, and then he's welcome in school. (p. 5)

The timing of the study process is only in the afternoon, because their working hours are taken into account (p. 5)

Awards are also used as incentives; these are mainly in the form of home leaves:

Awards as well, the teaching staff recommends the students, for instance the good students, to the leadership of the prison – at the end of the school term, for the 24th of May holiday, home leave awards, home leave – Saturday and Sunday. The prison leadership takes these things into account. But this is at the recommendation of the teachers council, we can't let them go, our teachers council can't, because the prisoners are not in our field of competence, they are in theirs [the competence of the prison]. (p. 5)

Along with this, the school leadership, the teachers, strive to put variety into the study process by holding celebrations, recitals, festivities, just as in ordinary schools:

We always have celebrations – a celebration for Christmas, a celebration for New Year's Day, a celebration for Levski, a celebration for the 24th of May, contests. The most interesting thing is... now there's a group of foreigners who want to study Bulgarian, Bulgarian language. I give them that chance, we accept them... With the permission of the head of the prison we allow them to attend classes, we give them first grade readers, they study, and they've learned a bit, they're even happy about it. So now they even took part and on the 3rd of March holiday they came in second, they learned history better than some of ours... It's very interesting for them to take part in contests. They recite poetry. Some of my colleagues laughed about it, that I make them recite the poem "I'm a little Bulgarian"! Well, he recites it, why not. We even had the following case, a young Turk, a very well read boy, he stood up... and they, from his ethnic group, they started calling him "Traitor!". And he said: Why should I be called a traitor? Because he recited "The Hanging of Vasil Levski" beautifully. They want to demonstrate their abilities among themselves, they have no other place where to demonstrate their abilities. (p. 7-8)

BACKGROUND TO PRISON EDUCATION

Prisons and the schools attached to prisons are subordinated to different ministries:

I'm director of the school, but there's a head of the prison. I'm attached to the Ministry of Education, we're attached to the Ministry of Education, the salaries, everything comes from the Ministry of Education. (p. 5)

According to the respondent, the leadership of the prison has a positive attitude to education of prisoners:

A positive, a positive attitude, no obstacles at all... They are very positively minded, in general, in prisons they show understanding about these matters. (p. 17)

The funding of the school is arranged in the following way:

I can tell you specifically in my school how finances are regulated... The salaries come from the Ministry of Education, and my school in particular is the only one under the municipality, my school is under the municipality. The salaries and the office materials come from there, while the central heating, water, light, heating are on the account of the prison. The textbooks are free, as everywhere, if something is needed, the prison buys it – notebooks, pens, handbooks, from the prison. So they [the prison] are sort of the parents, the parents of the prisoners, because they work, they have revenues. The funds are minimal, but nevertheless... Because they can't buy notebooks, they can't buy pens, they can't buy such things for themselves... But I have a budget, for the time being... It's quite minimal, the most, the most I can spend in a year is five-six hundred leva [250-300 euro]. But these are just for handbooks. Apart from that, electricity, water, what they pay, I don't know their accounts. Because we're situated in the building there, in the block, and these things are accounted as a whole, the water is paid as a whole for the entire dormitory. It's a dormitory – one block in which we are, the school, and two blocks in which they live. Above are the storage spaces and other things. We're sort of tenants there, though we don't pay for consumables. (p. 10)

Since this is a small school in terms of the number of students and teachers, it does not have the capacity to work under projects:

There are, projects there are. In Stara Zagora they work under a project... It's an interesting project, they work with Irish, Irish people visited them, but they are a big school, they have the capacity, they have a closed cycle of 1st to 12th grade and a group of about 60-70 teachers. While my group is 7-8 people. When they broke us down and took the school, they made me lose courage a bit. (p. 18)

As a rule, all the schools attached to prisons offer vocational training, because learning a profession always implies better re-socialization after release. The school in Kazichene also offers it:

It's classified as an basic school with vocational-technical school, because the aim is, together with the basic education – because the people are above the age of 20 – the aim is to give them some profession, we give them first qualification degree as fitters, we took this over from Kremikovtsi, that's what we were teaching when we came here. (p. 1)

As for other vocational courses, there are some. But they lie somewhat outside the parameters of the study of the formal education system, inasmuch as they are organized along another line. There is a great interest shown in these courses, and that is why resources, above all, sponsors, are actively sought for to enable organizing courses; but the condition for enrollment is that course takers must have a completed basic education (8th grade). This requirement, in turn, is used by the school leadership to make the prisoners go to school and motivate them to obtain the required basic education.

As for courses – for those who have completed 8th grade, vocational courses are also given when funds can be found. Specifically in our schools so far, courses have been conducted for bread bakers, for electrical technicians. If there's a possibility, we find sponsors, we form a group, we ensure the material basis for it. They need a classroom and materials. (p. 4)

Interviewer: *Regarding these courses, the vocational ones, can they participate if they want to?*

Yes, if they want to, we enroll them... but basic education is required.
(p. 4-5)

Later on the respondent comes back to this issue:

What can I say about the courses? There are possibilities, there are possibilities, but on the other hand, resources are needed. As for possibilities for conducting courses – there's plenty. And interesting courses. As I told you – we've conducted [courses] for bread bakers, for cooks, there were some initiatives but sponsors must be found, more work must be done. The opportunities are there, the people are there that need it [courses]. They simply need this thing. That's exactly the problem we'll be tackling. (p. 15)

In the respondent's words, the general picture of education in prisons is the following:

Well, I told you, I already answered that question. It's being raised again, we'll hold a seminar on exactly that topic. So the rise of education in prisons was up to 1990. Every prison had a school. After that it underwent a... how should I say it... mass closing down of schools, and from about ten or more, only three or four schools have remained. Just one school was reopened in Vratsa, and so far they are... At present in prisons there are 4 secondary schools – the ones in Vratsa, Lovech, Stara Zagora, and Sliven, where the ladies are. My school is an basic one – it's the fifth. Oh, there's one more secondary school in Boychinovtsi, but that's a reformatory. (p. 11)

Nostalgia for the past can definitely be sensed in the respondent's words:

I now what the schools were like when we were attached to the Ministry of Internal Affairs – you could say there was [more] discipline, and a different, things were regarded in a different way, there were more schools, a lot of work was done. Marching in formation, yes, but nevertheless a lot of work was done. There was fear, there was fear and respect then, and the prisoners... when a prisoner talked to you – hands at the waist, he takes his hat off. Now you can't tell who's the prisoner and who isn't... This democracy sort of played a bad joke on us, but... for me democracy means discipline, to know what you do and when. But these guys misunderstood it. But that's just my opinion. (p. 23-24)

CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION

As was pointed out several times, the school at the prison dormitory in Kazichene is an basic school and goes as far as the 8th grade. Due to the low educational level of the prisoners in it, the efforts of the teaching staff are mostly directed at simply teaching the trainees literacy:

I noticed that the Turks here in the Pazardzhik region, are more literate than those in the regions of Razgrad, Targovishte, who don't even know Bulgarian, it's awful. (p. 16)

And we've got to teach them literacy! Can you imagine that, a 30-year old man, he stares and doesn't understand a thing. And he can't write his name! (p. 21)

As for continuing of education, the respondent discusses this in two aspects. First, regarding the case of continuing education within the system of prison schools, and when the sentence of the prisoner desiring to continue school has not been served:

When he completes 8th grade and wants to study, he submits a request, this request is examined, he is transferred, let's say, from Kazichene, and he goes to the prison in Stara Zagora or Lovech, where he may be enrolled as a student for secondary education. There they offer secondary education. (p. 9-10)

Second, when it is a question of continuing education after release from jail:

After release – well, he is issued a normal document, valid for the whole country. (p. 12)

Apart from this formal aspect of the possibilities of continuing his education, the respondent describes how, through his personal acquaintances and contacts, he strives to direct and facilitate the inclusion of released prisoners in the education system – in case, of course, the prisoner desires it:

I maintain very good contacts with certain acquaintances of mine, the director of Evening High School No. 4 and I are friends. Say, for instance, that I have some boys who want to complete 6th grade, she enrolls students from the 5th grade upwards. And I direct them, why not. And I say the following: When

you graduate here, I give you a document – a certificate of leave or a document for completed grade, a certificate for completed grade with which you can continue wherever you wish. (p. 9)

I simply direct them and even tell them they should say on my behalf that they're coming, or I may take them there personally, I say to them. Those of them that are at all interested are keenly interested: Where should we go? I tell them, no problem about that - I'm thinking of Sofia. Apart from that we direct the, we tell them – as a private student you can sit exams in the local school of your place of residence, the law permits it. You go to the director, you submit a request, and that's all. They set you exam sessions, several sessions, where you can go three, four, several times and pass your exams for a given grade and thus graduate your grades. But you have a base on which to stand. (p. 12)

But what usually happens?

But what generally happens? What generally happens is that, they being of the minority [Gypsies], his environment takes hold of him at once and he forgets about these things. But it would be good for him to have an opportunity... because, when he graduates 8th grade, I give him an alternative... The ones with 8th grade, they have the biggest prospects. They can graduate in something; they can enroll in whatever courses they like. (c. 9)

In some cases the work that these prisoners, serving under a milder, open prison regime, can do outside prison shows them clearly why they must know more, why education is necessary, and this stimulates them to be more tenacious:

There was one case: a guy comes to me and says: I want you to teach me to count. But why? He says they sent him somewhere and he had to count up to one hundred articles in the boxes. He can't count to a hundred. They'll fire me from the job, he said... It's a cruel thing in life, being illiterate! (c. 19-20)

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Prisoners have no access to the Internet and there is no distance education in school. The leadership is making efforts to at least provide computers and computer training:

No, we don't have it [distance training]. We have computers, but we don't permit... We study informatics in the maths room, the maths teacher teaches informatics too. They show a lot of interest. Just now I've prepared a request for 15 computers, if I get them we can set up a special room. We tend to give courses in computers for those who have graduated 8th grade, because it's gaining ground, he must move with the times... They even study the alphabet on the keyboard. This interests them, it's more interesting. He can't write it [letters of the alphabet], but he can recognize it there, then we start to teach him to write. It's meaningful and we try to make it more interesting for them... Once I got ten-fifteen computers from an acquaintance of mine, they had discarded them and were going to throw them away, but they worked! So in each room we put two or three, it does no harm having them there, it will keep them busy. So we're more or less keeping apace with technology, although... (p. 15)

SUPPORT SERVICES IN PRISON

There is a prison psychologist, but no other specialists on problems of education or personality development work in the prison. On the other hand, the social worker institution is well developed:

The social workers are attached to the Ministry of Justice and they are formally detachment commanders. They are like the parents, they keep... keep files – about how much time each has left to serve, they give awards, recommend prisoners for awards, recommend them for amnesty, prepare their references, lead them in life. (p. 12)

Together with this, according to the Statutes for the internal order, social workers are also members of the Teachers Council. We informed them somewhat about how far we had gotten with these boys, whether they were advancing, we call them for a talk with the social worker if they show bad

behaviour. He is interested about their attendance, whether they don't go to school, why not. (p. 13)

PRISONER PROFILES

As the respondent mentioned several times, most of the prisoners are of the Roma and Turkish ethnic groups, displaying primary or secondary illiteracy. Recently there is a growing number of Bulgarians, but they are more educated. The prevalent age group is 20 to 30 years.

I must say that, at the start, when I started work, in nineteen seventy-three, four, five – so, between 10-15% were illiterate or with secondary illiteracy... Now, however... If I told you they were 40-50%, I wouldn't be wrong. (p. 14)

It should be noted that recently some of the foreign prisoners, as they are hardly allowed to go to work, have shown interest and willingness to study Bulgarian. This fact is used by the school staff as an incentive for the others to study:

They are literate, but they want to learn Bulgarian. And... I give them first grade readers, they listen, they learn the words, they ask what this is called, what that is called. But this helps us, we use it as an incentive – just look, a foreigner has come to study, while you're a Bulgarian and you can't cope! (p. 16)

As regards the discipline, there are no problems:

We have no problems at all with discipline during classes. Because they're grown men... especially as they come, so to say, a bit exhausted from work. (p. 14)

There's something else I should say, that in my school there is no service staff, no cleaners... This is not only for financial reasons – that somebody will be getting 200-300 leva [100-150 euro] salary, - but so they know that they should leave the room as they find it. This also has an educational purpose. (p. 13)

Overall, in describing the prisoners, the respondent emphasizes on the hardships in their past:

They are perfectly normal, but lazy and neglected, physically neglected people. (p. 13)

And the family environment... most of them are divorced, few of them still have a family. And all this has crushed them, simply crushed them. It's not easy, not easy at all! (p. 22)

TUTORS IN PRISON

The school is small, that's why the teaching staff is not large – 9 people, including the director, who also teaches.

They are normal teachers, under permanent contracts all of them. (p. 14)

Every teacher has a computer in his office. (p. 15)

Of course, the selection of teachers is done a bit more carefully than for ordinary schools:

The school is sort of different. I'd like to get back in our talk and share something – in the past you had to compete for the position of director, and a lady from the Ministry asked me: Is there a policeman (a militiaman at that time), whether there was a militiaman in the classroom during classes? So I said to her jokingly: Okay, what kind of a pedagogue are you if you can't handle ten murderers? She just gave me a peculiar look... So see here, you can tell a person... First I talk to the teacher, I make him familiar with the conditions and I see to it... that they're of a more mature age. And they're men. Mostly men. But I'm the first... when we were still attached to the Ministry of Internal Affairs it was absolutely forbidden for a woman to enter the prison. But I was the first to make a breakthrough. I had to find 5 primary school teachers in Sofia, I found only two men, no, they were three as I recall. And that was all I could find. Then I said, the rest must be women. How's that, women! (p. 14-15)

At present the teaching staff, though small in number, is well selected according to the respondent, well balanced and complete:

There are three women, three and a secretary- administrator... she's elderly... I'm confident, now I know, even if they come in, it's not the same thing. But it's very important to keep your distance. I see to it, it's important for me that about 60% are men. But even the primary school teachers, one is a man, the other is a woman. They are of a ripe age. And I have two women in the middle course – a math teacher and a literature teacher. The rest are men. I have two younger men... one is an engineer, he teaches the special subjects... I teach biology, while a woman colleague teaches chemistry and physics. We have teachers for each subject. And they're all regular staff members, they have many years of service. I even had a PhD, a senior research fellow, he used to be a university teacher, but he had been a teacher of history of the Bulgarian Communist Party and they had fired him. So he came to me – he was a philosopher. That's the kind of people I come across. And it's no coincidence... even lecturers, when it's necessary, only school directors were lecturers in my school. The deputy director of the natural sciences and mathematics high school, he was definitely the best of teachers – and he worked here too. Ordinary people don't come to this school! I told him then – let's see what kind of teacher you are. Because in the natural sciences and mathematics high school the children know what a teacher is. Here they don't. In my school you must first make that guy active, make him think. (p. 22-23)

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As mentioned, the respondent often made comparisons between education in the past, the time when, in his words, in every large prison there was a school, with the present period, when only 5 or 6 schools remain. At the same time he is aware that the situation has changed and that only a part of the past practices can still be applied successfully under the new conditions. Some of these useable practices are related to the organization of the teaching process – for instance teaching the material in modules in the primary course, something that was done in the past:

And I told you – the social workers want these modules to be implemented in nearly all the prisons, implemented, and to look for teachers, so that it will be possible... For instance in the prison in Belene there used to be a school – now there isn't – for instance there was a school there, a prisoner would complete the first module, the second module, for instance finish 4th grade, and when he came to me for the remaining 4 or 5 years, I would directly enroll him in 5th grade, because he would be prepared. So we'll be meeting to discuss these questions... the ideas are still in rough form, but changes are being prepared... it is being undertaken and seriously considered to conduct teaching in all prisons on this basis [modules]. Not to create schools. Because these schools... we are...there are about 13 thousand prisoners in Bulgaria and I think that these 5 or 6 schools can cover the number of willing people. Because, after all, it's all a matter of willingness. (p. 17)

The respondent is also of the opinion that prison schools should have a special status:

For instance I proposed and I believe we should be protected schools, like they used to be in the past. Because I can't recruit students. Yes, we have students, but here it depends on whether they are willing. It's quite different when the parents oblige you or the law obliges you up to the age of 16. I don't know how many people will be convicted each year, how many of them will need schooling and how many of them will be willing [to go to school]. That's why... it's set that way and determined by the legal regulations – from 2 to 14

people in a class, when you reach the number 14 the class is divided in two. Because in our school, our strength lies in individual tutoring. I have to work individually. Just as you're talking to me now, that's how I talk with the prisoners. And in one hour I can cover half the material in the textbook. I can find out who he is, what kind of person he is. Why? Because when he's alone, he's more relaxed, he shares thing, you see him. But when he's in class – get up, answer, that's as far as it goes. We even conduct classes in a little circle, so they'll feel more relaxed with us. Because these are adults, people who had never been to school, a great part of them. Or if they had, it was no further than first, second, third grade. (p. 15-16)

Along with these more general and normative proposals, the respondent emphasizes that it is the teacher's duty to work on the personal motivation and to stimulate prisoners towards education. As noted already, since education is compulsory up to the age of 16, further education after that age is optional and a matter of personal desire. That is why it is so important to work on motivation, using all kinds of ways to persuade, using examples taken from life and comparisons with the other people around – the foreigners who have chosen to study Bulgarian; everyday life in prison offers other cases that can be made use of:

The more literate boys help. And why? I'll tell you why. Because this is a prison, and [some prisoners] he can't write a letter, he receives a letter, but he can't write one. He goes and asks someone to do him the favour of writing it, but the other will torment him – he'll ask for a pack of cigarettes or something else. And this compels him to learn... It is very important to make him understand the need for it. Because they are de-motivated as a rule. But I think they can feel it, because I ask him straight away: Do you have a child? I do. And I really feel embarrassed, he says to me, that the child is in fifth or sixth grade, while I'll be in the first. All right, I say to him. That's exactly how you'll set an example for him, because the kid will ask you – have you ever gone to school? What will you answer? That you haven't! And the child will say to you: so why do you make me go to school? (p. 5-6)

This talk about the children is very important and the example is very aptly chosen. Because, if the prisoners, as parents, become concerned about the education of their children and come to consider it important, it may be supposed this will, to some extent, prevent the children from repeating the bad example of their fathers:

Above all these people must understand that school is not something to be afraid of, so they won't discourage their children. This is a preventive measure. Because these people are already parents. When they leave prison, he should go home, and the first thing he does should be to make the kid go to school. Once he's felt and seen what sort of thing school is. (p. 7)

It was already said that a considerable factor of the personal motivation of prisoners to get an education would be to tie school attendance to the permission to go to work and thus obtain some income. This is understandable. But on the other hand:

I should tell you that the ones who go to work are more diligent students. It seems they're more aware. And we stimulate them in this way, we have an arrangement with the leadership of the prison – whoever attends school regularly will go out to work... Because, someone will say to them... if you get enrolled in school, you won't be able to go out to work, you won't have money for coffee. But I say – no. Those who attend school regularly, they'll be the ones who go out to work. But it's hard, he says to me. Yes, and so it will be! Since you didn't go to school when it was the proper time for it, now you'll have to combine the two things...

Interviewer: *Actually, who decides who goes out to work?*

Well, the social worker and the head of prison, but we give him suggestions – this one is good, a good student, he wants to go out to work. And they start to compete among themselves for this. And he knows that if he stops attending school – okay, you won't attend school, but as long as you don't attend school, you're not capable of going to work either. And he gets motivated. He has a responsibility towards himself. So we use all these things. (p. 19)

But only prisons of the transitory category permit this opportunity; the category of a prison has an impact and defines the features of each school:

But I should mention something else – each school has specific characteristics. A school in a prison building, like the one in Stara Zagora, which is enclosed, no one goes to work, it's enclosed and a guy is seeking ways to get out of his cell for a while and have something different. While in my school it's harder to motivate him, he's in Sofia all day long, for instance in the city... And this made things easier for me in Kremikovtsi, because they didn't go out much. That prison was of a more closed type. And they could hardly wait, they waited at the door of the cell for me to take them out, because they were in their cells all the time. (p. 20)

The respondent distinguishes another group of incentives to education: these might be called institutional ones:

Because, after all, it all comes down to willingness. And willingness, unfortunately, is decreasing. Perhaps it can only be done with laws, with legal grounds... Just as they require basic education for a driver, they should require basic education for the right to vote... When such things become required under law, then a person will think – wait, if I don't go to school they won't allow me to vote. That will make him think more. (p. 17)

Later the respondent comes back to this idea:

But as for the motivation, I know how, I told you – when the rule is that a person who has no secondary education has no right to vote, you'll see then how everything will come into place. Like it is in some countries. (p. 24)

As for the world financial crisis and its impact on prison education, the respondent indicates that, on the one hand:

It affects us, as our minister told us that only 75% of my budget will be left, the budget will be 75%. (p. 18)

But, paradoxically, the economic stagnation may have a positive impact in this case:

When he [a prisoner] comes back from work and says: But I'm tired. But he gets his mark on the record, in going to work, he has got his little mark

on the record. So he isn't very interested in going to school. But if he doesn't have a job, there's no way he can avoid it. By coming to school he gets a second chance of getting that little mark. (p. 18)

To conclude, it is hard to determine which is the main obstacle to education in prison – whether the changed situation or the insufficient funding, or, after all, the attitudes of participants. The respondent is a person with 30 years of service in prison education, he is one of the founders of the school in the prison dormitory in Kremikovtsi, a person of rich experience accumulated in two fundamentally different social contexts, a person who has achieved professional satisfaction, but has also come up against lack of understanding; in the end he says:

And so, when they broke us down and took our school, they discouraged us. I had decided to quit, but some friends of mine persuaded me not to, otherwise I would have quit. Because you build something all your life, I had built what I had dreamed of, and all of a sudden, they bury it with one stroke. But it no longer matters now... But I told them – that every newly opened school shuts down one prison! A great Frenchman said this – Victor Hugo! That's what I told them. Whereas we... instead of opening schools, we close them down and make prisons. (p. 18)

But nevertheless, the final summing up is positive:

Otherwise, the achievements... I'm happy that there is hardly a student who has come back here – at least not in my experience, 30 years – no one who graduated with me has come back to prison again. And this is a big achievement! There are some, but they are very few cases, in 30 years... What I mean is that this is probably the more important thing for me. (p. 11)

Basic School with Vocational Technical School at the Prison Dormitory Interview with KK (Expert and Teacher)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See the interview with SI.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN PRISON (FORMAL EDUCATION)

BACKGROUND FEATURES OF THE PRISON

The Kazichene Prison Dormitory is part of Sofia Prison and was created, according to approximate information, after 1970. The number of prisoners is between 600 and 700 persons. This institution is classified as a transitory type of prison, which means that inmates with lighter prison sentences serve time here, or inmates serving the remainder of longer sentences, but not longer than 5 years. The prison regulations allow for a more open system: inmates have the right to go out to work and go on home leave, the purpose of this being resocialization of the inmate before he recommences life outside prison. However, as a result, the school here does not offer grades beyond the 8th, unlike schools in other prisons, which have a complete course of secondary education: the briefer prison sentences of inmates here preclude a full secondary school cycle.

EDUCATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN PRISON

Regarding education in prison, the respondent makes the following general remarks:

Each year about 800 people take part in the educational activity in the schools attached to prisons. There is no definite student profile of prison students, but I believe that most of the students serving prison sentences are in prison for the first time. The grounds for this assertion is the number of students in the educational institution at the Stara Zagora Prison, the Boychinovtsi Reformatory, and, to some extent, the school in Sliven Prison and the one attached to the Prison Dormitory of the village of Kazichene, which is a branch of Sofia Prison.

In the Stara Zagora prison and the Boychinovtsi Reformatory, the inmates are not recidivists, and the ones attending school amount to about 50% of the total number. Due to their specific characteristics, in the schools attached to Sliven Prison, which is the only female prison in the country, and in the prisoner dormitory of Kazichene, which is of a transitory type (with inmates serving shorter sentences or the remainder of sentences of no more than 5 years), the people included in the teaching activity are prisoners with first convictions and recidivists who, due to their good behaviour, have been moved here to serve the remainder of their sentence. (p. 2)

Regarding the school libraries: the situation is described not very detailedly, but rather critically:

In all prisons, including Boychinovtsi Reformatory, there are libraries, just as in any school. The existing library fund can be used by the people serving sentences. I could not give you even an approximate number of the library units, because there is a constant process of discarding damaged books and new ones being donated. The basic characteristic of the prison library funds is their deteriorated state and unreadability. As in all school libraries, in the one in the Kazichene dormitory most of the literature is meant to be of aid in the teaching process, and this is understandable. In general, in the last 20 years not a single lev has been allotted from the budget for renewing and

improving the library fund. Whatever has been done in this respect has been through private donations from people and legal entities. (p. 2)

As for the professional training courses offered the inmates, such courses are a universal practice in the schools attached to prisons. They are organized in view of a quicker and successful adaptation of the prisoners to life outside after they have served their time:

In all schools, professional training is conducted with a view to successful professional realization after the sentence has been served. The school in Kazichene is no exception; prisoners there are trained to be mechanics (fitters). (p. 1)

In penitentiaries many and various courses are organized for professional qualification. Above all I want to point out the courses that enable immediate inclusion in work activity: steam generator stokers and assistant cooks working in the service sphere in prisons, as well as tailors, masons, house painters, etc., which are needed for the production activity in the concrete units.

In penitentiaries there is a programme in course for preparing inmates for life outside; this programme is applied in the last few months of the sentence. Since prisons accept convicts coming from specific regions, these professional qualification courses are organized in a way that takes into account the labour market demand in the respective region. (p. 2-3)

The inclusion of prisoners in the education process is done entirely of their own free will. Their participation in professional courses is voluntary:

The people sentenced to imprisonment voluntarily take part in the courses for professional qualification. In practice, if there are 12-15 people desiring it, this is the precondition for organizing the respective course. Classes for professional qualification are conducted on the basis of the approved documentation of the educational institution or by a legal entity registered in due legal order. (p. 3)

The time length and place of class sessions, and other such organizational issues cause no particular difficulties and are decided upon in coordination with the prison leadership and according to the working hours of the prisoners:

The time and place where theoretical and practical training is conducted is coordinated with the prison leadership. The average time length per week is between 20 and 30 classes, in accordance with teaching documentation and the time schedule of the prisoners. (p. 3)

Prisoners are stimulated to attend school mostly by a connection between study and work hours; the respondent describes this in detail:

In general the prison regime decreed in the court sentence has practically no direct impact on the opportunity of convicts to take part in the study process. Since participation in educational and qualification activities is on a voluntary basis, many informal causes contribute to the unwillingness of prisoners to take part in the education process.

The leading factor is the desire to take part in labour activity, because they receive remuneration for it, with which they can provide themselves the things they need in their daily life in prison. Work is not possible in all places, however, but it is in the prison dormitory in the village of Kazichene, which is of a transitory type. (p.1)

The way to stimulate prisoners to take part in educational activities is defined by the regulations; 8 hours of training classes are counted as equal to 8 working hours, i.e. to one working day. Two working days can be counted as three days of the sentence. In other words 16 hours of training classes of the student are counted as three days of the sentence served. (p. 3)

As indicated above, the possibility of going out to work and thus gaining some financial means is first in order of preference among prisoners. But other motivating mechanisms are looked for, which will make education in prisons something demanded and desirable:

Moreover, in the last five years in penitentiaries there is a practice, in accordance with the Law on Execution of Penalties, of applying methods for evaluation of the personality of the offender. Planning and pre-planning of the sentence is being done, and participation in educational and qualification activities is a proof of the positive efforts being made and of the inmate's willingness to be reformed. This justifies the proposal of substituting the

regime of the sentence for a lighter one and for making the proposal for pre-term provisory release from prison. (p. 3)

There are no (and cannot be any) measures discouraging prisoners to educate themselves.

From the perspective of normative regulations there are no practical problems or hindrances to participation in a teaching process. (p. 1)

Paradoxically, what might make prisoners give up learning is the same thing that is used as an incentive – work:

The prisoner's hope of being given a job and receiving money for it in order to meet his daily needs for cigarettes, coffee, etc., discourages him from taking part in educational activities. (p. 3)

According to the respondent, another cause of lack of interest in education opportunities in prisons is the ethnic origin of the greater part of the prison inmates:

A considerable part of the prison population is of the Gypsy ethnic group, and among it education is not a priority of their value system. The high degree of pedagogic and social neglect, as well as their long detachment from school work, are the other factors impeding the inclusion of prisoners in educational activities. (p. 1)

It cannot be said there is a tradition of mutual teaching in Bulgarian prisons. As the respondent points out, there are single cases of this in some places, and they are not regulated by official documents:

Though rarely, there have been cases of mutual teaching between the prisoners – regarding knowledge of herbs and gardening (in the Belene prison, where conditions permit it). Skills are in fact obtained, but obtaining a document on this is a problem that has not been clearly resolved. (p. 3)

Otherwise, the teaching environment and teaching process are similar to those in mainstream schools, even as concerns organizing and conducting some form of out-of-class activities:

The classes are conducted in specially built school buildings and school workshops. The environment is favourable for conducting teaching activity.

The whole process of impact of the school as an institution represents a combination of educational and moral rearing goals. This is achieved in class

activities as well as by out-of-class forms of teaching: drama, music, dance, etc. In these, in using the impact of art, the goal is to achieve positive personal change. It can definitely be said that this method leads to good results. (p. 3)

The difference is that social workers are the ones entrusted with psychological work with prisoners, and social workers are a separate institution in the framework of the Ministry of Justice:

As concerns the formation of the skills needed to cope with challenges in life – solving conflict situations, dealing with addictions, etc., this is the object of specialized group therapeutic courses and activities conducted by social workers. (p. 3)

BACKGROUND TO PRISON EDUCATION

The respondent draws the following general picture of teaching in prisons?

In terms of a legal solution, most generally speaking, the possibility exists for prisons to carry out educational and skill training activities for convicts.

One of the goals of imprisonment as a punishment is the reform and re-education of convicts towards compliance with laws and good morals (art. 2, par. 1 „a” of the Law on Execution of Penalties (LEP) – State Gazette, issue 103 of 23 November 2004, in force from 1 January 2005). Various state institutions take part in achieving this goal: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Prosecutor’s Office, etc. It is through the educational institutions that are branches of the Ministry of Education and Science that the most direct impact is made for achieving this goal – reform and re-education of the convicts. (p. 3-4)

The respondent particularly talks in greater details about the funding; he distinguishes three lines along which funds come in. He shares his proposal about how certain sums can be set aside for social activities:

As I already had the occasion to mention earlier, the activity of educational institutions in the last few years has been seriously hindered by the limited support per student.

But as bad as this difficulty might be, it is nothing compared with the fact that in the budget prepared for General Directorate “Execution of Penalties” there are no financial resources allotted for social activities. And if a fair enough tradition of social activities does nevertheless exist in Bulgarian prisons, it is a result of the high professional skills and persistent work of the social workers, and exists in spite of the vague financial provision.

In this sense the budget resources are part of the process of educational and professional qualification of the prisoners, mostly in the form of school budget loans that the prison leaderships manage to set aside in order to pay for one or two qualification courses.

There is a special state enterprise called “Prison Activities Fund”, which unites economic activity in prisons and uses the profit from this activity to support various teaching activities. This is the second source of funding for educational and training activities in prisons.

Third in place, but not least in importance for the implementation of these education policies, is sponsorship and the implementation of project funding.

In mentioning the three ways of supporting education and qualification policies as part of social practices in prisons, I would like to make it clear that in this way the social activity itself in prisons is supported (funded). I will take the liberty of sharing a proposal of mine, drawn from my long years of practice:

Example: *For quite a few years I’ve been proposing that, from the incoming budget subsidies, 0.10 leva (which is ten stotinka) [0.05 cent] be set aside daily for social activities. A very rough calculation shows that, approximately 11 000 prisoners, multiplied by 0.10 leva a day = 1 100 leva [550 euro], for a month – 31 000 leva [15 500 euro], for 12 months – 372 000 leva [186 000 euro].*

How can the activities required by the LEP be planned when there is no guaranteed financial resource? (p. 4)

The respondent sums up his opinion regarding the difficulties faced by education in prisons, an opinion that fully applies likewise to the school in the prison dormitory in Kazichene, in stressing most of all on the material conditions and the new principles of funding education and educational institutions; these principles, however, in his opinion, do not take into account the specific characteristics of prison schools:

From a theoretical perspective, the capacities of prison schools could not take on an “avalanche” of people wanting to study. Having in mind the material conditions in prisons and that they do not correspond to European norms, since improvement would be expensive and very slow, I think that the basis for education will not be changed.

Nor are the management decisions of the Ministry of Education and Science satisfactory. Above all we are talking about an issue of funding educational institutions. The preparation of delegated budgets has created serious difficulties for the normal functioning of schools attached to prisons. The approach whereby each student carries an allotment of a certain sum of money for one school year may be correct, but I think it needs some differentiation. For instance, while in the mainstream schools the funds needed for the support of one student is a certain amount, in a school attached to a prison it should be different, higher. Today, when there are a hundred and more students, the budget might be just enough for one year. But, for instance, in the prison in Sliven there are 300-350 prisoners, so the probability that a hundred or more will be included in the education process is minimal. (p. 1-2)

Another thing that deserves criticism is the lack of specially prepared teaching materials for adults:

The situation is similar as regards study plans and curricula. There are no handbooks for adult students, especially for 1st to 4th grade. It is not fitting to teach 25-30 year old students by giving them math problems and texts about little chicks, bunnies, etc. For years the people in the Ministry of Education

and Science have been claiming they are working on the problem of education of adults. (p. 2)

CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION

The respondent cannot give any concrete examples of education continuing after the prisoner has been released from jail, because there is no system built for collecting such information:

As far as the development of individuals after serving their penalties is concerned, there is no system built for post-penitentiary adaptation of prisoners, and the information is meager and random.

There are more than a few cases of continuing education – secondary and higher education after release from prison, but it is very hard to sum it up, due to the above-mentioned reason. (p. 4)

Regarding individual training, the respondent says in general:

Yes, there are cases of individual training. It is possible, and it is done when there is a proven necessity for this. (p. 4)

DISTANCE EDUCATION

At least for the time being, distance learning is not applicable in prison schools:

There is one case of distance learning in a higher school among prisoners, but not in the Kazichene prison but in Belene. The problem with distance learning is that it is not possible for the prisoners to use a computer and Internet. (p. 4)

SUPPORT SERVICES IN PRISON

As was already mentioned, the social worker institution has been created at the Ministry of Justice. One social worker is responsible for 100-150 prisoners. For each prisoner, the responsible social worker keeps an information card file with data about the term of the sentence and how much time remains till the end, makes proposals about awards, home leave, going out to work, amnesty, etc., and prepares a personal profile. Social workers are in constant contact with the persons they are responsible for and likewise with the leadership of the prison and the teaching team in the school.

PRISONER PROFILES

Regarding the profile of a „typical” prisoner, the respondent describes the standard procedure, which is valid and followed in all prisons:

In compliance with the requirements of the Law on Execution of Penalties, no later than one month after the convict enters the prison, an evaluative personal profile is prepared. This method is borrowed from the English evaluation system. In the profile there is a separate section containing information about the educational and qualification status of the prisoner. In preparing the personality profile of the offender the deficit and resource zones are delineated. On this basis the sentence is planned and pre-planned. This is done by the social worker, who has daily contacts with the prisoners. (p. 4-5)

Difficulties arise in determining the educational status of the prisoner:

...because when entering prison no document is required about completed grade or degree of education. When the documents for enrollment are prepared the information filled in is what the convict has indicated. There are cases when he presents a document for completed 8th grade, but in practice he is almost illiterate, and then we use the term “secondary illiteracy”. In this sense, about 50% of the prisoners are illiterate, without professional qualification and work skills (p. 5)

TUTORS IN PRISON

Teachers in prison schools are likewise no different in their training and work methods from those in ordinary schools. According to the respondent, here too more than half are women, and this reflects the general tendency of feminization in Bulgarian education:

Teachers in schools attached to prisons work on a work contract basis. They use modern efficient teaching methods, and use the available social experience. This is advantageous to a great degree for the active participation of students in the teaching process. (p. 5)

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In conclusion the respondent, who is a teacher and an expert with many years of experience in prison education, stresses the need for an integral view about the problems in this field that must be resolved in order to obtain positive results both for the student prisoners and for society as a whole, to which they return sooner or later.

There are possibilities for further developing and perfecting the educational and training activity in Bulgarian prisons. All that needs to be provided for this is one condition – a state policy regarding execution of the penalty of imprisonment. And this requires a lot – a vision, resources, regulations, good practices, etc.

What has been achieved so far is not “thanks to...” but “in spite of...”! Unfortunately! The basic reason for this is the lack of understanding of the importance of this activity for the future successful (re)integration in society of the convicts – social, economic, etc., integration. When things are done piecemeal, the expenditure of resources is greater – in terms of people, time, funds – and the positive effect is doubtful. (p. 5)

And when the problems are not viewed as part of a system, even the world financial crisis may come in handy as an excuse:

Yes, the world financial crisis will have an impact on education in prisons, mostly because it is used as an excuse for unsuccessful policies! (p. 5)

Secondary School

Interview with ZG (Principal)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

The Fourth Night -Shift Secondary School '*Otez Paisi*' was established in 1948 and is housed in a building built in 1914 which is currently a cultural heritage monument.

The school is the successor of the Third and Fourth Shift Secondary School, which merged in 1981 in the Night Shift Secondary School. The school is unique, with 500 students, divided into 17 classes, combining various forms of training - day, evening, part-time with a three-shift system - morning, afternoon and evening, according to the students' availability time and their work schedule. There are more young people with health problems that are trained according to an individual curriculum. Various forms of education create conditions for individually tailored time management of the school lessons and work of each student.

Due to social changes, the IV Night -Shift Secondary School was recognised as a school, where students of the 16-25 years age group are taught, who, for various reasons: social, domestic, health, change in residence have been compelled to work and study at the same time.

Today the school has a highly skilled staff of teachers with experience, as well as of young teachers who have taken in this profession as their calling. The entire staff is competent on the development of new technologies. Four computer rooms are being used intensively, not only for IT classes, but also for other subjects. Emphasis is put on the basic socio-cultural development of the students, as well as on the social and psychological aspects of the personality. The good contacts that have been established with the Foundation ***Junior Achievement*** allow students to obtain and develop knowledge and skills that make them economically literate and help them find employment. The school has established a very good

partnership with Animus Association Foundation, the State Agency for Child Protection, and the Clinic **Kanchelov**. It has its very own website - <http://www.ve4erna.com/>, which besides providing information regarding the organization of the learning process, helps students to study on their own.

Every year 40% of the school's graduates continue their studies in institutions of higher education.

- **Target groups**

Young people and adults who have dropped out of the mainstream secondary school system, regardless of the reasons - new job, health, criminal activities, difficulties in keeping up with the mainstream educational process. Classes (grades 8 to 12) are held for students who are age 16 and older, following the curriculum of the mainstream secondary schools. The school offers also extramural studies for students who are of age and work full-time – Wednesdays from 5.30 pm and Saturdays from 9.00 am, as well as five full-time examinations, according to curriculum.

- **Funding sources**

As part of the formal education system, the school is on a state's budget. In addition it participates in national projects of the Ministry of Education and Science. It does not have any experience in implementing European or other international projects.

- **Institution's mission**

The school integrates students of different ages and individual characteristics in an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and regard for personal dignity. It gives opportunities to students of different ages and individualities: combining work and study time, family responsibilities and career. The diploma that the students obtain gives them a chance to raise their qualification, continue their higher education, be competitive on the job market and make choices for their future.

The school's strategy has to do with lifelong learning. Its goals and tasks are along this line - teaching students, who are above 18 years of age and

who have discontinued their education. The entire school curriculum and methodology are consistent with teaching students 18 years old and above. We have a group of students among whom 50% are of school age, between 16 and 18 years old, among them there is a large group of students over 18 years of age. There is also a large group of students over 21 years of age. The ones who are of school age are employed; they have discontinued their regular education and have enrolled in our school. (p. 1)

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

The curriculum and the learning environment are based entirely on the principle of providing special services for disadvantaged groups. This is a school which aims to enrol primarily people who are employed and who have not finished their secondary education. Classes are held several times a day: in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. There are also weekend classes, as well as distance education.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS TO ENABLE THEM TO STAY ON AT SCHOOL

Our main purpose is to enable students, who have dropped out of the mainstream educational system, to stay on at school by carrying out an adequate learning process, in order for them to obtain a secondary school equivalent diploma. All activities and efforts of the school staff are aimed at supporting young people who have once dropped out of school to complete their education. There is only one similar school in the capital, but it has significantly less students - 100.

The diploma received upon completion of the Secondary Night School is equivalent to all other secondary schools' diplomas in the Republic of Bulgaria, and it gives students the right to continue their studies in institutions of higher education. (Website)

Besides flexible curricula in terms of time, specialized assistance and individual approach is used for each enrolled student who has once discontinued attending regular secondary school. By applying the Learner-Centred Approach towards each student, combined with an in depth analysis of the reasons for dropping out, the most appropriate form of education is ensured. Psychological counselling and additional services are provided, such as, sessions with family members and meetings with employers. In cases of students with a deep personal problem, such as: loss of a loved one, violence, lack of social skills, aggression control issues, etc.

We recognize the problem from the very beginning- the parents or the students themselves inform us why they have dropped out, when it happened and for what reasons. We explore each case, in order to apply our individual approach. We inform our colleagues, who teach these students. For instance we recently had a student who had dropped out of school because of hearing problems, so we had him sit in the front of the class. (p. 2)

Besides the different alternative programs and approaches offered at the school, students can switch programs if they are unable to cope or if additional problems arise.

ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

Very few students are expelled - 1-2%. Administrative penalties, such as warnings for transferring to other schools and expulsions are rarely put into practice because this is the last chance for the students to obtain a secondary school diploma. The school has many specially designed programs and services aimed at preventing students from dropping out of school again.

We are flexible in our actions, which we apply according to each particular case. We offer to the students, who we have penalized by transferring them to other schools, or who cannot adapt to our teaching methods, just to take the exams without coming to class. These cases are very few, though, mainly students who have serious problems, such as chronic aggressive or antisocial behavior. The rest of the students we try to keep in school. (p. 5)

The reasons for students' drop-out, which also lead them to apply to this school, can be divided in three main groups:

A) Socio-economic – starting work due to lack of financial resources:

In this case a flexible curriculum is offered with classes held in the morning, afternoon and evening. Also, classes can be taught on a part-time basis in a more concentrated form and mainly on weekends, or several days during the week, which allows students to take time off work. If the students cannot participate in any of these alternative forms of education, they can be offered lessons on an individual basis, with exams held several times a year. They can also take a makeup test if they wish to receive a higher mark.

B) Personal problems – inability for social interaction and inclusion, caused by deep psychological problems or traumatic experiences:

A school counselor, who is employed full-time at the school and has specialized in family counselling, group work, psychoanalysis, psychodrama, etc, is called upon in cases like these. The latest professional methods for analysing and resolving each individual reason for dropping out are used.

If any of the students have communication problems, we organize meetings with parents and support groups, we try to ensure a supportive family environment ...because many of them have dropped out of school due to difficulties in communication with their peers and the teachers, and the school as an institution frightens them. (p. 3)

Some of our students have only been taught on an individual basis from 1st to 8th grade. Marty has been working for two years and this year he succeeded in starting school. He cannot relate to his peers. Mentally he is fine, but he has problems in communicating with kids his age. He is able to communicate with adults, but when he is in class in a setting with a group of children he becomes frightened. We had several similar cases, which we were able to resolve... (p. 3)

C) Health problems – severe illnesses that lead to various forms of disability and prevent students from attending classes:

In cases like these the students are offered home-schooling and distant education – teachers visit them at home where they also take their exams.

I think that our institution is very advanced because it educates students at risk. Even here, the students continue having problems with staying at

school. This is a very important problem and we are completely devoted to solving it – trying to keep students in school, especially the ones that are of school age. That is why, I consider our school system to be more advanced as a whole. (p. 2)

A CURRICULUM TO ENGAGE AT RISK STUDENTS

The school has a long standing tradition in working with groups at risk. This is its main function. Therefore, considerable success is achieved in adapting the curriculum, by using an individual approach to each student, which is based on methods developed over the years. Curricula are developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, but they are adapted to each particular case by the teachers in the school with the help of the school counselor.

We are capable of doing this, we have experience. For instance in Marty's case we were able to develop a curriculum according to his schedule.

The curricula are adapted for 288 school hours, and midterm and final exams are also included. We also pay individual attention and have developed methodology for working with these students. (p. 4)

The emphasis in the curriculum is put on preparing the students for the final matriculation exam. Only lessons which provide the students with the knowledge needed for taking the exams are included in the curriculum:

...we do not offer extracurricular activities, most of the students do not have time for that – they are at work, or are busy with their families. (p. 4)

Lessons on personal development are usually taught once a week in the so-called “Hour of the class”. If a certain teacher is absent, common practice is the school counsellor to give a lecture on a particular topic, ranging from health to personal problems. However, no classes on personal development are included in the general curriculum, just general subjects.

Even physical education or music classes are not included in our curricula – just the general subjects. (p. 6)

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AT SCHOOL

There are no activities, structures, and mechanisms in the school that encourage active citizenship behavior in the students. The respondents refer to a very interesting issue in this regard. The students themselves have problems in identifying themselves as such, which further complicates their legitimization as active agents in school. Very often, their attendance at school is a secret because some students are ashamed that they have dropped out of the mainstream schools and they have not told their families about it. They are also embarrassed that they attend night school and not a regular secondary school. They have limited resources - time and money, which does not allow their active participation in civic activities. In practice, however, within the small community of students, who are in difficult situation and need help there is intragroup solidarity. Quite often the administration of the school organizes campaigns to help students who are in the dire financial situation:

...they help each other find jobs. They lend each other money, they help each other. They also go everywhere together in a group...Some students will find lodging for others, or let them sleep at their place, until they find their own. There is solidarity among the, they support each other a lot. Sometimes we make a collection of clothes, money or textbooks and give to students, who we know are in a bad financial situation. (p. 7)

ADULT EDUCATION ON THE SCHOOL SITE

The school provides a full secondary school level education to adults, including examinations and a diploma. Classes are held in the morning, afternoon, evening, and on weekends. Distance education is also offered. The full capacity of the teachers and the school is utilized; sometimes there is a shortage of it. There are also different forms of education – full-time, part-time, group and individual.

We use the full capacity of the school's building. The Municipality of Sofia supports us by maintaining the building and also financially. We have also equipped the four computer rooms with full access to the internet. No other courses are offered. We work almost round- the- clock – 14 hours a day, and the building is in use all the time. (p. 7)

The school has its own website and is listed in a directory of schools. This is one of two schools in the capital which is specialized in educating adults. Vocational trainings for adults are offered by vocational secondary schools and Centers for vocational qualification by different NGOs. This is, however, one of two institutions that offer a secondary school general education and professional qualification training courses. According to legislation, one can obtain professional qualification if he/she has completed at least 8th grade.

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SITE

The school has 4 computer rooms and the teachers are qualified in using information technology when teaching different subjects. Distance education is also widely in order to meet the needs of the students. Different methods are used – tests, materials and different links can be found on the school's webpage. Also up-to-date information about exams, consultations, and other news are published on the website. Also, students who live abroad can also take part in the studies by communicating with the teachers via e-mail and reading the school materials online:

...we provide very good opportunities for distance education, which is grounded in our developmental strategy and we put it into practice. There are students who live abroad and who would like to graduate from secondary school and we communicate with them from a distance by providing them with school materials, which they can study on their own. They can read the syllabus on our website, also information about the exam schedule. We do not have a developed curriculum for a whole course of education, though, but nevertheless, we sent one of our students from Italy the test materials via e-mail, and thus she passed successfully her matriculation exam. (p. 8)

At the present moment the school does not have a credit and module based system of education.

LINKS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THIRD LEVEL

The school has not developed mechanisms that link students with institutions of higher education. The school's function ends with the issuing of a secondary school diploma. Despite that, services like career and vocational counseling are offered at the school, but they

rather help students in finding a job, than in continuing their education. Contacting the institutions of higher education is left to the initiative of the students themselves – a rather high percentage – 40% continue their education in universities.

According to the respondent's opinion, the institutions of higher education can enable underprivileged groups by organizing preliminary courses, which might compensate the disparity in the level of education.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND INSERVICE/PRESERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Capacity building of the school staff is a continuous process. They participate in all the projects and programs of the Ministry of Education and Science, of the Regional Pedagogical Center and of the Center for Professional Qualification of Teachers. The courses aim to improve the educational methods.

Recently our teachers participated in a seminar on incorporating the testing methods in the examination process, on interactive methods of education, and on using multimedia in teaching. By participating in another program of the Ministry of Education, the whole staff was trained on utilizing informational technology in the educational process...At the present moment, some of our colleagues are taking vocational courses for receiving additional qualification as foreign language teachers. (p. 9)

We do not formally train teachers to work with adults, they acquire their conflict resolution skills and learn new teaching methods during the work process, through practice. During the whole process they are guided by the school counselor. Actually, the official position of our colleague MM is 'school counselor', but in practice she has many other qualifications: family counseling, psychoanalysis, conflict resolution, and other psychological skills. She is actually acting also as a consultant and facilitator of the school teachers.

According to the respondent, the skills necessary for teaching adults are not acquired during the learning process, but rather are a matter of personal traits and characteristics and are perfected through practice. (In Bulgaria there is still no formal university education in andragogy on a bachelors or masters level. Some courses in the department of 'pedagogy' are offered at some universities, but so far it does not exist as a separate specialty.)

According to the respondent, the most effective and socially just way for enabling

underprivileged groups to have access to higher education is by providing them with scholarships and by lowering their tuition.

III. MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR DISABLED ADULTS

Objectives of the practice: The school in this study offers a wide variety of educational methods to underprivileged adults, and these services can be classified as good practice. Of special interest of this study is the training and certifying of students with severe health problems, that prevent them to physically access the school building, and also with psychological problems. These people have an adapted curriculum and are individually taught at home. Teachers visit them on a regular basis and provide individual instruction and consultations, even though, most of the schoolwork is done by the students on their own. They also teach by means of information technology and the internet and other forms of distance education - e-mail and phone consultations.

Target groups: Individuals with severe disabilities, who are unable to go outside of their home on their own and persons with severe psychological problems and lack of social skills.

One of the students had cerebral palsy, another is disabled severely. We teach and test these students in their homes...our colleagues take a laptop with them when they are teaching electronic lesson and the test has to be taken also electronically. We have a lot of experience and are able to reach almost all of them. (p. 3)

These are predominantly people who are ill or have special needs. For instance Vassil and Konstantin, I told you, they are special kids, who cannot learn easily... some of them come with their parents, because they cannot leave them alone at home (p. 4)

Funding sources: The school is on a state's budget and the respondent does not give data regarding additional financing from donors or non-government charity organizations.

History of the model: This practice developed in the last 10-16 years. The school does not keep any statistics on the development over the years.

Number of participants: During the current school year 10 students are taught on an individual plan and four students are taught at home.

Location: The teachers from the school teach the students at home.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The individual learning plans, which also include home visits by the teachers, are some of the methods that the school uses in order to give opportunities to people with severe health problems to complete their secondary education. The main problem with this kind of education is that it requires additional staff and financial resources that the school can not always ensure.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: It is necessary that this model is further developed and expanded, so that more people with severe disabilities can complete their education and thus increase their chances for further social integration.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The main methods for assessment of this model include students' feedbacks, as well as these of their family members. Data on the subsequent development and professional realization of the students is used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the model.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The recession will have a negative effect on the implementation of the individual training programs as they require additional funds and human resources.

Secondary School

Interview with MM (Pedagogical Adviser and School Counselor)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See interview with ZG.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS TO ENABLE THEM TO STAY ON AT SCHOOL

Unlike the manager, who basically deals with the strategic and organizational issues at the institutional level in terms of keeping adult students in school, the answers of the pedagogical advisor and school counselor are considerably more person-oriented towards the emotional and psychological problems that prevent students from participating in the normal learning process. The role of this respondent is primarily at the level of intervention in the personal space and environment of the students - family, friends, and other significant others.

On the other hand, the functions of the school counselor/pedagogical advisor are to diagnose the problem and to help for its solving. The fact that the same person is in the role of a pedagogical/andragogical advisor, of a career development consultant, and of a psychotherapist must be emphasized in this case. The main form of support, which is rendered to adult students, is individual, after an in-depth analysis of the concrete problem. Depending on the nature of the problem, group work methods such as role plays are also used.

Most of the problems are related to their previous learning environment, their family system, lack of support network, loss of a parent... we regard the students as individuals, using a client-centered approach. (p. 1)

...they practice communication skills in a group context, which is a projection of real life, and the small group is like a microenvironment, a more protective one. Yes, we successfully use role plays. (p. 3)

The students have two main problems: on a personal-psychological level and learning problems related to the school curriculum. Of course, these two groups of problems are dialectically related, and we work on solving them. The school curriculum is flexible in terms of access to education; it offers evening and weekend classes which are consistent with the work schedule of the students. In order to support the learning process temporary or part-time employment is provided to students who experience financial difficulties.

The school is unique, taking into consideration the above-mentioned forms of support. It has its own methodology aimed at helping students to stay in school.

I think that in this school we work differently, taking into consideration the specific characteristics of our students. We use a more individual approach in our work. Maybe later we can share more about the work of our colleagues and about the established individual work approach. Some of the teaching methods which we have developed are on the basis of our experience with the students and are tailored to their specific needs. (p. 3)

The pedagogical advisor also works with at risk students in a group format of 10-12 people, aimed at solving the specific problems that they have. The groups are formed on the basis of the social category that its members belong to, for instance: teenage mothers, single mothers, etc.

Individual plans are developed for students with serious health problems. Distance education and home visits are the main educational methods used in these cases.

H. is 34 years old and has first degree disability. She has had many operations of her spinal cord and is completely paralyzed and has never used her limbs, and now during the spring break she had some kind of rehabilitation procedures done. I always accompany my colleagues during their first home visit, because our experience has shown that when these students become aware that I am the link between them and the teachers, that they can approach me regarding different issues and that my colleagues are in charge of their education, they learn who is responsible for what and they find

meaning in living, they feel that they are not complete outcasts; their health is bad but they have great intellectual abilities... Before 1999, these students attended specialized schools, which do not exist anymore which has made their life more difficult. We help them in this situation to find meaning and to feel a little bit healthier. A former student of ours who was on dialysis and had to discontinue his studies for health reasons... now he is waiting for a kidney transplant, and is experiencing also heart problems... (p. 4)

Motivational trainings are of extreme importance for the learning process and for keeping students from at risk groups in school.

One of the main ingredients of counseling is motivation. It is important that students themselves find meaning in continuing their education, because many times this meaning is somewhat vague, which leads to students dropping out of school. It is very useful to meet with such students on a regular basis. When the student does feel very sure in him/herself or motivated enough to speak either with the class teacher or with other colleagues, I try to predispose him/her to share his/her problems, to discuss them informally in order for him/her to continue with his/her studies. (p. 5)

ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

The school does not use harsh methods of punishment such as suspension or expulsion.

Our goal is to work with students who have problems or with groups at risk by solving specific problems, regardless of their nature – financial, emotional, psychological, etc. Behavioral and disciplinary problems are regarded as a result of adverse effects of the environment, rather than as a characteristic of the concrete individual.

A CURRICULUM TO ENGAGE AT RISK STUDENTS

Lessons on personal development are usually taught once a week in the so-called “Hour of the class”. Different topics on relationships, sex, parenting, life skills, and conflict resolution skills are discussed in this class. If a certain teacher is absent, common practice is the school counsellor to discuss with the students certain problems that concern them. The advisor is at

the disposal of the students for consultations upon appointment in a convenient for him/her time.

I always have open office hours for consultations. My work schedule is flexible. If a student is experiencing emotional problems, he/she approaches me whenever it is convenient for him/her. (p. 4)

The fact that most of the time students prefer to go to such meetings than to go to class, proves that there is a need for such consultation during which students can discuss their personal problems.

According to the respondent, the role of the parents in dealing with the personal problems of the students is very important.

However, no classes on art and personal development are included in the general curriculum, like: theatre, music, creative writing or visual arts. Very often the students themselves have such professions – musicians, dancers, singers. There is no research on whether the scholastic achievements of these students are greater than the rest, even though, according to Gelner's theory (about the 8 types of intelligence), these professional activities should contribute to their personal development.

Students' academic and personal development problems are dealt with on several levels:

- a) individual – sessions with the counselor and group therapy;
- b) microenvironment – family, friends, colleagues, schoolmates:

I think that the lack of family support is a big problem, because students' main cause for dropping out of school is due to personal and family problems, so we work on that... many of these students come to us with a preconceived notion that there is no more help available. There are parents, though, with whom I meet and talk and we set goals to work towards. I keep in touch with many mothers and grandmothers ... mainly with the women... there are also fathers, there are lots of fathers, who take care of their children on their own. (p. 5)

c) NGOs that are specialized in solving specific problems. In this case the consultant only formulates the problem and refers the student to a particular organization, where he/she can receive professional help:

I refer my students to organizations which are recognized in their work and specialize in a concrete problem area. First, I formulate the problem, and then refer the student to different organizations that can be of help. At the present moment, the socio-economic survival of the families is very difficult and this to a great extent calls for different kind of support. Frequently the problems that occur are due to loss of a job, lack of money, poor living conditions, etc. (p. 5)

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AT SCHOOL

Self identification is one of the main problems that the respondent points out in terms of active citizenship. Due to the traditional understanding of the category "student", which is associated with younger age, virtually all students maintain anonymity with respect to their school attendance, which creates some obstacles for them in terms of organization within the institution. On the other hand, despite this anonymity, they establish relationships and help each other within the group, which indirectly can be regarded as a form of active citizenship.

Some keep the education itself confidential, which is an important fact. They are ashamed that they have not completed their education in time and thus hide the fact that they attend school from their family and colleagues. (p. 7)

ADULT EDUCATION ON THE SCHOOL SITE

The school's main aim as an educational institution is to educate adults and for that reason has a flexible and steady curriculum.

The schools offers morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend classes to its part-time students. (p. 7)

The school provides a full secondary school level education to adults, including examinations and a diploma. Classes are held in the morning, afternoon, evening, and on weekends.

Distance education is also offered. The full capacity of the teachers and the school is utilized; sometimes there is a shortage of it. There are also different forms of education – full-time, part-time, individual and group.

We use the full capacity of the school's building. The Municipality of Sofia supports us by maintaining the building and also financially. We have also equipped the four computer rooms with full access to the Internet. No other courses are offered. We work almost round-the-clock – 14 hours a day, and the building is in use all the time. (p. 7)

The school has its own website and is listed in a directory of schools. It is one of two schools in the capital which are specialized in educating adults. Professional trainings for adults are offered by vocational secondary schools and Centers for vocational qualification by different NGOs. This is, however, one of two institutions that offer a secondary school general education and professional qualification training courses. According to legislation, one can obtain professional qualification if he/she has completed at least 8th grade.

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SITE

The school has 4 computer rooms and the teachers are qualified in using information technology when teaching different subjects. Distance education is also widely used in order to meet the needs of the students. Different methods are used – tests, materials and different links can be found on the school's webpage. Also up-to-date information about exams, consultations, and other news are published on the website. Also, students who live abroad can also take part in the studies by communicating with the teachers via e-mail and reading the school materials online:

...so, we provide very good opportunities for distance education... (p. 8)

At the present moment the school does not have a credit and module based system of education.

LINKS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THIRD LEVEL

The school has not developed referral mechanisms that link students with institutions of higher education. The pedagogical advisor/school counselor refers student to jobs that require completed secondary education.

Students are mainly referred to the big chain restaurants, like McDonald's, KFC, and Dunkin Doughnuts. We work mainly with McDonald's - our students are employed on a part-time basis there and have some privileges due to the fact that they are at school. Even though, they start work at the lowest position, they are given opportunities to grow in the work hierarchy. I have good connections with the relevant organizations which accept the students and become in charge of them. I am the link between them. Recently we have students who work at larger chain stores - like Metro. (p. 2-3)

The institutions of higher education do not express interest in establishing contacts with the school. Since, this institution is a closed system, and its main goal is to educate students so that they can receive a secondary school diploma, it does not provide referral services to link students with universities. This, in fact is a general structural flaw of the formal educational system – the secondary schools and the universities are like two separate closed systems that do not intercept and interact. Whether they attend higher educational institutions is up to the students' own initiative.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND INSERVICE/PRESERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

As a whole, the teachers at the school have no formal university education in andragogy on a Bachelors or Masters level. Some courses in the Department of Pedagogy are offered at some universities, but so far it does not exist as a separate specialty in Bulgaria. The school supports their participation in all training forms, provided by specialized state institutions (Ministry of Education and Science, Teacher's Training Institutes, etc.), which can be defined as in-service training for teachers within the educational system. The respondent herself has many specializations and uses good international practices:

I have participated in a training on motivational techniques, have also studied Family and Marital Therapy at New Bulgarian University and motivational integration, as well... We also study on a wider scale what motivates students and to what extent. (p. 5)

...we use methods which are widely practiced in other countries. I have specialized in psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychodrama. (p. 8)

The pedagogical advisor/school counselor provides support to students, relying on the personal qualities and qualifications of the teachers.

Teachers at the school have enough self-reflection in order to use their own judgment in their work with the students and to further qualify themselves. (p. 8)

The school has developed its own know-how – methodology that has been developed on the basis of a long standing experience in individual work with students, which is also provided as in-service training for the teachers.

Maybe later we can discuss more about the ability of my colleagues to indentify students' specific problems and about their methods of individual work with them. We have developed teaching methods which are based on our experience with the students and are tailored to their specific needs. (p. 3)

The respondent does not express opinion about the reforms needed in the training of teachers in order to improve the institutional climate and to keep more students to stay in school.

III. MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. FORMS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Objectives of the practice: To ensure employment, which can provide the necessary minimal standard of living and can also be combined with regular school attendance. A maximum effect in the students' professional development is achieved by combining formal education with practical work. By doing so, the educational process is viewed through the prism of concrete practice. Also, strictly professional, as well as social skills and competencies are developed during the course of the work process.

Target groups: Individuals who have not completed their formal secondary education, which prevents them from finding a suitable job and to achieve professional realization.

These students already have their professional identification, and a job, that's why they attend night school in order to receive their secondary school diploma. (p. 2)

Funding sources: The school is on a state's budget and the respondent does not provide data regarding additional financing from donors or non-government charity organizations.

The respondent volunteers to do this job in addition to his other work duties.

History of the model: This practice is being developed during the last 3-4 years. Sheltered job positions, working in shifts at different commercial chain establishments, restaurants, as well as at the malls.

We are talking about students between the ages of 16 and 18... I try to find places where the students who have previously experienced difficulties in finding a job can work part-time. Students are mainly referred to the big chain restaurants, like McDonald's, KFC, and Dunkin Doughnuts. We work mainly with McDonald's - our students are employed on a part-time basis there and have some privileges due to the fact that they are at school. Even though they start work at the lowest position, they are given opportunities to grow in the work hierarchy. I have good connections with the relevant organizations which accept the students and become in charge of them. I am the link between them.

Recently we have students who work at larger chain stores - like Metro. (p. 2-3)

Number of participants: During the current school year about 20 students are being taught on an individual plan which is developed in accordance with their work schedule. The number of students has varied during the years, but we do not keep exact statistics on this.

Location: Classes are taught at the school, according to a flexible curriculum which is consistent with the free time of the students, who are also employed. Individual learning plans are developed and distance education is also provided. The curriculum is flexible - students can change the form of education, depending on their work shifts.

Our curriculum is flexible because we provide many forms of education. For instance, if a student works two days and then rests two days, he/she can choose when to attend classes. That is why we have introduced the night-shift form of education and the students can choose the classes they wants to take and can make-up for missed classes. The schools offers morning, afternoon, evening, and Saturday classes, as well as part-time education. (p. 2-3)

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The individual learning plans, distance education, and the provision of school textbook and materials are part of the flexible form of education that the school provides in order to give opportunities to people who work to complete their secondary education.

The main problem with this kind of education is that it requires additional efforts on the part of the teachers, who have to work on a volunteer basis, due to lack of financial resources. Another problem is the school's shortage of staff needed to teach the specialized school subjects, which are tailored to the individual needs of each student and are not included in the formal state educational system.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: It is necessary that this model is further developed and expanded, so that more people who have difficult financial circumstances and are working can complete their education and thus increase their chances for further professional realization and social integration.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Data on the subsequent development and professional realization of the students is used as an indicator of the effectiveness of this model.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The recession will have a negative effect on the implementation of these practices, because of high levels of unemployment. Due to increased downsizing, the job opportunities for students will decrease. At the same time, the introduction of more flexible work schedules may create opportunities for more people to be hired for shorter periods of time – hourly, daily or weekly jobs.

Technical College

Interview with SD (Vice Rector)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

The Technical College was established in 1986 and in 1997 it became part of the institutional structure of South-West University "Neofit Rilski". Students are trained in the following specialties: *"Electronics"*; *"Mechanical Engineering"*; *"Design, Technology, and Sewing Production Management"*; and *"Communication Technologies"*. The training at the college is three years. The successful graduates receive diplomas for higher education with a degree "Professional Bachelor". The college offers also Postgraduate studies in the following areas: *"Communication Technologies"*, *"Electronics"*, *"Design, Technology and Sewing Production Management"*, and *"Mechanical Engineering"*.

The college has a library, workshops, and laboratories which is a precondition for a quality theoretical and practical education.

- **Target groups**

There is no statistical data about the ethnic backgrounds of the student body.

The majority of the students are Eastern Orthodox Christians, which determines their ethnic origin. There are also Roma, Macedonian, Bessarabian Bulgarian, Ukranian, and Albanian students. (p. 1)

There are no former prisoners who attend the college.

- **Funding sources**

The college is funded by the state budget and the students pay tuition, which is different for the different specialties, but is around the minimum wage of the country, i.e., for one 4-week semester a student pays a fee of around 130 Euros, which is approximately equal to one minimum wage salary.

- **Institution's mission**

The Technical College is part of South-West University in Blagoevgrad. It enrolls its own students, has its own curriculum and awards Bachelor degree diplomas, but it adheres to the rules and regulations of SWU. Many Bulgarian universities have established campuses following this model.

The main admission requirement is the entry-level exam. After passing the exam, students from some vulnerable groups pay tuition fees at a reduced price, as stipulated in the Higher Education Act, Articles 68 and 70: people with 70% disability, war veterans with disabilities, orphans, single mothers with three or more children are accepted on easier terms, and social grants are given to socially disadvantaged students, who also receive preferential treatment in terms of accommodation at the student dormitories.

The university offers correspondence courses as part of its lifelong learning strategy. The college does not provide literacy courses.

The college gives up its buildings to members of the local community for different social events, except for literacy courses.

The college's long-term outreach strategies with regard to lifelong learning include: recognition of prior education, creating conditions for distance education, and improving the opportunities for educating students in a real work environment.

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

The Technical College does not offer child care services to adult students.

According to the Higher Education Act, Articles 68 and 70, people with 70% disability, war veterans with disabilities, and orphans do not pay tuition fees. Also, the law stipulates that social stipends are given to socially disadvantaged students, who also receive preferential treatment in terms of accommodation in the student dormitories. (p. 1)

II. COLLEGE APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

The admission requirements of the college are the same for everybody.

Nobody receives preferential treatment in terms of admission procedures, conditions, rules, etc. Everyone who wants to study can do so. The college does not assign quotas for students from certain social or ethnic groups. Before, during socialism, there were quotas for certain ethnic minority groups, like students from Turkish or Roma origin. Otherwise, people with disabilities pay tuition fees at a reduced price, as stipulated by the rules and regulation of the College. (p. 1)

The state could encourage the institutions of higher education to improve the access of students from disadvantage groups by:

...offering trainings that are directed at the concrete community, for instance assistant-teachers who in Roma schools. Some NGOs support such activities; I know that the Open Society Institute gives scholarships to Roma students. There should be opportunities for students from socially disadvantaged groups in terms of financial support and grants. (p. 1)

The college does not specifically aim to accept a concrete percentage of students from disadvantaged groups. This situation is similar to the ones of other institutions of higher education.

The most effective way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

through conducting auxiliary classes and preparatory admission courses. Thus disadvantaged groups will be prepared to begin and to complete their education successfully. (p. 2)

The most just way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is by organizing preparatory admission courses for them, and by giving them special scholarships. (p. 2)

The strategic plan of the College for improving the access of adults to education

applies to all prospective students and includes: preparatory admissions courses, a preliminary exam, recognition of the matriculation exam results, establishing admission offices, and visits to different regions throughout the country aimed at increasing the interest in the college. (p. 1)

The good practices of the College relate mainly to the development and work of its labs where the students

have practical exercises. We would like that the work done in the labs will bring additional financial support to the College. (p. 2)

The electronics lab is the most effectively working lab in the College (Good practice A). Since 2009 the College organizes “Days of Open Doors”.

The management of the College visits different schools throughout South-West Bulgaria, in order to have a more massive campaign aimed also at students from disadvantaged groups and covered by the local media. (p. 3)

In order to optimize the students’ results, the College offers:

...additional classes, faculty office hours, and practicums. (p. 3)

The College organizes preparatory admission courses for prospective students.

Preparatory classes for students from disadvantaged groups are not conducted. The state can stimulate the institutions of higher education to organize such classes and to improve the access of students from disadvantaged groups by providing them with additional financial support. (p. 3)

Admission offices are set up during the campaigns, which begin each year in March. Also, a reference book for prospective students is published.

INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

We do not have statistical data on the percentage of students from disadvantaged groups. (p. 4)

Some of the advantages of having students from different social and cultural backgrounds are related to

acquiring social experience and developing a sense of tolerance. (p. 4)

The challenges of having students from different social backgrounds are that differences can be used for

instilling hostility, which could be dangerous. (p. 4)

RANGE

The College establishes contacts with disadvantaged groups in order to improve their access to higher education by:

...organizing visits to different schools and discussions with students. [...] The college's buildings may be rented to members of the local community for different social events. (p. 4)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

There is mutual support among students and teachers at the College.

...during the practicums and internships at our lab or at other firms, where the students can experience real workplace settings. (p. 5)

Our students mutually support each other:

...they interact informally and the College does not participate in these processes. (p. 5)

The students' opinions about the school curriculum are studied by the Center for Quality, as well as, during practical exercises and consultations conducted by the faculty.

Students from disadvantaged groups are fully informed about the admission policies and procedures. The College does not use admission strategies specifically targeting members of disadvantaged groups.

TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The College organizes preparatory courses, preliminary examinations and application procedure:

Students who attend vocational high schools and live in the nearby villages are interested in applying to the College. (p. 6)

ADMISSION POLICIES

The College does not assign quotas for students from disadvantaged groups. Scholarships are mainly provided by different foundations; the income of students from socially disadvantaged groups is taken into consideration for their accommodation at the dormitories.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

It is a common opinion that the exam is the most effective way for assessing knowledge and skills. People are suspicious of informal and individual learning. The main obstacle to the establishment of a mechanism for recognition of prior learning and professional experience is in its insufficient level:

...the recognition of all prior courses and trainings is not indicative of the existence of a sufficient level of knowledge and skills. That is why accreditation of universities is done, which is related to the qualification of the faculty members, the classes offered, etc. (p. 6)

The entrance examination is the initial assessment of the students' knowledge and skills. Then, during the course of the semester, this assessment is done by midterm and final exams. (p. 6)

SUPPORTS

The College does not have a specialized unit that provides emotional support to the students. There is a Career Development Center at SWU, which also renders its services to students from the Technical College.

The students from the College work, even though not in their field of specialty, in order to support themselves financially during their studies. Most of the College's graduates continue their education at SWU. (p. 7)

The College does not have a permanent admissions department. Each year admission committees are set up. The management of the College develops the rules for: the admissions criteria, the recognition of the matriculation exam results, the exam schedule, etc.

The College does not work on developing the writing skills of the students.

The educational support that the students receive during their course of education is in the form of:

...seminars; consultations given by faculty members during their office hours; practicums and internships. (p. 7)

The financial support that the college provides to the students with low economic status is in the form of social stipends. They also receive preferential treatment in terms of accommodation at the student dormitories.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Even though it is considered important, the College does not yet offer distant education.

III. MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICES

A. TECHNICAL LABORATORY (IN ELECTRONICS)

Objectives of the practice: To carry out practical exercises, to educate through practice, and to offer lab products on the market, and gain profit:

The most efficient lab in the College is the Electronics one. (p. 2)

Students majoring in “*Electronics*” and “*Communication Technologies*” have their practical exercises in this laboratory. The students actively participate in the projects done at the lab. Here are some projects that illustrate the nature of the lab’s work:

- *"Modern Methods for Building Microprocessors Media, Based on PLC-SIEMENS, with Integrated Computer Systems"*: The aim of the project is: introducing PLC-Siemens systems to the microprocessor lab of the Technical College. The introduction of the system to the learning process will meet the increased needs of professionals, who are familiar with: PLC microprocessor systems, computer programming management, Microwin programming, and WinCC – based computer integrated development environment.
- *"Development and Implementation of a Portable PEPS - SWU Hardware-Software Electropuncture Stimulation System"*: The project’s goal is to develop and implement a portable electropuncture stimulation system with different combinations and

electrical impulse modulations. As a result of the project we expect to develop a unique portable electropuncture stimulator to be used for treatment and research (in combination with Electrocardiography and Electroencephalography) and for training purposes in the course *“Molecular Bioelectronics”*.

- *“Adapting PC Technology for the Production of Small Series Printed Circuit Boards (PCB)”*: The project aims to adapt PC technology at a reasonable cost for the development of a set of printed circuit boards designed by students in the class *“Automated Design of PCBs”*. The technology that the students have developed provides efficiency of production and allows for personal creativity of the students. The advantage of the proposed PC-technology is a fast computer design of single PCB, which in turn is very convenient for visualization and modernization of the learning process, and can be applied in the Practicum on *“Analog and Digital Schemotechnics”*.
- *“Trombe Solar Systems and Microcomputer Systems of Management and Efficiency Study of Different Types of Solar Converters”*: Department of *“Electronics and Communication Technologies”*.
- *“Development and Introduction of IT Training in the Engineering Courses”* in the Department of *“Electronics and Communication Technologies”*.
- *“Application of Wireless Technologies in the Learning Process”*: The project’ goal is to broaden students’ knowledge and practical skills in the field of wireless technologies and to study the possible application and implementation of wireless technologies in the curriculum of the Electronics department. Another goal of the project is the development and implementation of a video monitoring system, based on wireless technology.
- *“A System of Monitoring and Control of Technical Parameters with Automatic Data Processing”*: The project aims to establish a system for monitoring and control of process parameters - temperature, moisture, etc., based on wireless communications. The system should be introduced in the curriculum of the Department of *“Electronics and Communication Technologies”* which will meet the need for specialists who have knowledge of: industrial wireless communication networks, hardware, software, using

specialized mathematical software to design automated systems and automated data processing.

Target groups: Mainly students, lecturers, and employers.

Funding sources: Mainly from university projects and from external sources; the equipment and all the materials related to the projects' activities are funded by the projects.

History: The electronics lab is established in the early nineties of the 20th century.

Number of participants: 100-120 students and faculty each year.

Location: Technical College, Blagoevgrad.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The laboratory is a place where teachers and students collaborate, in order to develop their creative and innovative thinking; their teamwork skills; and their skills needed to apply knowledge into practice. The "learning by doing" method used in the lab increases students' capacity.

One of the weaknesses is the insufficiency of modern equipment. More resources are needed for maintaining the equipment in the laboratory up-to-date.

Priority needs for expansion of the model/service:

- Having close cooperation with employers, in order to ensure the practical training, the upgrading of equipment and the successful professional realization of the specialists on the labor market.
- Developing research projects.
- Establishing a Center for Training and Vocational Qualification of specialists with technical educational background.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The work of the laboratory is assessed by a student opinion survey and by observing the students development during their studies at the university and then during their professional realization. Employers' opinions regarding the knowledge and skills of the students who have worked at the lab are also surveyed.

Technical College

Interview with BA (Lecturer)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See interview College_1.

II. COLLEGE APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

The successful admission practices of the college are aimed at recruiting students from all social groups and are not selectively targeting adults from disadvantaged groups.

The successful practices are mostly related to the work of the electronic's laboratory, even though its equipment is not quite up-to-date. (p. 1)

Students have practical exercises in the lab as part of their training. Thus, one of the main advantages of the training is that it is oriented towards practice, including the internships that take place in local businesses. The practical nature of the training is the main factor for motivating future students to enrol in the college.

An important part of the institutional strategies and processes related to disadvantaged groups are the grants given to socially disadvantaged students, based on proven low-income. All students pay the same fees, no concessions are given, except under certain conditions indicated in the Bulgarian Law on Higher Education, e.g. orphans, military staff with

disabilities, persons with 70% disability. There are also students who receive scholarships from external donors, e.g., non-governmental organizations.

The college does not aim to accept a concrete percentage of students from disadvantaged groups. Indeed, the situation is similar in all institutions of higher education in the country and this is legally stipulated in the Law on Higher Education.

A career planning center for students from Roma ethnic origin is going to be established at the college, provided that we receive the necessary funding. (p. 1)

The strategic plan for improving the access of adults to education refers to all prospective students, regardless of their social status:

...the plan includes preliminary courses and an exam, recognition of the matriculation exam results, establishing admission offices, and visits to different regions throughout the country aimed at strengthening the interest in the college. (p. 2)

A situation analysis of the college is being done in terms of improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education.

It is similar to the situation in other higher educational institutions. (p. 2)

We have students who are from Roma and Turkish origin, but the ones of Bulgarian origin are the majority, I can not say the exact number; we do not collect information concerning their ethnicity. (p. 1)

The most effective way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

by setting up a special quota for them. (p. 2)

The most just way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

through organizing preparatory admission courses for them (p. 2)

The college organizes Days of Open Doors - this event is part of the initiative of the South-West University (SWU).

The college's admission policies, including the application procedure are part of the SWU's admission process, i.e., we do not have a separate admission's office. There is a website with information about the whole application procedure, there are admission offices, preliminary examinations, etc., but all these are part of the overall structure of SWU. (p. 4)

Auxiliary classes for students who are behind are not being held, but this could be done by
encouraging the lecturers to do extra work with students like these. (p. 3)

Preparatory classes for students from disadvantaged groups are also not held, but the universities can be stimulated to develop such a practice

by ensuring state scholarships for these students. (p. 4)

The state could encourage the institutions of higher education to improve the access of students from disadvantage groups by

organizing career centre information days at the universities with a special focus emphasis on recruiting minority students and by conducting free preparatory courses. (p. 1)

INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

Some of the advantages of having students from different social and cultural backgrounds are related to

having opportunities for intercultural dialogue, creating a more favorable and stimulating environment for the students from other ethnic groups, developing students' competence as a precondition for a more successful professional realization in a multicultural workplace. (p. 4)

The main challenge of having students from different social backgrounds is related to the need for

acquiring intercultural competence of the lecturers themselves. (p. 4)

RANGE

In order to improve the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education, the college establishes contacts with disadvantaged groups

by visiting different schools and talking to teachers and students. More contacts with non-government organizations are necessary to be established.
(p. 5)

The college's buildings may be rented to members of the local community for different social events.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

Students and teachers at the college mutually assist each other: consultations are given, student internships and practical sessions are conducted.

An opportunity for social interaction and for promotion of mutual support among all students, as well as, an example of a good practice is the Annual Spring International Art Festival. Students from disadvantaged groups participate in it. The possibilities are limitless.

The students' opinions about the school curriculum are studied by the Center for Quality at SWU. Otherwise, there is no especially organized campaign specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups. The strategies are not specifically oriented towards one or another social group. The target groups are formed as a general object of impact.

TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The college organizes Days of Open Doors in collaboration with SWU; also, preliminary entry-level math courses are conducted and an entry-level examination for Technical College is also held. Especially students from the professional high schools in town visit the college.

During the visits, the students are introduced to the learning process and to the opportunities that the Technical college offers, also prospective students are recruited and students' interest is provoked. (p .6)

However, the college does not organize admission campaigns specifically targeted at improving the access of students from disadvantage groups.

ADMISSION POLICIES

The college does not assign quotas for students from disadvantaged groups, which is actually legally defined by the Bulgarian Law on Higher Education. The college provides several types of financial support: merit scholarships, social grants, especially designated for students from disadvantaged groups with low-income, and scholarships provided by different foundations (NGOs):

...we give recommendations to students for these scholarships, but their number is small. (p. 6)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The main obstacle to the establishment of a mechanism for recognition of prior non-formal education and professional experience is the discrepancy of criteria at the institutional level:

...people attend different courses at different places, but the quality of the trainings is not always good. How can we know if a certain student is good at math, if he does not solve the math problems, and what is the purpose of a certificate, received for passing a math course, but he cannot actually solve math problems. Attending courses and receiving certificates is not always a guarantee for acquired knowledge. (p. 7)

The entrance examination is the initial assessment of the students' knowledge and skills,

then each teacher administers an entry-level test in order to determine their preliminary knowledge on the specific subject. There are other tests during the semester, and a final exam at the end of the course. (p. 7)

SUPPORTS

The college does not have a specialized unit that provides emotional support to the students (e.g. a psychologist's office, etc.).

Support to students in terms of career development is provided at the Career Development Center of SWU, where information is provided regarding different job positions, and the students are helped during the job application process.

Almost all of the students at the college work in order to support themselves. (p. 7)

The college does not have its own admissions department. Its admissions campaign is part of the campaign of SWU which is led each year by the deputy rector:

Actually, this department is formed at the beginning of each admissions campaign and it includes department secretaries and administrative staff. It functions on several levels by combining different activities, which is also cost-effective. Our secretaries are also involved in the work of the admission committees and the management of the college also participates in the organization of the whole campaign. (p. 8)

The educational support that the students receive at the college is as follows:

- consultations, given by the lecturers,
- lecturer's office which are officially posted,
- students' internships and practical exercises,
- writing of course papers.

The financial support that the college provides to the students with low economic status is in the form of social stipends, as well as, recommendations written by lecturers which students present when applying for scholarships from NGOs or business companies.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The college still does not offer distant education.

University_1

Interview with PT (Vice Rector)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

South-West University “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad was founded in 1975 as a branch of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, and with a decision of the General Assembly was made a university in 1995. Its academic faculty includes over 1000 lecturers, of whom over 400 professors and associate professors. It is a place where virtually every 8th Bulgarian obtains his/her education – it has a total of about 12 000 Bulgarian and international students (bachelor's and master's degrees) and PhD students in 42 academic subjects.

- **Target groups**

One of the characteristic features of the Bulgarian education system and also of the national policy towards ethnic communities in the Bulgarian context is that no information is officially collected on the ethnic background of individuals. Personal identity papers feature no section entitled “ethnic background” and no official institution – a university, school, organization or company can collect such kind of information. This is considered personal information of confidential character. It is assumed that all ethnic communities have Bulgarian citizenship, the separate groups having their own ethnic, religious and cultural identity or family preferences, which do not fall within the priorities of the state. In this context officially no information concerning ethnic background is being collected in this country. According to the 2001 census Roma people in Bulgaria are 370 908, or 4.79% of the population, data provided

by National Statistical Institute. Ethnic background of the population: <http://www.nsi.bg/census/census-i.htm> of 2001. Various sources estimate the real number of Roma people to be between 600 000 and 800 000 or 8-10% of the population (Stigmata, 2004: 22).

The information about students, collected at the South-West University (SWU) includes their place of residence, school finished, final marks, present address and identity card data. Hence depending on the region students come from, it can only indirectly be concluded whether they could be Bulgarian Mohammedans, Turks, Roma or Bulgarian. A second indicator are student names: generally Mohammedans (those are people with Turkish names and Muslim religion, speaking Bulgarian; they were made to settle in the Rhodope Mountain regions, and are actually Bulgarians forced to accept Turkish identity back in the 15–16th centuries, after Bulgarian lands were invaded by the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century), Turks and some of the Roma people with Muslim religion have Turkish names, while quite a significant part of the Roma people (Christians) have Bulgarian names and were made to settle in all regions of the country. Ethnic groups can be considered only in this context, with no data on the ratio of their representation being available.

At the South-West University “it can be said that Bulgarians predominate; there are also Bulgarian Mohammedans, Roma people, Greeks, people of Bulgarian origin from Ukraine, Serbia, ethnic Bulgarians from Yemen and Moldova. However no accurate statistics is available due to the type of information officially collected. Similarly, no information is collected about: parentless children and long-term unemployed people. (p. 1)

Disadvantaged groups can be identified by the social scholarships granted by the university.

Social scholarships are granted for low family income. This is stipulated in the regulations of the Students Council. But not all students with low income submit such documentation, and moreover there are frequent cases of misuse of documents certifying social needs. This means that in reality the full income is not declared, and on the whole social scholarships granted are a small number. (p. 2)

There are no former prisoners studying at the South-West University.

- **Funding sources**

Tuition is funded by the state budget, with the students paying semester fees, which differ for the various subjects but are relatively close to the minimal monthly salary for the country. i.e. for one semester whose duration is four months students pay a fee of around one minimal salary.

- **Institution's mission**

The mission of the South-West University is to be the largest educational, open and dynamic research, development and creative centre in South West Bulgaria. SWU goals to be a modern scientific-education and social-cultural institution in the system of Bulgaria's higher education are related to:

- setting new standards in scientific research, training and continuous education of specialists;
- stimulating the development of enriching and tolerant intercultural communication in accordance with the national, European and general human norms and values;
- a continuously self-improving academic community.

The main mechanism of admission to the South-West University is the competition examination. Some disadvantaged groups are admitted under relieved conditions, but again with a pass at the competition examination, according to the Higher Education Act, articles 68 and 70, reflected in the SWU Regulation, article 95: "disabled people (with disability of 70% or over), the wounded in the wars, parentless children, and mothers with three or more children do not pay tuition fees". No competition examination is needed for winners of National Olympiads, but those account for a small number of students. Besides the cases mentioned above, all other students pay semester fees.

SWU grants social scholarships and those approved have the right to preferences in obtaining student housing. (p. 1)

SWU strategic plan aims to increase the number of preparatory courses offered by the university for applicant students as well as admission based on the grade from the matriculation examination at the secondary school. Since 2009 an active campaign has started, focused on meetings between the academic management with secondary school

graduates to facilitate the transition between secondary and higher education. The second transition between the university and the work place is facilitated by the SWU Centre for Career Development (*Best Practice C*) which registers the preferences and demands of students and employers and aims to reach balance between labour market demands and academic tuition.

SWU strategic plan regarding access to the institution for traditionally underrepresented groups is accomplished through the functioning of the Centre for Continuous Education and the training of assistant teachers for Roma people.

The university strategies in the area of lifelong learning are implemented through the availability of correspondence courses and an electronic library, as well as the offer of distance learning.

SWU long term strategies concerning lifelong learning are focused on the development of a qualification framework and the accreditation of transition learning, creating conditions for distance learning, expanding the possibilities of the Centre for Continuous Education towards granting 3rd, 2nd and 1st qualification degree to teachers, training of Roma assistant teachers and education of teachers in Roma environment, as well as education of resource teachers.

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

SWU does not offer services related to child care for adult students.

Higher Education Act, articles 68 and 70 are reflected in the SWU Regulation, article 95:

...disabled people (with disability of 70% or over), the wounded in wars, parentless children, and mothers with three or more children do not pay tuition fees. (p. 1)

Social scholarships are granted to low income groups; for the latter “preferences are available with regard to student housing”. (p. 1)

II. UNIVERSITY APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

The university practices related to expanding the access of disadvantaged groups are defined in the Higher Education Act (articles 68 and 70 define student rights and the relief circumstances for various groups of people: disabled people (with disability of 70% or over), the wounded in wars, parentless children, and mothers with three or more children do not pay tuition fees) .Admission is through a competition examination.

Whether it will be a competition examination, selection by documents or results from matriculation examinations, this is competition in practice. There is no way to go around the legal norm, and also no privileges based on ethnic, religious, social or cultural principles should be granted in a sphere where knowledge, intellect, the will to learn and professional realisation are the indicators for an equal start. At the same time if for disabled people a disadvantaged position can be clearly certified, in the case of people with low income the documents certifying it are not always reliable. Frequently there is misuse with regard to the family income and possibilities exist to conceal various sources of income. Therefore there are no specific discounts in the semester fee based on the financial status of students. It should be said that socially disadvantaged students have preferences in obtaining student housing, as well as a quota for social scholarships. In modern times knowledge is a tool for social mobility and socially disadvantaged students should be able to maximally utilize this possibility. Social scholarships are given for low family income. This is stipulated in the Students Council Regulation. On my observation however, part of the students are frequently against such scholarships as documents certifying social needs are sometimes misused. Often a certain social status is claimed, which the university has neither the capacity nor the right to verify. (p. 1-2)

Another line of support to students are the scholarship references:

Tutors give references for applying for financial support (scholarships) to different foundations, including Open Society Institute, despite that this is generally the concern of non-governmental organizations and the students themselves. The university certainly has to get involved; i.e. we show tolerance to any student initiative regarding the obtaining of a scholarship from external organizations. And if I could summarise, the university respects the ethnic, cultural and religious background of students; there is no discriminatory policy towards diversity. (p. 2)

A serious problem to implement the university institutional strategies is posed by the lack of

a working mechanism for student crediting. In fact, this is so because there is no effective economy which should guarantee work places and return of investments in education in a visible term of 5 or 10 years. This actually becomes the hindering factor for crediting students' education. Besides, within our cultural realia learners themselves have no mental readiness to use crediting for their own education. Perhaps it is because education itself is not viewed as an investment. Again in this context, another problem related to the unregulated students' labour can be highlighted. At the present moment many students go to work but employers hire students because their labour is less paid as compared with other individuals; no social security payments are needed for students; employers can conceal taxes through this type of labour; generally this is a phenomenon related to the black labour market. The lack of regulation for students' labour and effective control by the state is an unfavourable circumstance both for the students and the state. (p. 2)

The university has no specified objective of admitting a certain proportion of students from disadvantaged groups:

I believe that the competition examination allows the best selection of applicant students. I think that the introduction of financial discounts for certain groups (e.g. based on ethnic background) would imply unequal access for the remaining ethnic communities. Essentially a policy of admission based on ethnic background used to be applied in the recent past (during the socialist

regime there were quotas for admission of Turks, gypsies). Ethnic quotas are definitely not an appropriate or fair method for admission in the higher education school. In actual fact the university is not a social welfare institution. It is true that education together with its selective function has an integrating one as well, but integration should be based on the fundamental relation “abilities – work – achievements - desire for proving oneself in the community and society”. The other option would mean suppression of the desire for more knowledge and more skills achieved through education. (p. 2-3)

SWU does not have a unit (committee, section, department) for social inclusion or access, which at institutional level should deal with expanding access to the higher education school.

The university implements a specific policy in support of minority Bulgarian communities outside Bulgaria:

There is a government decision stipulating admission quotas for Bulgarians from the Western border territories, Ukraine, Moldova. The condition is for them to have passed the competition examination organized by the Ministry of Education and Science. Furthermore, with a decision of the Academic Council each year an additional number of students are admitted following Regulation 103 and 228 of the Council of Ministers within the academic admission plan and in accordance with the plan approved by the state. (p. 3)

The university supports all practices aimed at expanding the access of disadvantaged groups:

...as long as they are legally authorized and do not contradict the interests of the university. In this connection I should draw attention to the different research projects on ethnic minorities implemented by the university as well as the university electronic library www.labiko.swu.bg; (Best practice B). Below I will list only a few of them:

- “Mixed marriages – a model for ethnic and religious tolerance”, implemented in 2003 by the Centre for Intercultural Social and Learning Communication to SWU “Neofit Rilski” in cooperation with the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Korce “Fan. S. Noli”, Albania.

- *“The state of education in the Roma community”, “The Roma child and its socialization”, “The socio-pedagogical profile of the Roma family” (see Electronic Library at www.labiko.swu.bg).*

- *Training of Roma people for assistant teachers was conducted in 2003, funded by the Phare Programme. A technological model was developed, published in the Electronic Library at www.labiko.swu.bg.*

- *The Centre for Continuous Learning focused on training teachers working with Roma communities; the Centre is located in the town of Dupnitsa, in the building of the former Teachers’ Institute, and is part of the structure of SWU.*

This constitutes only part of the work of the academic faculty but I think that it clearly shows the professional commitment of the university to ethnic minorities as disadvantaged groups and its activity for their social inclusion.
(p. 3-4)

Regarding the expansion of access to education for disadvantaged groups the situation at the university is

analogous to the situation at the other higher education schools. My explanation derives from the fact already mentioned that our admission policy is based on the relevant legal acts and regulations concerning scholarships, financial support, reduced tuition fees, etc. (p. 4)

SWU has projects and practices directed to the preparation of specialists to work with the minorities. In this connection we can point to the Centre for Continuous Education in the town of Dupnitsa (*Best practice A*), which is an education, research and consultation unit integrated in the structure of the South-West University “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad. The project is entitled “National centre for qualification of teachers for instructing and integration of Roma children”. The Centre is also focused on training of Roma people for assistant teachers.

SWU has no practice for students coming from disadvantaged groups to pay reduced tuition fees.

Regarding the most reasonable way for expanding access to higher education for disadvantaged groups:

...reducing tuition fees, granting special scholarships, defining a special quota for certain groups (e.g. ethnic minorities or social groups) would not be fair for the rest of the students who do not hold such privileges. Social and cultural justice, at least in my opinion, lies in the equality according to the “competency” criterion. (p. 6)

Since 2009 SWU has started to organize Open Days (*Best practice D*). Open Days are held in other towns as well – Petrich and Sandanski. More such events are to be held in Kiustendil, Pernik, Gotse Delchev, Blagoevgrad and other towns in the country. The university takes part in national fairs for applicant students.

SWU has no experience in organizing assistance classes for students who are unable to cope with the learning process.

There is no legal framework in Bulgaria to introduce tutoring on the part of students. Student councils do not take the initiative either. Academic faculty has the obligation to act as course directors, but this work is not stimulated in any way. (p. 6)

The university does not organize preparatory classes for disadvantaged groups.

This is a good idea, but for this purpose universities should be funded by the state or donor organizations by a competition, quota or other indicator. This is not possible for now. The universities themselves have no sufficient funds for this activity. And there is no guarantee that if they conduct such activity they can reap its fruit. There is no way to commit people to being students at only one institution. (p. 6)

SWU does not have a specialized institutional unit for student admission; the unit is mobile and is set up each year during the annual admission campaign; it works under the guidance of the Vice Rector for bachelor's programmes; the unit includes all technical assistants responsible for collecting applications, processing results and publishing information. The unit deals with admission and all related activities: forming committees for collecting applications, printing the applicant students' guide, uploading information about admission procedures on the website, holding open days, organizing (preparatory) courses, answering

questions posed by applicants, submitting detailed information about subjects, examinations, dates, matriculation grades required, etc.

For this academic year we prepared early the regulations guide, published the applicant students' guide, uploaded attachments on the website, prepared contracts for firms recruiting applicant students from all regions of Bulgaria, participated in applicant students' fairs, conducted open days, communicated with the mass media. We shall hold three examination sessions and have already organized their preparation. I myself invest much effort in informing the public and in ensuring the correct proceedings of the examinations and admission ranking. This is socially fair and significant for the university prestige, especially in the context of the restricted applicant students' market. (p. 7)

INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

The information about students, collected at the South-West University regards primarily their place of residence, school finished, final marks, present address and identity card data. Hence depending on the region students come from, it can only indirectly be concluded whether they could be Bulgarian Mohammedans, Turks, Roma or Bulgarian. A second indicator are student names: generally Mohammedans (those are people with Turkish names and Muslim religion, speaking Bulgarian, made to settle in the Rhodope mountain regions, who were actually Bulgarians forced to accept Turkish identity back in the 15–16th centuries, after the Bulgarian lands were invaded by the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century), as well as Turks and some of the Roma people with Muslim religion have Turkish names, while quite a significant part of the Roma people (Christians) have Bulgarian names and were made to settle in all regions of the country. Ethnic groups can be considered only in this context, with no data on the proportion of their representation being available.

At the South-West University “it can be said that Bulgarians predominate; there are also Bulgarian Mohammedans, Roma people, Greeks, people of Bulgarian origin from Ukraine, Serbia, ethnic Bulgarians from Yemen and Moldova. However no accurate statistics is available due to the

type of information officially collected. Similarly, no information is collected about: parentless children and long-term unemployed people. (p. 1)

Similarly, the university does not have statistical data about the ethnic background of the faculty.

The main advantage of having students of diverse social groups at the university is related to the accumulation of social experience.

The diversity of social groups actually reflects society as a whole; contacts between different groups bring experience to students, they socialize them and prepare them for life. For the faculty it is also important to communicate in real in the ethno-cultural environment and expand their experience. In macro-social terms this is important for strengthening the values of democracy and the European Union. (p. 7)

The most significant challenge posed by the presence of students of diverse social backgrounds would be

related to hostility, cultural, religious or economic intolerance and conflicts. However, there are no such cases at the university. (p. 7)

SCOPE

Relations with disadvantaged groups with the aim to expand their access to higher education are established through conducting PR campaigns and meetings at the schools. No contacts have been made with non-governmental organizations in this regard.

There is no ban or any limiting mode “for the use of university premises by the community or certain social groups for holding evening or summer events, the main requirement being not to breach the University autonomy act”. (p. 8)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

SWU has practices for mutual assistance between students and faculty including the following activities:

- Field activity including workshops, visits to firms and organizations, observations, research work aimed at expanding the scope of students' practical knowledge.
- Students and faculty working together on projects focused on intercultural dialogue, tolerance, ethnic and religious identity.
- Diploma research made by the students.

Even though support to students from disadvantaged groups “is not the subject of systemic analysis and constructive concern, we have not had any cases of ethnic conflicts between students and faculty. Among students, as well. (p. 9)

An important aspect of the interaction between students and faculty is the survey of students' opinion.

Students' opinion on the curriculum, especially on the courses taught and the lecturers is reported by an internal unit engaged in monitoring the quality of teaching (Centre for Quality). Students evaluate the courses taught by their usefulness, relation to practice, accessibility etc. and the relevant lecturers by their qualities, ability to present the course content, methodology used etc. through completing survey forms which are later summarized in order to make public their evaluation of faculty and courses. This information is uploaded in the university website, so that site visitors can familiarize themselves with students' opinions. Furthermore, the website gives information on the curricula and courses and an option for students to share their opinion on faculty and courses on the Students Council forums or directly in the departmental blogs. Several sociological surveys concerning the quality of teaching have been also made by the Department of Sociology at SWU. (p .9)

TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The university organizes various programmes in this area. Firstly, these are the preparatory courses for applicant students.

Moreover, the University Regulation allows the admission of students without a competition examination, when they are winners of different Olympiads, but such cases are relatively few.” The university also holds “visits of secondary students, but those are incidental and primarily on the occasion of Olympiads and competitions”. This is a significant shortcoming “when viewed self-critically both universities and secondary schools owe more to future students. (p. 10)

ADMISSION POLICIES

SWU has no practices of providing quotas for disadvantaged groups. This policy is in compliance with the Higher Education Act, whose Regulation the University is obliged to adhere to.

No, we shouldn’t do that! It is NOT lawful!! (p. 10)

Regarding university **fees**, there is no special policy for discounts and it is difficult to regulate this.

The Rector and the Academic Council however have not refused to show understanding in certain incidental cases. We have rescheduled payment of fees beyond the two-week term. Regretfully, recently I have had about 10 such requests to which I have responded positively. On their part, students do not misuse the situation. (p. 10)

SWU provides scholarships for excellent performance and social scholarships for students with low income.

This is included in the Regulation of the Academic Council. Furthermore, there are preferences for disadvantaged groups in obtaining student housing. (p. 2)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

There is no mechanism at the university for recognizing prior non-formal learning, but the need for developing criteria for its validating is clearly acknowledged.

The university holds the ambition to create a qualification framework which will regulate competences and recognition. This will be accomplished best for pedagogical specialists, however in that area non-formal education proves nonsense. The next possible area is that such framework be developed for computer skills and business competences. It is very important to set standards for the validation of the transition non-formal education, as conversely there is a risk of decreasing the quality of higher education. (p. 11)

The initial assessment of skills is done by the entrance examinations at the university, which measure literacy, linguistic culture and certainly knowledge of the relevant subject; as the input point it is the entrance examinations that serve as the selection mechanism. Moreover, each tutor can conduct a base level test for their course, whose aim is also to diagnose students' initial knowledge and preparation.

SUPPORTS

SWU has no institutionalized forms of providing emotional support to students (e.g. a specialized unit, psychologists).

The Centre for Career Development (best practice) at SWU is an institutionalized form of support to students with regard to their professional development and choice of career.

An institutional form for providing support to students concerning the learning process are course directors to whom students can turn for assistance and support if needed, for solving problems related to their studies, examinations or some social issues.

At SWU the institutional forms for providing financial services and support to the students with lowest income include social scholarships, scholarships for excellence, and preferences in obtaining student housing.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The SWU Regulation includes distance education as an option, which is not yet applied because it requires large investments. Correspondence courses, which may be viewed as an alternative to distance education, are largely available at the University. (p. 12)

COURSE CONTENT

The activity approach to learning is applied through

visiting programmes, student internships and workshops. An important aspect of the activity approach to learning is the participation of undergraduates and doctoral students in scientific research projects. In compliance with the Strategy for Scientific Research developed by the Ministry of Education and Science the inclusion of undergraduate and doctoral students in the research teams funded by the Ministry is considered an advantage. (p. 12)

The present recession and financial crisis will affect negatively the policies and practices for access of disadvantaged groups to higher education.

The financial crisis will undoubtedly create serious difficulties for the various aspects of university education, as well as for certain social groups. These difficulties will be many times stronger for the representatives of disadvantaged groups because their resources for coping with the crisis are much less as compared to the other groups. (p. 12)

SWU has no special programmes organized for drop out students aiming to support their re-inclusion in the education process.

There is possibility for consultations, for multiple re-sit of examinations, but no courses for drop out students are organized. (p. 13)

Among the disadvantaged groups being at greatest risk, i.e. threatened by social exclusion, are considered

the representatives of minorities, early school leavers, former prisoners. (p. 13)

However, SWU does not have policies and programmes specially directed to the groups at risk: representatives of minorities, people on social welfare, single parents, early school leavers, parentless children and former prisoners. There are no preparatory classes available for disadvantaged groups; preparatory courses for applicant students are organized, open for all who wish to attend; there are course fees. One way for expanding access to disadvantaged groups is for these courses to be free for them, i.e. if the state covers the expenses for the preparatory courses.

III. MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICES

A. CENTRE FOR CONTINUOUS EDUCATION TO SOUTH-WEST UNIVERSITY “NEOFIT RILSKI” IN THE TOWN OF DUPNITSA

Objectives of the practice: The Centre is an education, research and consultation unit integrated in the structure of South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, founded with a decision of the Academic Council of 24 January 2007. It is based in the building of the former Teachers’ Institute in the town of Dupnitsa.

The mission of the Centre for Continuous Education is to implement teaching, scientific research and applied studies activities in the area of adult education.

The main strategic objective of the Centre is to establish itself as a significant, modern and influential research and social centre in the region, in Bulgaria and on the Balkan peninsula for educating people of pre-career and career age as part of their professional qualification and career development in the context of life long learning.

In the short term the Centre aims to provide courses for teachers as part of their professional excellence. In the long term the Centre plans to offer continuous education to people of all ages in support of their career development. In this area the Centre envisions:

- √ organizing and conducting of continuous education (short term and one year courses) for increasing the professional competence of those working in the education sphere;
- √ organizing and conducting qualification courses for specialists from different professional spheres;
- √ development of education and research projects within different national and international programmes;
- √ expanding social partnerships – contacts with non-governmental organizations, pedagogical centres, regional inspectorates for education; work with children of different age groups and different ethno-cultural communities and their parents, relations with employers and staff recruiting firms etc.

The Centre's main focus of activity includes education, research, information, publishing and consulting activity in the area of continuous education.

The following types of **training activities** are provided:

1. Specializations for additional professional and pedagogical qualification;
2. Specialized courses for additional professional training;
3. Thematic courses and individual consultations.

The forms of training are fulltime or correspondence courses, distance learning, intensive courses. They are conducted at the Centre for Continuous Education, at schools, at the offices of firms or organizations. Following the successful completion of training, participants obtain certificates in compliance with the Regulation of the state requirements to the content of the main certificates issued by higher education schools (State Gazette, issue 75, Council of Ministers' order № 215/2004).

The Centre for Continuous Education offers the following training services:

1. One year qualification courses

The course has two semesters (1 year). The form of training is by correspondence. On completion participants obtain a certificate for professional qualification in compliance with the Regulation for the unified state requirements (Council of Ministers' order № 151 of 09.04. 1997) and (Council of Ministers' order № 162 of 17.04. 1997).

2. *Qualification courses for obtaining professional and pedagogical qualification in “Teaching and integration of Roma children”*

Trainees’ qualification (nursery, primary or middle school teachers) is officially stated by a certificate for professional and pedagogical qualification.

3. *Courses for the qualification of “Assistant instructor in the raising and coaching of children”*

The curriculum is developed in compliance with Regulation №10 of 4 December 2006 for acquiring qualification for the occupation of “Assistant instructor” (enforced on 13.02.2007). It is founded on the technological model developed by a SWU team within a project funded by the Phare Programme in 2003.

4. *Courses for obtaining the qualification of “teacher”*

The curriculum is developed in compliance with the Regulation for the unified state requirements for obtaining the professional qualification “teacher” (State Gazette, issue 34 of 29 April 1997).

The centre offers the following short term qualification courses:

- √ Civic education through classroom and extracurricular activities
- √ Project development and implementation
- √ Career orientation and consulting of secondary school students
- √ The teacher as class manager
- √ Prevention of students’ drop out from school
- √ Prevention of aggression and risk behavior of children
- √ Conflict resolution
- √ Sex education of students
- √ Communicative skills and team work
- √ Diagnostics and stimulating of children’s non-traditional thinking.

Target groups: Teachers (nursery, primary and middle school), school directors, pedagogical advisers, young people without higher education, including Roma youths; people of all ages.

Funding sources:

The setting up and activity of the Centre was initially funded by a project of the Roma Education Fund, Budapest. The project entitled “National centre for qualification of teachers for the education and integration of Roma children” is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Municipality of Dupnitsa, representatives of the academic faculty of the former Pedagogical College in Dupnitsa and Future for Roma Association. (p. 5)

History of the model: The Centre for Continuous Education is integrated in the structure of South-West University “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad (Decision of the Academic Council of 24 January 2007); it is located in the building of the former Teachers’ Institute in the town of Dupnitsa. It develops as a “*National Centre for qualification of teachers for the education and integration of Roma children*” and is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Municipality of Dupnitsa, representatives of the academic faculty of the former Pedagogical College in the town of Dupnitsa and Future for Roma Association. A new term of funding for this activity by the Roma Education Fund, Budapest, is expected to commence from 20 May 2009.

Number of participants: The Centre trains 40-50 people annually, when project funding is available.

Location: The Centre is located in the town of Dupnitsa.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: The main problem for the Centre’s development is how to find additional funding for its activity as it is not funded by SWU and needs external financial support.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: Training of teachers for working in a Roma environment, training of young Roma people for assistant teachers, improving teachers’ qualification.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Conducting meetings of course members at the Centre to share work experiences, on site visits of tutors from the Centre to schools and maintaining contacts with the course graduates; monitoring by the funding institution Roma Education Fund, Budapest.

B. ELECTRONIC LIBRARY WWW.LABIKO.SWU.BG

Objectives of the practice: To inform about projects implemented, their methods, results and practical applications. The Electronic Library also includes publications of academic faculty, and the technological model for training Roma assistant teachers developed by SWU, resulting from a project funded by the Phare Programme in 2003.

Target groups: Students, faculty, managers, lecturers from other universities, teachers, school directors.

Funding sources: The library is funded by SWU and through project funding.

History/background of the model: The electronic library is part of the National Laboratory for Intercultural Education at SWU, whose latest project uploaded in the electronic library is: “Professional qualification in intercultural training for academic faculty, experts from the Regional Inspectorates of Education to the Ministry of Education and Science, school directors and teachers.” The project’s main goal is the development and implementation of a new strategy for additional qualification of tutors, teachers and administrative personnel in intercultural training for the successful desegregation of Roma students. Training (a one-year qualification course) was conducted for 34 academic lecturers, 60 directors and experts, and 150 teachers from mixed (Bulgarian and Roma students) schools. 5 universities from regions with Roma schools are included in the project: SWU (project leader), Plovdiv University, Thracian University, Bourgas Free University, Shoumen University.

Number of participants: The Electronic Library was founded by the National Laboratory of Intercultural Education at SWU, but is used by all students and academic faculty, an approximate number of 6000 – 7000 people.

Location: South-West University “Neofit Rilski” (www.labiko.swu.bg).

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: Below are some of the titles included in the electronic library:

[EDUCATION OF ROMA FOR ASSISTANT TEACHERS](#)

Compiled by: assoc. prof. Dr. Dimitar K. Dimitrov

CURRENT PROBLEMS OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Jubilee collection on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of prof. Dr. Anastasia Atanassova

SOCIALIZATION OF ROMA CHILD

Compiled by: assoc. Dr. Anastasia Pashova

TOLERANCE TO DIVERSITY. WORLD VIEWS AND VALUES OF ROMA CULTURE

Anastasia Pashova et al.

FAMILY, RELIGION, EVERYDAY LIFE OF MOHAMMEDANS IN THE WESTERN RHODOPE (HISTORICAL AND ANTROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS)

Anastasia Pashova et al.

"I WANT A NOBLE PROFESSION..." TRADITION, FASHION, MODERNITY IN WESTERN RHODOPE

Kristina Popova, Petar Vodenicharov, Anastasia Pashova

"I WISH THAT MAN BE ALWAYS KIND AND WE CAN MAKE CONVERSATION" LANGUAGE BEHAVIOUR AND WORLD VIEWS OF BULGARIAN MOHAMMEDANS FROM GOTSE DELCHEV AND RAZLOG REGIONS

Kristina Popova, Petar Vodenicharov, Snejana Dimitrova

WOMEN AND MEN IN THE PAST

Petar Vodenicharov

LANGUAGE, GENDER AND POWER. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BULGARIAN MODERNISATION (THE 30s AND 60s)

Kristina Popova

THE NATIONAL CHILD

Anastasia Pashova

MIXED MARRIAGES – A MODEL FOR ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The need for wider publicizing of the library activity and the results from various library projects can be emphasized, as well as increasing cooperation with other universities and the preparation of new course books and readers for the SWU faculty.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The Electronic Library is used in the studies of undergraduate and postgraduate students, PhD students, teachers and school directors. They are able to regularly evaluate its work and to express their opinions for improving its activities.

C. CENTRE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Objectives of the practice:

The Centre for Career Development is committed to the students' growth. All students can seek jobs there, establish contacts with employers, and learn how to sell their labour potential. Students from disadvantaged groups can make use of the Centre if they are sufficiently active. (p. 3)

The mission of the Centre for Career Development is to:

- Provide effective services related to the support, preparation and enhancement of the professional realization of students at SWU, their career orientation and development.
- Stimulate interaction between the university and business represented by highly qualified young specialists and employers.
- Create and maintain close relations between the academic community, students and business.

The Centre's **objectives** are to:

- Provide quality services related to career orientation, information and development of students at SWU.
- Facilitate their professional realization.
- Establish relations with the labour market.

- Assist business in the selection of highly qualified specialists.

The Centre for Career Development is an institutionalized form of providing support to students with regard to their professional development and choice of career. (p. 10)

Target groups: Students from the university and employers.

Funding sources: SWU.

History of the model: The Centre was founded in 2005.

Number of participants annually: About 400 students and 30-40 employers annually use the Centre's services.

Location: South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: Students often seek more qualified jobs than employers usually offer. It is important for them to be able to combine study and work. Almost all students at the university have a job. For employers it is important to maintain contacts with the Centre for Career Development because the university educates the specialists they seek to employ.

The main services offered by the Centre for Career Development are directed to students and employers.

What services are offered to students?

- ✓ Registration of students wishing to use the Centre's services
- ✓ Assistance in preparation of application papers and the job interview
- ✓ Information about free internship and work positions and data about the employers offering them
- ✓ Orientation in the labour market trends, the possibilities for career development and continuing education
- ✓ Seminars for acquiring practical skills
- ✓ Participation in firm presentations to students
- ✓ Assistance to students, university and employers in organizing and conducting successful internship programmes

- √ Consultations for successful presentation before employers
- √ Feedback after recruitment

What services are offered to employers?

- √ Registration of employers wishing to use the Centre's services
- √ Maintaining a database of employers – company profile and subject of activity, products and service offered, preferred courses/disciplines
- √ Organizing company presentations for employers, allowing them possibilities to present their activity and the ways for professional realizations to students
- √ Organizing Career Days where employers have the possibility to present their internship positions and free work places
- √ Maintaining an up-to-date database of students, which is available to employers seeking qualified staff
- √ Enabling direct contacts with students seeking jobs or internship
- √ Assistance in the selection process
- √ Assistance in the development and conducting of internship programmes and their presentation to students
- √ Presenting needed information about students and academic disciplines
- √ Providing feedback

Services to the university:

- √ Publicising the university, including the attracting of future students
- √ Observation on the most wanted disciplines at SWU by students and employers
- √ Direct observation on the labour market and the university graduates who have realized themselves
- √ Consulting faculty on the effective ways of increasing the quality of education
- √ Maintaining a database of university graduates

- √ Assistance in raising the university rating
- √ Providing feedback from business for optimizing study documentation.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The main directions of development of the Centre and the possibilities for expanding its activity are related to a) finding work for more students; b) maintaining a database of students and employers; c) conducting Career Days.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The Centre is assessed through students' feedback regarding the labour conditions and payment of the jobs organised by the Centre as well as feedback from employers on the quality of work and commitment of the students.

D. OPEN DAYS

Objectives of the practice: Organising of a PR campaign aiming to reach the future users of university education – the people living in various regions of the country.

Target groups: People from various regions of the country; at this stage the events were held in towns of South-West Bulgaria.

Open Days were held in Petrich and Sandanski. It is planned to conduct more events in Kiustendil, Pernik, Gotse Delchev, Blagoevgrad and other towns. We also participate in the national applicant students' fairs. (p. 6)

Funding sources: SWU.

History of the model: Open Days were organized for the first time in 2009. This good practice has proved its effectiveness in almost all European and U.S. universities. Therefore at SWU there are positive expectations for an increase of the number of student applicants.

Number of participants annually: The approximate number of people who participated in the meetings and talks with representatives of SWU management is about 300-350.

Location: All towns in South-West Bulgaria.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: A need for more intensive meetings in different parts of the country is perceived, which enable SWU to answer more questions of various people and to establish contacts with representative of all social groups.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The organization of Open Days needs improvement as well as wide and timely advertising among the communities of more towns in Bulgaria.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The interest demonstrated towards SWU, reflected in the number of applicant students and the students enrolled for the academic 2009/2010.

Unieversity_1

Interview with SM (Chair of Department)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See the interview with PT.

II. UNIVERSITY APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

Institutional strategies of South-West University (SWU) are focused on guaranteeing equal opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic background.

In 2003 the Department of Sociology conducted a study of students' ethnic and religious identity, funded by SWU. The study posed various questions related to students' tolerance to people with different religion and ethnic identity. The conclusion of the study is that at the university the ethnic model is similar to the one existing in Bulgarian society, but the degree of tolerance at the university is very high. (p. 1)

Another aspect of SWU institutional policies regarding disadvantaged groups is:

...the Master's programmes focused on ethnic tolerance and intercultural dialogue. The Department of Sociology organizes a master's programme with tutors from the Islam Institute in Sofia. The university also offers a Master's programme entitled "Intercultural dialogue and religious differences" for teachers working in regions with minorities: Roma, Mohammedans, Turks. The funding of this programme is provided within a project with the French Cultural Centre; 35 teachers participated in 2006 and the programme created strong interest. The Department of Sociology also offers two specializations related to social policies and dialogue between diverse communities. Students from ethnic communities are very active and perceptive, and this requires a special approach. (p. 1)

A SWU initiative directed to stimulating the dialogue between young people of different ethnic background is the Euroart International Festival (*Best practice B*). The festival has been held for several years now, aiming to attract young people from different ethnic origin, interested in art.

There is no practice at the university of organizing assistance classes for students failing to cope with the study process.

I think that as compared with the assistance classes a more sensible approach will be the tutoring system, but regretfully it is not used. (p. 4)

INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

The advantages for the university from having students of different social groups

are manifold – character forming, humane, educational; the presence of students from different social groups stimulates the development of tolerance. Even if at the beginning of studies there has been some tension between the representatives of different ethnic groups or religious minorities, this tension diminishes throughout the years of study and differences start to be perceived with tolerance. (p. 4)

The challenges lie in that

differences, regardless of their character, can generate conflicts and tensions.
(p .5)

The university maintains close contacts with the local community and organizes joint events with it. The university premises are used by the local community for conferences and training.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

The main channels for mutual assistance in the university are:

- the course directors;
- the contacts between the research supervisor and the student in the writing of diploma papers and in preparing the doctorate thesis;
- tutors' office hours for consulting students.

At SWU there is a Student Council, student government, which organizes general student events and activities. In the Sociology Department there is a Sociologist's Club; this is a way of uniting students from one discipline, but also throughout the university. The representatives of disadvantaged groups are part of this student community. (p. 6)

Students' opinion is surveyed

by the Centre for Quality Research (Best practice A) which analyses students' opinion about the learning process and the academic faculty. (p. 6)

TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

The university holds preparatory courses on the subjects of admission and testing.

Every year centres for admission of applications and enrolment in preparatory courses are set up at the university. Preliminary competition examinations are organized. In this way student applicants have the possibility to sit for the entrance examination two times and to attain better results. SWU is visited by secondary school students; there are academic lecturers (in

pedagogy) who hold student practice and internships in the schools. There are close links between the representatives of the local community and the academic management and administration. (p. 6)

ADMISSION POLICIES

Students' admission is organized by

a specialized unit which is engaged with the admission and all related activities: forming committees for receipt of applications, print of a student applicants' guide, uploading information on the university website regarding the admission campaign. Student applicants are allowed to ask questions concerning all aspects – admission subjects, examinations, dates, acknowledgement of matriculation grades. Open Days are organized as well as preparatory courses for student applicants. Preliminary entrance examinations are held. The vice rector is directly responsible for the organization of admission. Work on the forthcoming admission of students has started from the beginning of March. (p. 4)

Disadvantaged groups obtain comprehensive information about policies of admission. There are no special strategies for reaching these groups. The university establishes contacts with them aiming to expand their access to higher education

through conducting advertising campaigns but I don't think there is a particular policy towards them. (p. 5)

At the same time there are positive examples of certain initiatives at the university, regarding the expansion of the access of disadvantaged groups:

It is good that our university finances studies devoted to ethnic and religious identity, master's programmes are delivered, training of Roma for assistance teachers is conducted. Those are activities demonstrating the positive attitude of the university to ethnic minorities and religious differences and to their training. This year, 2009, Open Days were also conducted for the first time. (p. 2)

Concerning the access of disadvantaged groups to higher education the situation at SWU can be assessed as analogous to the other higher education schools.

I have observations on the teaching and the students at other universities; I am familiar with different practices through my participation in seminars and in the accreditation of other universities and disciplines, and I can say that the situation at our university is similar to those at the other higher education schools. (p. 2)

There are no academic policies ensuring the admission of a certain proportion (quotas) of disadvantaged groups or payment of lower tuition fees for these students.

There is no such practice at all in Bulgarian universities. There is only a practice for students from disadvantaged groups to obtain scholarships from different foundations and non-governmental organizations. (p. 7)

I think that the most effective way for expanding the access of disadvantaged groups to higher education is by reducing tuition fees and providing special scholarships for the representatives of such groups. I believe this is also the fairest way to do it. (p. 3)

Among the disadvantaged groups, the most risky ones, i.e. threatened by social exclusion, are the representatives of minorities, early school droppers, former prisoners. (p. 10)

The university does not organize preparatory classes for representatives of disadvantaged groups:

I do not agree that there should be preparatory classes for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups in general. This would contribute for their separation instead of their integration. (p. 4)

The university does not organize special programmes for drop out pupils/students to assist them in re-joining the learning process but

those students have possibilities for additional consultations and multi-re-sitting of examinations. They can visit lecturers' office hours as well as participate in seminars with assistant lecturers, where they can obtain additional explanations on the study material. (p. 9)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The university has no practices of recognizing prior experience and learning.

One of the problems is that in order to enroll in master's programmes students need to have a bachelor's degree, and diplomas from other education institutions are not recognised. However, people obtain different certificates related to studies and development of competences, which are not recognized by the formal education system. The system of Bulgarian higher education is closed for prior experience obtained from outside institutions. This should be changed and the education system should be improved towards the recognition of qualifications. (p. 7)

An initial (preliminary) assessment of student needs and skills (including written skills and literacy) is made at the entrance examinations. After that each lecturer conducts tests, sets course assignments, book references etc. Most disciplines include subjects on style, essay writing, i.e. disciplines providing specific skills important for all students. (p. 7)

SUPPORTS

The university has different units providing support to students:

A) Psychology laboratories:

There are 2 psychology laboratories working with students. They are technologically equipped and they can conduct tests and studies, with primarily research purposes; in rare cases do they offer therapeutic services. (p. 8)

B) Centre for Career Development:

The Centre is a relatively new university unit – it was founded in 2005. It has a department dealing with students' professional orientation and career development. There is a list of services announced, which at the present stage is not fully effective. (p. 8)

C) Department dealing with access:

The department makes contacts with secondary schools, disseminates information, it has a website featuring the student admission campaign. The department works full time, funded by the university. Its main target groups are young people completing their secondary education and therefore its main contacts are with schools. (p. 9)

D) Course guidance:

Part of the professional duties of lecturers is their active engagement and work with students. Every course has its course director – a lecturer who communicates regularly with students and monitors their participation in the learning process. In addition every lecturer has office hours for consultations with students.

The university devotes special care to

the development of students' written skills. This is a responsibility of each programme. To develop students' written culture various courses are organized, depending on the needs of the students. (p. 9)

Another form of support to students is the granting of social scholarships for the poorest students.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

There is not yet distance learning at the university, though work is ongoing in this area. (p. 9)

LEARNING CONTENT

The respondent does not know whether there is a unit or strategy at the university for supporting the activity approach to education, or the concept of education as social practice:

I am not aware of this. (p. 9)

The consequences of the recession and the financial crisis on the policies and practices of access to higher education for disadvantaged groups are reflected in

the increase of interest to education because of unemployment growth. At the same time the financial crisis decreases the possibilities of people, which means that the funds which they can allocate for education will also decrease.
(p. 9)

III. MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICES

A. CENTRE FOR QUALITY RESEARCH

Objectives of the practice: Survey of students' opinion about the curriculum and especially about the courses taught and the lecturers.

There is a Centre for Quality Research at the university, which surveys students' opinion on the quality of education. Students assess the courses taught by various criteria, as well as the different lecturers – their way of teaching and their pedagogical skills. The results of the surveys conducted are public – they are published on the university website. (p. 6)

Target groups: All university students.

Funding sources: The Centre is funded by the university.

History of the model: The Centre was founded in 2002 and is part of the strategy for obtaining feedback from students with regard to the entire learning process. Students can anonymously give their opinion on different issues related to education, courses or lecturers.

Number of participants: Annual assessment of all university lecturers (1000): full and part time; results are summarized and uploaded on the website of the Centre for Quality. Each lecturer depending on the course he/she teaches has a mark there, obtained as a summary of individual students' marks.

Location: South-West University, Blagoevgrad.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: As a strength it can be pointed out that the Centre gives possibility for publicizing students' opinion about the quality of education. By summarizing individual students' opinions one can follow the mark given to the different lecturers, and courses respectively. This information is uploaded on the university website. It is regularly updated and thus each visitor can view students' opinions on these matters. Furthermore, the website gives information about the various curricula and courses.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The maintaining and expanding of the Centre's activity stems from the need to systematically assess the learning process, including students' opinions, and on this basis to develop measures for improving the quality of teaching and the teaching methods.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Ratings of lecturers, summaries of students' assessments on the quality of education in the different disciplines, trends in students' opinions, studies of the department of Sociology on the quality of teaching, parallel to those made by the Centre for Quality Research in the period 2002–2006.

B. INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL EUROART (<http://www.evroart.org>)

Objectives of the practice:

The annual spring international art festival gives possibilities for social interaction aiming to stimulate mutual support among students and is an example of a best practice. Students from disadvantaged groups participate in it. The festival creates magnificent opportunities for diverse expression of students. (p. 6)

The festival's mission is to contribute for:

- the dissemination of European democratic values and a spirit of tolerance on the Balkans;
- normalizing the atmosphere on the Balkans through the development of creative cooperation in all spheres of art and culture;

- respecting different European cultures through getting to know them better in direct contact between young artists from all parts of Europe;
- building the image of Bulgaria as a cultural ambassador of Europe on the Balkans.

This mission is accomplished through the subsequent attainment of the following objectives:

- Turning Blagoevgrad into a Balkan festival centre of youth culture and arts through the annual holding of the International Youth Festival “EUROART”;
- Building of an international network of Balkan cooperation in the sphere of art coordinated by the Faculty of Arts;
- Holding of a thematic international scientific conference in the framework of the International Youth Festival “EUROART” for the dissemination of systemic knowledge in the area of European integration and European law and institutions;
- Conducting a systemic media campaign reflecting the richness of the Festival’s activities through building of a network of media partnership and youth radio and TV centre “EUROART”.

Main activities:

- Creative performances entitled “Our Europe” with the following sections: music, dances, art, theatre, fashion, cinema and photography;
- International scientific conference “Intercultural dialogue and integration”, held on 12-13 May 2008.

Target groups: Performers, artists, lecturers, scientists, students from the Balkan countries.

Funding sources: The Municipality of Blagoevgrad and the South-West University “Neofit Rilski”. (The organizers cover the expenses of participants and their course leaders for the appointed date of performance – accommodation and subsistence. International groups’ expenses are covered for the full stay.)

History of the model: The festival has taken place annually in May since 2004.

Number of participants: 300 people per annum.

Location: Blagoevgrad.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: A main problem in conducting the festival is perceived to be the need for a more active advertising campaign aiming to raise

additional funds for supporting the festival and the scientific conference held parallel to it.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The keeping up and expanding of the festival activities stems from the need to affirm the European democratic values on the Balkans and first of all the tolerance between the different cultures and ethnoses, as well as to promote the positive influence of creative cooperation in the area of art and culture.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The interest to the festival measured through the number of participants; feedback about it in the media. To cover the festival activities a systemic media campaign is conducted through the development of a media partnership network and a youth TV centre “EUROART”.



University_2

Interview with MP (Vice Rector)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

Shumen University "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski" has ancient cultural and educational traditions. It is the successor of the Pliskovsko-Preslav Literary School and is named after Konstantin of Preslav - one of the most educated and talented students of Cyril and Methodius. After the Liberation from Turkish Yoke in 1879 the Shumen Renaissance schools started offering the first pedagogical course. In 1919 it was transformed into the Pedagogical Institute for middle-school teachers and in 1964 it became a departmental branch of Sofia University. In 1971 the Higher Pedagogical Institute is established, which in 1995 expands to become Shumen University "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski".

Today, Shumen University is a modern and reputable institution, well-known throughout the country and abroad. It has created a good learning environment for research, creative and artistic activities. The University offers courses in the fields of humanities, natural, mathematical, pedagogical and technical sciences.

The University has five departments (in the town of Shumen), one College (in the town of Dobrich) and one department (in the town of Varna). Shumen University offers full-time, part-time and distance education to over 7000 students in its Humanities, Mathematics and IT, Natural Sciences, Pedagogical, Technical Sciences Departments and at the College. The educational program is in accordance with state regulations and the school curriculum for the degrees: Professional Bachelor, Bachelor, Master, and PhD.

Classes are taught by over 400 full-time lecturers: 30 of them professors, 150 associate professors, 30 have PhDs in Sciences, and 220 have PhDs in other fields. Renowned scholars from Bulgaria and abroad are also involved in the teaching process. Based on ECTS the Shumen University ensures the mobility of its students to other universities in the country and abroad. Students and faculty participate in exchange programs with foreign universities and academies. The University has a Foreign Language Center that provides language courses to foreign nationals.

The academic staff contributes immensely to the various branches of science and its members are preferred partners in the development of a number of national and international educational and research projects and programs.

- **Target groups**

Students at the University come from several different ethnic communities. Due to its geographical location Shumen University has become the educational hub of Northeastern Bulgaria. The majority of the population in the region speaks Turkish, due to historical facts: during the Ottoman Yoke, large Turkish armies were concentrated in this region, and the towns (including Shumen, itself) became well fortified Turkish fortresses. At present, there are entire villages that consist of Turkish speaking population, which in the towns of Northeastern Bulgaria constitutes between 30% to 50% from the total population. The larger towns in the region have several mosques that are related to the religious and cultural traditions of the local population.

There are students attending the University who are: bilingual /Turkish, Russian- speaking students from Macedonia/; students with disabilities; students who are employed. (p. 1)

No former prisoners attend the University.

- **Funding sources**

The University is funded by the state budget and the students pay tuition, which is different for the different specialties, but is around the minimum wage of the country, i.e., for one 4-month semester a student pays a fee which is approximately equal to one minimum wage salary.

- **Institution's mission**

The Mission of Shumen University includes:

- preparing highly mobile and adaptable to modern realities specialists in accordance with the requirements and dynamics of the labor market;
- educating the students from all University's departments;
- educating professionals capable of working in regions with a multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious population;
- developing and implementing curricula; using modern teaching methods and monitoring the quality of the acquired knowledge;
- implementing fundamental and applied research, in order to meet the needs of society and related to the quality of the educational process;
- introducing students, through teaching, research and practical training, to the national and international achievements in the field of education;
- creating conditions for increasing the level of education, professional qualification and post-graduate training of the specialists in the region, on the way to continuing education and lifelong learning.

The mission, goals and objectives of Shumen University correspond to the national principles and standards for raising the quality of education, to the educational reform and aim to create conditions for the successful training of highly educated professionals.

Through its Mission, Shumen University strives to provide a quality education, to introduce innovative educational methods and practices to

improve the access of disadvantaged groups to education, and to maintain contacts with local communities. (p. 1)

The main admission requirement is the entry-level exam. Students from disadvantaged groups are also accepted to the University, which is consistent with its motto: “University of Tolerance”.

Being a University of tolerance, we have taken several initiatives to improve the access to our university. These include: accepting students from disadvantaged groups who have not made the list of admitted candidates, improving the access to the university buildings (building ramps and, restrooms for people with disabilities, etc.... (p. 1)

According to law, if for one of the specialties offered by the university requires 100 students to be accepted, the state usually funds 40 of them. However, the Higher Education Act stipulates that all candidates with equal grades must be accepted. It is our University’s idea to accept more students from disadvantaged groups. The number of these students is not high – about 10 per year. These students receive preferential treatment in terms of admission, they pay 30% of the total tuition fee, and the fee has been waived for some of them (decisions are made on a case by case basis. In general there are not many older candidates and ones with disabilities. However, according to internal university regulations, students with disabilities can be accepted above the set number for a certain specialty. For instance, until last year 100 students above the fixed number have been accepted to the University. These are the candidates with equal grades and the ones with disabilities In this way we abide the law but we violate the ordinance of the Minister of Education regarding the acceptance of an additional number of students. As a result, last year our University has paid more than 250 000 levs (128 205 Euros) in penalty fees. These fees are allocated among the different departments of the University, so you can imagine how we cope financially, keeping in mind that the 90 % of the state subsidy is also being paid... The procedure that we have now is as follows: each department lists the number that it can allocate to such “quotas”- which is around 1-2% of the total number of accepted students. For

instance: 2-3 students from disadvantaged groups are accepted for every 40 candidates. (p. 1)

The state could encourage the institutions of higher education to improve the access of students from disadvantage groups by providing financial resources:

I think that if more funds are provided from the budget, facilities for people with disabilities can be built, thus changing the environment and infrastructure. Also, free textbooks and teaching materials can be given to them. More students from disadvantaged groups should be accepted to the University. (p. 1)

The University offers part-time and distance education as part of its lifelong learning strategy.

The university has several research laboratories and centers. The Center for Continuing Education (*Good Practice A*) has a key role in the realization of its lifelong learning strategy.

The University does not provide literacy courses.

The University gives up its buildings to members of the local community for different social events, except for literacy courses.

The University's long-term outreach strategies with regard to lifelong learning include: recognition of prior education, creating conditions for distance education, and improving the opportunities for educating students in a real work environment.

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

Shumen University does not offer child care services to adult students.

All students pay tuition fees. There is no separate unit (department, committee, etc.) at the University that works on the institutional level for improving the access to higher education.

Efforts are made in order to ensure a favorable environment for students with disabilities, for instance, a rail for access to the buildings is being built. (p. 2)

II. UNIVERSITY APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

Successful practices of the University related to improving the access of adults to education are directed to representatives of all social groups, not specifically to students from disadvantaged groups; even though:

Some of these functions are delegated to the University Career Center.

(p. 1)

The University has a Center for Continuing Education (Good Practice), an Informational Department for Improving Teachers' Qualification, as well as a Language Training Center for foreign citizens. These units ensure the necessary conditions needed for the training and re-qualification of specialists, college graduates, people with college and higher education. The University guarantees to its graduates that they will be capable of adapting to different work settings.

The strategic plan for improving the access of adults to education is directed to all prospective students; the University policy regarding disadvantaged groups involves:

About 1 percent of the newly accepted students to be from disadvantaged groups. The University is aware of the need for giving equal opportunity to all citizens of the country and this is an integral part of its policy. Indeed, changing the disadvantaged position in which people with disabilities are in this country is an important part of university policy. At this stage, it is difficult to identify any specific sequential steps, because due to the economic crisis the universities budgets have been reduced. The management of the University has strong will and ambition to improve the access of representatives of disadvantaged groups to education. (p. 2)

In terms of improving the access of disadvantaged groups, the situation at Shumen University is

similar to the situation in other universities. Other universities also have similar programs aimed at encouraging the access to higher education. (p. 2)

The most effective way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

by allocating special quotas for them. (p. 2)

The most just way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

by allocating special quotas for them. (p. 2)

Shumen University organizes “Days of Open Doors”.

“Days of Open Doors” are organized as part of the popularization strategy of the University. If until recently the University relied on the people themselves to express interest and approach the university, now we think that, considering the current demographic and economic crisis, the University must take a more active stance in attracting prospective students. Furthermore, our future students are interested in various issues and prefer meeting with us face to face. The university has its own website. Not everybody, though, uses the Internet or has access to it, so it is good to go to more places and meet people. (p. 2)

The admissions preparations start at the beginning of the second semester. We have a special admissions office that deals with this procedure. The whole procedure is described in detail on our website. (p. 3)

Auxiliary classes for lagging students are not organized at the university, but it could be arranged:

...if more financial support is provided for universities. (p. 2)

The courses organized by the Center for Youth Studies are a specific form of auxiliary classes. They are both, preparatory admission and additional training courses in nature.

Preparatory admission courses for disadvantaged groups are also not offered, but higher educational institutions can be stimulated to develop such a practice with some

financial support from the state. In general, the University relies a lot on financial support from the state budget, because the students pay small tuition taxes and it is impossible to allocate part of the money for other activities. (p. 3)

An integral part of the preparatory classes may be considered the courses conducted by the Language Center for Foreign Nationals and the Center for Youth Studies. They support and improve the level of qualification of people with learning disabilities.

INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

We do not have information of the percentage of students from disadvantaged groups.

The University is aware of the advantages of having students from different social groups.

A clear stance regarding people from disadvantaged groups is well accepted in today's society. It is a common belief that it is society's responsibility to create equal opportunities for them; that is why our efforts towards creating equal opportunities in education is viewed positively by the public. (p. 3)

The main challenge of having students from different social backgrounds is related to

the fact that people coming from different backgrounds and social contexts have to mingle and socialize together. Successful socialization requires that some of these differences are reduced which will lead to more effective education and the establishment of a university community. (p. 3)

RANGE

Shumen University establishes contacts with disadvantaged groups in order to improve their access to higher education:

...mainly by means of the media and the University's website. The media are an important intermediary for establishing contacts. Shumen University is perceived as a very important institution in the region; the demand and expectations of modern society are high and people are aware that they can meet them if they acquire a university degree and if they raise their qualification. That is why people start to express more and more interest in the University and the Department of Postgraduate Studies (Center for Continuing Education) has attracted a number of people, especially those whose competencies are in the field of pedagogy. In general the need for higher education is increasing” (p. 3)

The buildings of the University can be used by members of the local community and different social groups.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

There is mutual support among students and teachers at the University.

Students receive support during their during their internships and practical exercises and consultations conducted by the faculty. An important part of this support is the informal social interaction between faculty and students. (p. 3)

The student's opinion about the school curriculum is studied by means of

surveys on the quality of the lectures, methods of teaching and communication, the level of activity of teachers, the effectiveness of the education. The studies are administered by the Career Center and Student Council. (p. 3)

TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

Shumen University organizes “Days of Open Doors”, as well as preparatory courses.

Preparatory courses are organized in all subjects that require admission examinations. This procedure is used in all universities. These courses provide general information about the course material, teachers’ requirements, and guidelines for the preparation of prospective students. Our University is no exception; preparatory courses are conducted on an annual basis and the attendance is usually high. (p. 4)

Middle and high school students visit the University.

That is because students express interest in the studies, in the University as an institution, its premises, auditoriums, equipment in the labs, etc. (p. 4)

ADMISSION POLICIES

Shumen University allocates quotas for students from disadvantaged groups.

Each department assigns admission quotas for such students, usually 1 or 2 students per subject. (p. 4)

According to the Higher Education Act, the student fees for disadvantaged groups are not reduced. Merit scholarships are awarded regardless of the social status of the students.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The main obstacle to the establishment of a mechanism for recognition of prior non-formal learning and professional experience is the discrepancy of criteria at the institutional level:

It is difficult to determine the number of credit hours that are needed in order to recognize previous learning and to apply them to the current credit system. (p. 4)

These obstacles can be overcome by:

Defining more general criteria for transferring and recognition of credit hours. (p. 4)

An initial (preliminary) assessment of the students' needs and skills (including written skills and general knowledge) is done by administering the entrance examination and throughout their first year of studies:

Entry-level tests for first year students are most frequently used in order to determine their level of knowledge on a specific subject. (p. 4)

There is a belief among teachers that the admission entrance exam is the most appropriate and adequate way for determining the level of knowledge, the writing skills and self-awareness of the students. This is one of the reasons universities in Bulgaria to insist on keeping them as an "entrance" to higher education, not replaceable by the matriculation exams.

SUPPORTS

The University does not have a specialized unit that provides emotional support to the students (e.g. a psychologist's office, etc.).

Support to students in terms of career choice and professional development is provided by the Career Development Center

where students can find information on vacant job and internship positions; on specific employers, on the necessary skills and knowledge required for a specific job, and next possible career development stages. The Career Center provides assistance during the entire job selection process, including: the expectations of employers, what is the appropriate behavior during the interview. The Career Center participates in company presentations and seminars. (p. 5)

The University does not have a specialized department that has to do with access to education.

The University does not provide institutionalized forms of support to students for developing their writing skills:

...this is done during classes and throughout the whole learning process. (p. 6)

The University does not provide institutionalized forms of support to the students during the educational process.

The University does not provide financial support to students with low economic status.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The University has a Center for Distance Education, but for now only one specialty is accredited for this method of education. (p. 5)

CONTENTS OF THE EDUCATION

The University has not developed an educational support strategy, based on the activities approach or the concept of learning as social practice.

III. MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICES

A. CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AT SHUMEN UNIVERSITY

Objectives of the practice:

- training in a new subject and /or additional training;
- long-term postgraduate studies;
- short courses on a specific subject.

The training in a new subject is part-time on the following subjects:

1) Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy

- Application requirements: university education.
- Duration of study: 3 semesters.

2) Primary School Pedagogy and Foreign Language (German, English, Russian) at the Faculty of Pedagogy

- Application requirements: university education in Primary School Pedagogy or Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy.
- Entrance exam: on the respective foreign language.
- Duration of study: 3 semesters.

3) Mathematics and Informatics at the Mathematics and Informatics Department

- Application requirements: university education in: mathematics; Mathematics and Physics; Physics and Mathematics.
- Duration of study: 3 semesters.

The graduates receive a Bachelor's degree and may continue their studies in the Master's program.

The Center offers postgraduate training in an additional (second) subject in **English, German, Russian**.

- Application requirements: university education.
- Entrance exam: foreign language test.

Target groups: University graduates.

Funding sources: Shumen University; students who pay for their studies in a new subject or in an additional (second) subject. The tuition fee is 250 BGN (130 Euro) per semester.

History: The Center for continuing education was established 25 years ago. At the beginning it was part of the Faculty of Pedagogy as a Center for post-graduate work. In 1988 it was transformed in a University center. It organizes post-graduate courses and specializations such as: specialization for obtaining vocational qualification degree, courses for obtaining second specialty, courses for obtaining teacher's license for different disciplines. Very popular are the advanced language courses for English language teachers and the advanced courses in informatics. In the last two years the interest in the Center seems to diminish.

Number of participants: There were years when the number of students was 100 -150. In the last two years this number has been considerably more modest.

Location: Shumen University "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski", College of Pedagogy in Dobritch, Department for Professional Qualification in Varna; the above mentioned departments are part of the structure of Shumen University.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The advantages of the part-time education are related to the fact that it provides greater flexibility and mobility and thus improves the access to higher education of people who have a Bachelor's degree and are motivated to continue their education.

One disadvantage in terms of the organizational and structural aspects of the training is the payment of the courses, which does not allow the inclusion of students with low socio-economic status.

Priority needs for expansion of the model/service:

- increasing the professional qualification of people who have completed their education;
- organizing training courses for acquiring new and additional qualification;
- organizing short courses on a specific subject;
- publishing and dissemination of textbooks and training materials;
- developing research activities with student participation.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The quality of education is assessed on a regular basis by student opinion surveys.

Criterion for the quality of education is the future professional realization of the graduates.

University_2

Interview with PV (Head of Department)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See interview with MP.

II. UNIVERSITY APPROACH AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

The Mission of Shumen University corresponds to the object of its activity - a state university with a wide range of majors in the humanities, natural and social sciences which contributes to their development. (p. 1)

The main admission requirement at Shumen University is the entrance examination. The University does not specifically aim to accept a concrete percentage of students from disadvantaged groups.

The motto of Shumen University is the "University of Tolerance", which mostly manifests itself in the ethnic and cultural tolerance in the context of the training. The University has a Center for Continuing Education (Center for Postgraduate Education and Training) and an Informational Department for Improving Teachers' Qualification, which enable local people to continue their

education and to become more qualified... But the Higher Education Act is clear - all students must pay tuition fees. As far as I know, only twins pay taxes at a reduced rate, but people with disabilities and others do not. (p. 3)

The University offers part-time and distance education as part of its lifelong learning strategy.

The most important factor in distance education is that students study on their own, but the knowledge gained is tested by the traditional examination method. (p. 1)

Successful practices of the University related to improving the access of adults to education are directed to representatives of all social groups, not specifically to students from disadvantaged groups.

The University has an Informational Department for Improving Teachers' Qualification, as well as a **Language Training Center for Foreign Citizens (Good Practice B)**. These units ensure the necessary conditions needed for the training and re-qualification of specialists, college graduates, and people with college and higher education.

In the University there are research laboratories and centers, such as: the Scientific Center 'Preslav Literary School', the Astronomy Center, the Center for Pedagogical Studies, the Center for Byzantium Studies, the Applied Linguistics Laboratory, the Laboratory of Computer Methods in Archeology, the Iconography Laboratory, the Mathematical Laboratory, the Medical Physics Lab, etc.), where fundamental and applied research is carried out and works of art are created. Not only teachers, but also doctoral and other students are actively involved in the labs work. The **Center for Youth and Social Studies (Good Practice A)** has a special place at the University.

The strategic plan for improving the access of adults to the University is directed to all prospective students (regardless of their social status),

and it includes: preparatory admissions courses, a preliminary exam, recognition of the matriculation exam results, establishing admission offices, and visits to different towns and villages throughout the regions aimed at popularizing the University and increasing the interest in it, because traditionally Shumen University is a preferred place for the local people to educate their children, as well as to improve their own qualification. The people from the region prefer the University from a financial point of view, in

terms of proximity, and also because a large percentage of the local professionals are its graduate and the local people have trust in their professionalism. (p. 2)

In terms of improving the access of disadvantaged groups to higher education, the situation at Shumen University is

very similar to the situation in other institutions of higher education. As far as I know, other universities also do not have special programs aimed at encouraging the access to higher education. (p. 2)

The most effective way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

by organizing preparatory admission courses. (p. 2)

The most just way for improving the access of students from disadvantage groups to higher education is

by granting them special scholarships. (p. 2)

Each year Shumen University organizes “Days of Open Doors”.

They are an important part of popularizing the University among the locals, aimed at involving people from the region, answering their questions, introducing them to the University’s admission requirements, assessment criteria, preparatory admission courses, etc; All this is not specifically directed at improving the access to education of people from disadvantaged groups. (p. 2)

The admission preparations starts in March; the University does not have a special department that deals with this activity. The educational department organizes the entire admission procedure. (p. 3)

Auxiliary classes for lagging students are not organized at the university, but it could be arranged

by developing out-of-class forms of education; by additional financing, not from the state, but by students paying the extra fees. (p. 3)

The courses organized by the Center for Youth Studies are a specific form of auxiliary classes. They are both, preparatory admission and additional training courses in nature.

Preparatory admission courses for disadvantaged groups are not offered, but higher educational institutions can be stimulated to develop such a practice by

involvement in social programs and projects. (p. 3)

An integral part of the preparatory classes may be considered the courses conducted by the Language Center for Foreign Nationals, in which Bulgarian citizens can also participate (especially the Turkish speaking population in the region), who feel the need to improve their written and spoken language skills. The Language Center (Good practice B) and the Center for Youth Studies educate, support and improve the level of qualification of people with learning difficulties.

INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE

There are a few students from disadvantaged groups at the University:

...the percentage is probably very low - 1-2%. (p. 3)

From a financial point of view the University does not gain from having students from different social groups:

I do not see any advantages for the university itself – in fact more expenses are made from our budget. (p. 2)

The main challenge of having students from different social backgrounds is related to

the fact that students from disadvantaged groups have to mingle and socialize with the rest of the student body. (p. 3)

RANGE

Shumen University establishes contacts with disadvantaged groups in order to improve their access to higher education:

...mainly during the “Days of Open Doors”, when University representatives meet with prospective students. The University does not organize a campaign directed specifically at people from disadvantaged

groups. Contacts with them are established during personal communication and informal meetings, no official methods of communication are used. (p. 4)

The University lets members of the local community and different social groups to use its building for different events,

but this is not a common practice. In this respect, it will be good if the University governing body becomes more open towards the local community. These contacts are maintained by University staff; our faculty members are invited as experts by representatives of the political administration, by different NGOs, and are also involved in different cultural activities. Thus, the teaching community participates in the life of the local community. (p. 4)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

There is mutual support among students and teachers at the University: faculty office hours, student internships and practicums are organized. Another form of support is by

loan funds, as well as by informal interactions between students and faculty members. (p. 4)

The student's opinion about the curriculum is studied by means of

surveys on the quality of the lectures, methods of teaching and communication, the use of innovative educational methods. (p. 4)

The student surveys are developed by the Certificate Committee of the Department, where they are stored. We do not have access to them. (p. 4)

TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

Shumen University organizes “Days of Open Doors”, as well as

preparatory courses in Bulgarian Language and Literature, and in other subjects, which are conducted each spring, by lecturers from the Department of History and Literature Theory and from the Department of Native Language and Literature. The course fee is minimal and the total collected sum is used for covering the instructors’ fees. Some of the topics from the syllabus are discussed, as well as model tests in Bulgarian Language and Literature are administered. (p. 4)

Middle and high school students visit the University.

Organizing meetings with middle and high school students is a common practice, which is designed to present the majors offered at the University and naturally takes place before the admissions campaign; otherwise, only the oral entrance exams provide opportunity for stimulating students from disadvantaged groups, if of course they are competitive to the rest of the candidates. (p. 5)

ADMISSION POLICIES

Shumen University does not have lower tuition fees for students from disadvantaged groups, according to the Higher Education Act.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The main obstacle to the establishment of a mechanism for recognition of prior non-formal learning and professional experience is the discrepancy of criteria at the institutional level:

The University does not have a system that can evaluate the preliminary or informal level of qualification of the applying adult candidates. (p. 5)

...that is why it is important that they participate in activities that can confirm the level of knowledge and practical skills. (p. 1)

These obstacles can be overcome by:

Developing special programs. (p. 5)

An initial (preliminary) assessment of the students' needs and skills (including written skills and general knowledge) is done by means of the entrance examination:

The entrance admissions exams are maybe the only source of such preliminary information. (p. 5)

SUPPORTS

The University does not have a specialized unit that provides emotional support to the students (e.g., a psychologist's office, etc.).

Support to students in terms of career choice and professional development is provided by the Career Development Center:

It provides guidance and support to young people regarding their career choice and development, including to students from disadvantaged groups. It contributes to the development of relations and cooperation in the field of vocational guidance and career development between Shumen University and business organizations, the public administration and with other domains areas of socio-economic life. The Career Center monitors the movement of the labor market and informs the University management on trends in supply and demand. Thus, it helps the University to be more flexible in complying its courses and curricula with the real needs of the current economy. An important part of the Center's activities is the gathering and maintenance of information on the professional realization of the University's graduates. The Departments are interested in the realization of their students and keep in touch with them even after their graduation. For instance, the Department of Journalism keeps this kind of data and the information is usually provided in the process of accreditation of the different specialties. (p. 6)

The University does not provide institutionalized forms of support to students for developing their writing skills:

...this kind of support is provided during the educational process, especially in the language disciplines. (p. 6)

The University does not provide institutionalized forms of support to the students regarding the educational process; this is done to some extent by the **Center for Youth and Social Studies**.

The University does not provide financial support to students with low economic status:

...only the grants provided by the state in the form of scholarships, also European grants can be considered such possibilities, but they are consistent not with the socio-economic situation of the students, but with their school grades. (p. 8)

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Currently, there is no distance education offered at the University. (p. 6)

CONTENTS OF THE EDUCATION

The University does not have an action oriented educational support strategy.

The consequences of the economic crisis

will be negative, it will affect most severely the most vulnerable populations - people with disabilities, the elderly, socially disadvantaged ethnic communities; unfortunately the state has stopped supporting them a long time ago and the universities, particularly the state ones are not able to do this, because they are in a bad financial situation. (p. 7)

III. MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICES

A. CENTER FOR YOUTH AND SOCIAL STUDIES AT SHUMEN UNIVERSITY

Objectives of the practice: The Foundation Center for Youth and Social Studies is registered as a public benefit non-profit organization.

The Foundation was established with grant money provided for the implementation of legitimate activities with the following goals:

1. Educational

Conducting training in:

- university specialties jointly with higher educational institutions and colleges
- foreign languages
- computer literacy
- establishing and management of businesses
- university admission entrance exams
- secondary schools admission entrance exams
- vocational training

2. Research

Conducting research on:

- social practice
- welfare system
- social inclusion
- employment issues
- youth issues
- social problems of young people
- educational system

- pedagogical practice
- business management
- migration processes
- problems of refugees
- social conflicts
- social cohesion
- Balkan problems
- ethno cultural identification

3. Participation in International Projects

Applies and participates in projects by:

- international organization like: the United Nation, UNESCO, International Labor Organization, UNIDO, etc.
- international social organizations
- international educational organizations
- international regional organizations
- bilateral and multilateral joint projects with international higher educational institutions

Target groups: Students, prospective students, NGOs, government organizations, research guarantors, international educational and research guarantor organizations.

Funding sources: Guarantors associated with activities that include individuals and organizations as clients.

History: Establish in 2002 as NGO at the University of Shumen.

Number of participants: Since 2003 have been organized candidate student courses. The number of participants is about 80-90 people.

Location: Shumen University "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski".

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The advantages are in the greater flexibility and mobility in terms of finding guarantors of educational and research projects: training

of university student candidates, professional training, courses for students, and project development.

One disadvantage in terms of education is the payment of the courses, which does not allow the inclusion of students with low socio-economic status.

Priority needs for expansion of the model/service:

- working and collaborating on projects with other government and non-government organizations;
- increasing the professional qualification of people who have completed their education;
- organizing preparatory courses and training and re-qualification of specialists;
- conducting consultations in the area of management of for-profit and non-profit organizations, professional orientation, course papers and theses;
- publishing and dissemination of textbooks and training materials;
- setting up and developing educational institutions, social institutions, management systems;
- developing research activities with student participation.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The quality of work of the Center is assessed on a regular basis by opinion surveys administered to participants of different activities of the Center.

Some indicators of the quality of the activities rendered by the Center are also:

- the skills and qualifications of masters and PhD students, of people using the training services, as well as, their future professional realization;
- the implementation of contracts awarded by various social actors at local, national and international level;
- the conducted research on current problems of social practice, the system of social welfare, employment issues, young people, the educational system and pedagogical practice.

B. LANGUAGE TRAINING CENTER FOR FOREIGN CITIZENS

Objectives of the practice: The main objective of the Center is to conduct training in modern Bulgarian language to those students of Shumen University who are not Bulgarian citizens. The main task is to teach Bulgarian language at a level that gives students the opportunity to study in the specialty, which they have chosen at Shumen University or any other Bulgarian university. Other foreign nationals who for different reasons wish to learn written and spoken contemporary Bulgarian language can also study at the Center. Highly qualified lecturers from the *Department of English* and the *Department of Native Language and Literature* at Shumen University participate in the training.

Target groups:

- Shumen University students who are not Bulgarian citizens;
- Foreign nationals who for various reasons wish to learn written and spoken contemporary Bulgarian language.

Funding sources: Students pay for their training, but the University also funds the activities of the Center.

History: The Center was established in 1994 as a Division for training of foreign students in the Department of Bulgarian Language at the Humanities Faculty (then Faculty of Philology). It initially conducted intensive summer courses in Bulgarian language for Banat and Bessarabian Bulgarians.

Later, in 2003, by decision of the Academic Board of Shumen University, the existing Division developed into an independent Unit - Language Training Center for Foreign Citizens. Now, the Bulgarian language training course conducted throughout the year. Macedonian, Turkish, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Austrian and other foreign students take these courses.

Number of participants: About 40-50 students per year.

Location: Shumen University "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski".

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: Advantages: Shumen University students who have difficulties with the language and the course of education participate in Bulgarian

language training. Furthermore, other foreign citizens residing in the country and want to learn the language also participate in the training.

One disadvantage in terms of educational activities is the payment of the courses, which does not allow the inclusion of students with low socio-economic status.

Priority needs for expansion of the model/service:

- increasing foreign students' knowledge of Bulgarian language and enhancing their qualification in this area;
- publishing and dissemination of Bulgarian language textbooks and training materials.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The quality of work of the Center is assessed on a regular basis by opinion surveys administered to course participants.

Criteria for the quality of education are: the acquired language knowledge and skills by the students; their successful inclusion in the course of education and successful passing of the exams.

Federation of Fellowships for Dissemination of Knowledge – Non-formal Education Organization Interview with BM (Executive Director)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

One of the largest networks of NGOs, which provide educational services in Bulgaria, is the Federation for science communication. The main office of the Federation is situated in Sofia. It has about 25 regional offices which are placed in big administrative towns or in towns in industrial regions with high unemployment. Most of them are named 'Knowledge clubs' although there are cases of units which have other names – such as "Thought" in the town of Veliko Turnovo. The concrete name is not copyright protected. The Federation is a free association of NGOs, which declare their participation in the network but at the same time are free to function as an independent unit. Each NGO pays a fee of the amount of a one lowest salary in Bulgaria per year. In return they are given a license to teach certain vocational courses and receive regularly information, methodological advice and opportunity to participate in big European projects. In organizational aspect this structure is a continuation of the "Association for knowledge dissemination 'Georgi Kirkov'" which was established in 1971 and continued its activities until 1989. The new federation was founded in 1991 as an NGO and still carries out different types of educational courses with varying duration, which altogether reach the number of 900 -950 per year. Participants are usually about 14 000. Some of the local units have license to be Centers for vocational education given by the National agency for professional education and learning. This enables them to issue certificates to the participants in the courses. The focus of the themes covered by the courses has shifted from

the general education and cultural studies, which dominated during the period of socialism to vocational education and training after the transition to market economy. The courses are mainly for cooks, welders, and mechanics. In other words professions which do not require even high school diploma. The criterion to attend such a course in Bulgaria is 6 or 8 grade of education. The aim is to cover larger groups of people who are at the risk of being unemployed or who are registered as unemployed. Through its network the Federation functions on a national level being present in almost all big industrial regions which due to the restructuring of the economy have very high unemployment rates. Since its establishment in 1991 the federation has been supported by the German free universities (IZZ-DVV, Bonn). They provide financing through projects supported by the German ministry of foreign affairs and share know how of network development in the conditions of free market. The Federation has also a specialized Center for vocational education and training. At present it offers courses for more than 55 professions and all of them meet the state requirement for quality. Ten of them are for third educational level.

- **Target groups**

The Federation offers both vocational and language courses which are predominantly course-centered rather learner-centered. The courses teach concrete vocations and they are attended both by unemployed who want to achieve better or new qualification and by employed people.

The activities of the Federation are targeted at:

- People with educational degrees;
- Socially disadvantaged people;
- Employed people who need higher qualification;
- People with higher education who need to learn more and/or to acquire new qualification.

- **Funding sources**

Funding is provided mainly from project grants awarded from national and European foundations and from fees paid by the member NGOs. The Federation does not rely on donations or on state support. The annual budget is not big, about 25 000 Euro and therefore the personnel is rather limited.

- **Institution's mission**

Regarding the mission the federation identifies itself as an actor on the market whose objective is to provide quality vocational training within the framework of a free market of educational services and programmes for lifelong learning. Due to the fact that the federation has license for vocational education and training it targets at providing service for qualification and re-qualification of unemployed by applying for calls launched by the Employment agency . In this way although at the level of its overall strategy the Federation does not identify itself as targeted at concrete socially disadvantaged groups it in fact provides education and training mainly for unemployed people. By participating in European projects together with other NGOs the Federation sometimes trains social groups such as prisoners but this activity is not integrated in its mission and strategy. The federation is rather a provider of educational services by organizationally and methodologically coordinating the development of concrete courses and programmes for socially disadvantaged groups who are targeted by its partner organizations. The federation does not provide literacy courses.

Our mission is to develop a competitive national network of educational structures for teaching and training adults and children with the aim to enhance the quality of the human factor and help develop its personal and social realization by providing quality and accessible training embedded in the national traditions and in the European dimensions of lifelong learning. (p. 1)

Policy for supporting socially disadvantaged groups is listed in our statute but we do not do this in a systematic fashion. This is done mainly in cases when it coincides with the aims of a concrete project or when we can advise people to attend certain courses. (p. 3)

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

All courses which we organize are paid because we function under market conditions and the price of a course is calculated according to the recourses spent for it. Although being a NGO we do not have dividends we are in fact self sustainable organization. That is why we cannot afford free of charge courses. The only exceptions are when the organization is part of a project for education of unemployed. In this case the expenses are covered through certain financial mechanisms and the beneficent – unemployed, prisoner etc. - does not have to pay for the service. Most often these payments are covered by the state budget (particularly the Ministry of labour and social policy). The Employment agency at the Ministry signs a contract with the provider of the service - in our case NGO.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

BACKGROUND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

The NGO was established in 1971 at a national level. After that top down were created local units in the administrative regions of the country – predominantly in industrial regions. During the years of socialism the organization was mainly engaged in providing ideological education in line with the Communist party doctrine. There were however courses offered in the realm of health care, science popularization, as well as in the realms of state and law, ethics, economics, technologies etc. Since its establishment, throughout the years the organization has developed good relation on national and regional level with almost all nongovernmental organizations, such as youth unions, trade unions etc. To the extent the Federation has been financed from different sources it has developed partner relations with local authorities and business organizations. After the changes of 1989 the Federation was registered as NGO for providing educational services and has been carrying out predominantly coordinating and counseling functions. The Federation is one of the main actors in promoting the policies and the practices in LLL. It is one of the co-organizers of the

LLL - days in Bulgaria and participates in many European projects and programmes. The Federation is member of the European Association for Adult Learning.

COURSE CONTENT

The courses the Federation offers are mainly on vocational education. There are also courses on handcrafts. Those who finish the full course successfully obtain a Diploma for vocational qualification. Participants who already have had vocational qualification and have enrolled in courses for enhancing their qualification obtain Certificate for vocational learning. All documents issued by the Federation meet the state requirements and are licensed. At present the Federation does not offer courses for personal development.

STAFF CONDITIONS

The Federation has only two full time employees – these are the general secretary of the Federation and the director of the NGO. Their functions are mainly managerial and administrative. However they also participate in the preparation and coordination of projects. Teachers are paid on the basis of contracts for concrete course carried out. The courses offered are not on a regular basis. They depend on the expressed interest of number of candidates.

TARGET GROUPS

There are no particular target groups. The courses are mainly offered through the offices responsible for job offers for unemployed which presupposes that the main group of participants would be unemployed people. With regard to gender the participation is almost equal. The groups comprise 7 – 15 people.

The 'standard' group we teach comprise adult people which lack certain skills and knowledge, or unemployed people who are registered as such and need re-qualification, this is the main characteristic of the courses we offer. (p. 1)

CONNECTIONS TO THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The interviewee does not seem to be aware of the meaning of non-formal educational sector. There are no institutionalized mechanisms for relations with the formal educational system and continuing education. In the rare cases of contacts with the formal educational system the Federation uses personal contacts. The interviewee mentions only one relation to the formal educational sector – the fact that most of the teachers are recruited from formal educational institutions. Here we need to take into account a specificity of vocational training in Bulgaria. During socialism vocational training was organized and carried out within the formal educational system despite the fact that in the 1980s was created a separate system for vocational training. However the almost vocational training was carried out in the so called technical schools, which are part of the formal educational system. Because of this most of the teachers used in the non-formal sector come from the formal educational system. Thus we can claim that there is indirect but stable connection between the non-formal and the formal educational sectors.

Some of our teachers are representatives of the formal educational system. But we try to recruit people with practical experience – the everlasting conflict ‘formal vs. non-formal’, ‘away from practice – close to practice’... That is why for me the best teacher is the teacher who is currently practicing his/her profession and has gone through formal education. (p. 7)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

There are no institutionalized mechanisms for recognizing of previous nonformal learning. Participation in courses is documented by diplomas for secondary education or high school education depending on the qualification obtained.

OUTREACH TO MARGINALIZED GROUPS

The main way of recruitment of potential participants is through classical advertisement and personal contacts. For European projects are localized concrete target groups. There are also joint initiatives with other partner organizations, vocational units, governmental institutions – ministries, agencies which are responsible for the implementation of policies regarding marginalized groups – in this case unemployed. Depending on the type of project the Federation is open for contacts and partnership with organizations providing similar activities.

...relations with unemployment offices. And for example the project for the prisons. This was through the Ministry of labour and the Employment agency. We submit an offer to them. This offer is evaluated. Then they decide who among the unemployed meets the requirements and enroll them in the course. (p. 7-8)

We collaborate with employers association, with the Chamber of Commerce with institutions for program projects, with the association of the small and medium business, with the Craftsmen Chamber. We carry out many things with them. (p. 8)

TUTOR TEACHING METHODS

Due to financial difficulties the Federation is not in the position to offer continuing education to the recruited teachers. However it relies on their self education and requires modernization of the curriculum. The teachers use all advanced methods for adult education such as: a) active participation of the students; b) dialogue and discussions during the classes; c) shared educational goals; d/ relating the content of the course to the experience of the participants.

We always try to update our programmes because if we stick to old fashioned programmes we will jeopardize the entire course. The teachers adapt and update their lecture courses for every new course. (p. 9)

The course is evaluated by the participants through questionnaires and suggestions. There is no system for tracing the career of the students after the course finishes.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Under the conditions of financial crisis when at stake is the very existence of the Federation it is difficult to formulate strategic objectives. According to the interviewee however the main orientation of the Federation is towards the labour market. The short term task is to satisfy the needs in the sphere of social services at macro level.

Many important courses are ahead and we will concentrate there – this is tourism. All professions to start with cooks, administrators, attendants, gardeners, because I think that this has a future. This is a strategy oriented towards the needs of the market. (p. 9)

One of the main strategic aims of the Federation is the realization of educational courses with the participation of foreign consultants within the framework of European funded projects. The specialization of the Centers for Vocational Education is also considered as challenge of the future development. Opportunities for support from international and national donors is viewed as opportunity for development. The same is true for the exchange of know-how with foreign partners. The shortage of teachers or rather the inadequate payment of the teachers is seen as one of the main problems. According to the interviewee the role of the NGOs is the quick reaction to the needs of the labour market and the training at the working place of the students

to find the human recourse for this job because we are loosing them... often people prefer to change their qualification but not to teach. Teaching is not an easy thing and that is why I say that human recourse is very important. (p. 10)

The interviewee is not aware of a strategy for the development of the nongovernmental sector or of any document at national level outlining policies and strategies for the development of the sector. As advantages of the educational process in the nongovernmental sector the interviewee mentioned the shorter period of training, flexibility and mostly the possibility of the learning process to be at the work place of the participants in the course. According to the interviewee special mechanisms need to be introduced by means of which the disadvantaged groups should be prepared in advance in order to be able to integrate in the learning process.

Recommended is the redefinition of the target groups and of developing training programmes for disadvantaged target groups which are adapted to their specificities – psychological, cultural, level of literacy, special needs.

There should be more aggressive policy, targeted towards these groups, i.e. they should organize on purpose. To help disadvantaged people to overcome the barrier of integrating with the other students, this is the greatest responsibility of the NGOs. In other words to reduce the stress these people experience being disadvantaged. The organization of courses can help overcome this psychological problem. Why not have courses for plumbers for the minority groups? (p.11)

III. MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE:

A. TRAINING UNEMPLOYED AND OBTAINING CERTIFICATE RECOGNIZED IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

General (personal) impression: In this case the interviewee was not willing to reveal details related to the so called good practices. Being aware of the competitive situation in the realm of these services he knew that a ‘good practice’ is a resource which gives advantage to the Federation. As a typical market actor he ‘preserved’ the details of the ‘good practice’ – in other words he did not provide information, which might help other actors to emerge.

Objectives of the practice: Providing educational services for enhancing the qualification and re-qualification of unemployed and issuing certificate recognized in the European Union. The Federation teaches unemployed, without providing job. Depending on the degree of qualification the duration of the course (without the comprehensive exam) is as follows:

- 300 academic hours for I qualification level
- 660 academic hours for II qualification level
- 960 academic hours for III qualification level

Out of the 55 provided courses 10 are for III qualification level.

The objective of these courses are:

- obtaining initial vocational qualification
- obtaining additional vocational qualification
- re-qualification

The organization of the courses for professional qualification is done by the 'Labour offices' under the following conditions:

A) with written consent by an employer to hire the students for a period of at least 6 months after they finish the course. The teaching can be carried out by an educational institution chosen either by the employer or by the 'Labour office'. This is according to Paragraph 59, Article 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law of Employment Stimulation (Paragraph 63, Article 1 of the Law of Employment Stimulation.)

B) Without job provided by the regional Labour offices after completion of the course. This is according to Paragraph 59, Article 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law of Employment Stimulation (Paragraph 63, Article 1 of the Law of Employment Stimulation.).

Target groups: The unemployed participants in the courses are recruited according to special methodology. This is done by a Committee which is appointed for the occasion by the local branch of the Labour office. The procedure is of three stages:

At the first stage are checked the following requirements:

1. Declaration by the unemployed of his/her intention to enroll in a course for obtaining qualification or when obtaining qualification is part of the action plan for the unemployed according to Paragraph 19 Article 1 of the Law of Employment stimulation.

2. Correspondence between the level of education of the unemployed and the required educational level for acquiring the vocational qualification (according to Paragraph 8 Article 5 of the Law of vocational education and training).

The level of education is proved with a diploma or certificate.

The unemployed can study only courses which correspond to the vocational qualification he/she already has and only if this course is for higher level of qualification from their own.

3. Health certificate issued by the authorized units showing that this profession will not harm the health of the student (according to Paragraph 14, Article 3 of the Law of vocational education and training).

The first stage finishes with informing each of the unemployed who meets the requirements that he/she is eligible to enroll in a given course.

At the second stage of recruitment are included only the unemployed who have met the requirements of the first stage.

In case the number of people meeting the requirements is smaller than the number of students scheduled for the course some applicants who meet only the requirements of Paragraph 8 Article 4 of the Law of vocational education and training. They however are informed that instead of diploma of professional qualification upon finishing the course they will obtain certificate for vocational education.

At the second stage are assessed the needs of education of the unemployed person. For each indicator the unemployed is given a score. The evaluation criteria are defined according to the risk groups targeted as follows:

1. How long has the person been unemployed. Three groups are defined: a) up to 6 months with permanent registration; b) 7 to 12 months with permanent registration; c) more than 12 months with permanent registration.

2. Professional experience. In three groups: a) no professional experience; b) with less than 2 years professional experience; c) with more than 2 years professional experience.

3. Obtained qualification in the profession for which the course is designed. There are three groups; a) no qualification; b) partial qualification in the profession; c) with obtained certificate for a certain level of professional qualification.

4. Belonging to one of the following target groups on the labour market. Four groups are defined: a) young person up to 29 years of age; b) woman over 50 years of age or men over 55 years of age; c) disadvantaged person.

People who belong to more than one group are privileged.

5. Participation of the unemployed person in courses financed by the Employment agency in the last 3 years: a) the unemployed has not participated in a course; b) the unemployed has participated in one course; c) the unemployed has participated in more than one course.

6. Receiving dole. In three groups: a) the person is not receiving dole; b) the person receives monthly dole or dole for particular needs such as electricity, heating, etc.

The second stage of recruitment ends with rating of the unemployed on the basis of the score each one of them has obtained.

The rated applicants enter the third stage of selection. The selection is carried out by the representatives of the Commission and of the educational institution, which was nominated according to the Regulation for implementation of the Law for employment stimulation. The selection is carried out by means of a pattern provided by the educational institution (interview, test or essay). As a result are selected the unemployed who are enrolled in the vocational course. The third stage ends with rating of the applicants.

Enrolled are the applicants with highest rate. If a student drops out within the first 10% of the duration of the course the next one on the list is accepted.

The application of the described methodology of recruitment is monitored by directorate 'Regional employment agency'.

Funding sources: The courses are state financed. The support is provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as part of the state budget. The Employment agency is the executive agency which distributes the money. The Labour offices have information about the educational institutions and the professions for the unemployed. The selection of the educational institution is by means of a tender. One of the main criteria for winning the tender is the cost of the course. Upon completion of the course the unemployed obtain document for vocational training. As part of the key competence

courses are offered also language courses. If employers apply for vocational education the courses are financed by the programme “Human recourse development”.

On the basis of Paragraph 69 (1) (Changes - State Gazette N 95; 2005 enforced 01.10 2006, changes State Gazette N. 60 of 2008, enforced 04.07. 2008) and according to Paragraph 66 Articles 3 and 4 of the Law of employment stimulation the branches of Employment agency pay stipends, transport and accommodation of the students who present a certificate issued by the educational institution that they have participated in the course.

In some cases in addition to the application for vocational course the employer .is obliged to hire the participants at least 6 months after the course finishes.

History of the model: This procedure is part of the strategy for financing an active labour market policy, which is carried pout by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed within the framework of the National action plan for employment stimulation.

Number of participants: The Federation has no statistical data for the number of participants in the courses.

Location: Education and training takes place in all regions in which there are branches of the Federation and connections with the Labour offices.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The Federation has established long term relations with local authorities and the private sector in different regions of the country. In this way it is able to be flexible to react to the regional fluctuations on the labour market under the conditions of high dynamics.

A problem when organizing educational courses is the fact that sometimes there are discrepancies between the needs of the labour market and the interests of the people themselves. There are professions which the market need but are not very popular among the unemployed.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The expansion of these practices is necessary due to the changing needs of the labour market and the necessity of flexible reaction to them.

Methods of feedback evaluation: Feedback is ensured through questionnaires and interviews among the participants. No statistical or marketing information is used. The interviewee suggested that it would be useful if sociologists help them evaluate the outcomes of their activities.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The interviewee predicted that there would be fewer courses offered on the free market of this service. With regard to the courses offered by the Labour offices he expected that it would be vice versa. Due to the fact that during recession the number of unemployed goes up there might be that this activity expands.

Literature:

Law for employment stimulation (2002) Changes 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

Regulations for implementation of the Law for employment stimulation. Enforced 27.06.2003 (changes 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008).

Methodology for recruiting and selection of unemployed for enrollment in vocational qualification courses organized by the Employment agency (according to Paragraph 63, Article 1 of the Law for Employment stimulation)
http://www.az.government.bg/internal.asp?CatID=15/02/02&WA=Training/edu_2.htm

**Federation of Fellowships for Dissemination of Knowledge –
Non-formal Education Organization
Interview with GM (Director of Vocational Training Centre)**

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See the interview with BM.

**II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL
EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

BACKGROUND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE (VTC) is an independent structural unit in the Federation of Fellowships for Dissemination of Knowledge; it was created by decision of the General Assembly on December 13, 2001. With records of proceedings № 17 of 26.11.2003 of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the Centre was officially licensed under License № 200312097. There are 14 regional training units functioning at VTC: these are in Aitos, Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Veliko Tarnovo, Dimitrovgrad, Karlovo, Lovech, Pernik, Pleven, Plovdiv, Razgrad, Ruse, Smolyan, Stara Zagora. The object of activity of the Centre and its regional training units is to conduct vocational training for

qualification and re-qualification, for providing key competencies and skills for persons over 16 years of age according to their personal interests and capacities, and in accordance with the Law for Vocational Education and Training. The basic aims and tasks of VTC are:

1. Studying the labour market demands and ensuring adequate training.
2. Ensuring and facilitating access to continuing vocational training for:
 - persons without a completed degree of education and some qualification;
 - socially disadvantaged persons;
 - unemployed;
 - employed in need of updating their acquired qualification;
 - persons with higher education who wish to acquire new scientific knowledge or to increase their qualification level.
3. Studying the needs of trainees and providing the necessary training contents, forms, and length of training.
4. Working for effective application of new scientific knowledge and social practices.
5. Working for affirming the values of a learning society.

The VTC maintains contact with the Institute for International Activity at the People's Universities of Germany /IIZ/DVV/, the European Association for the Education of Adults /EAEA/, and similar training organizations abroad. It also exchanges information and ideas with foreign organizations in the field of methodology of training adults and updating the qualification of the training staff. The centre provides expert opinions and takes part in the development of a national policy for education of adults.

The yearly budget of the Centre is over 100 000 BGN (about 50 000 euro). In the last 5 years the number of courses has decreased considerably. The organization does not have statistical information about the course participants at the national level, for all organizations in the framework of the Federation. The VTC attached to the Federation has trained 60 unemployed; about 15 to 20 others have been trained in the framework of five or six other VTC. In key competencies – language training, 350 persons are being trained currently. In recent years the Centre has combined work under projects with work on a market principle. According to the respondent, the organization is more developed than others in the non-governmental

organization sector (the respondent has considerable experience in the NGO sector – she previously worked in 3 such organizations).

In my opinion we are better developed than the other non-profit organizations, I'm speaking out of my personal experience, because most non-profit organizations have a concrete fixed goal, they remain in the same framework that they have set themselves, and they don't open up. It is hard working with disadvantaged groups. In my prior job I worked with homes for abandoned children. This is very hard work and that is why few people commit themselves to doing it, because it is – how should I put it – the duty of a given non-governmental organization to do it, but one should be committed to a maximum in order to do it – otherwise there's no way to do the job. (p. 2)

COURSE CONTENT

The professional fields in the activity of the centre are: Marketing and Advertising, Finances and Banking, Accountancy and Taxes, Economic Management, Office Activities, Computer Use, Construction, Hotel Management, Tourism, Environmental Protection, Carpentry and Furniture Production, Welding, Tailoring, Bee-keeping, Landscape Gardening, Forestry and Hunting Management, Forest Cultural Activities, and Herb Collecting.

Included in all the licensed programmes are modules for acquiring basic skills such as: language competency in English or some other language of the client's choice; healthy and safe work conditions; use of computer technologies; communication skills; team work skills, etc.

The organization conducts courses for qualification and re-qualification of adults. The contents of the courses by professions and specialties are listed in detail on the organization's web site. For example, here are some professions and specialties for which training courses are offered:

Professions	Specialties
Administrator in hotel keeping	Organization and servicing in hotel keeping – third degree of professional qualification
Cashier	Cashier – first degree of professional qualification
Cosmetician	Cosmetics
Forestry specialist	Forest industry – second degree of professional qualification
Viticulturist – wine producer	Viticulture and wine production - second degree of professional qualification
Water and sewerage network operative	Internal water and sewerage networks External w. and s. networks
Energy facilities fitter	Refrigerator and air-conditioning technology
Transportation technology fitter	Road construction technology
Shoemaker	Shoemaking – first degree of professional qualification
Furnace worker	Furnace work
Food industry operator	Production and processing of milk and dairy products Production of meat, meat products, and fish
Landscape gardener	Floriculture Park planning and construction and landscape gardening

Organizer of tourist agency activity	Organization of tourism and leisure - third degree of professional qualification
Office manager	Business administration – third degree of professional qualification
Security guard	Personal body guarding Bank security and encashment activities Physical security of sites
Programmer	Programming provision – second degree of professional qualification
Assistant educator	Assistant educator in rearing and educating children – third degree of professional qualification
Seller-consultant	Seller-consultant
Road construction worker	Builder of roads, highways, and relevant facilities
Worker in catering and entertainment establishments	Food production worker in catering and entertainment establishments - first degree of professional qualification
Restaurant worker	Catering – third degree of professional qualification
Social worker	Social services for children in risk – third degree of professional qualification Social services for children and adults with chronic diseases and sensory disabilities – third degree of professional qualification

Construction worker	<p>Assistant in construction work</p> <p>Falsework construction worker</p> <p>Steel frame construction and cement</p> <p>Bricklaying</p> <p>Mosaics and plastering</p> <p>Painting</p>
Construction worker – fitter	<p>Reinforced concrete constructions – second degree of professional qualification</p> <p>Metal constructions – second degree of professional qualification</p> <p>Dry construction – second degree of professional qualification</p> <p>Window frames and glass pain fitting – second degree of professional qualification</p>
Accountant	Accountancy
Assistant in small and middle business	Small and middle business
Forest fruit gatherer	Herb gathering
Upholsterer	Upholstering – first degree of professional qualification
Technician – crop raising	<p>Crop raising</p> <p>Vegetable production</p> <p>Orchards and vineyards</p> <p>Mushroom production</p>
Technician animal breeder	Bee-keeping and sericulture – third degree of professional qualification

Farmer	Farmer – second degree of professional qualification
Hairdresser	Hairdressing
Baker – confectioner	Production of bread and pastry Confectionery
Hotel keeper	Organization of hotel management – third degree of professional qualification
Financier	Insurance
Tax and customs broker	Tax and customs services
Electrical fitter	Electrical installations
Operator in wood processing	Furniture production
Landscape gardening technician	Floriculture Park construction
Organizer of tourist agency activity	Rural tourism

With regard to personal development courses, VTC works on projects in partnership with other organizations. These are courses for developing skills related to stress situations and adaptation, more specifically: conflict resolution skills, self-knowledge programmes, parenthood skills, coping with loss of loved ones, coping with various forms of addiction. Included in the project frameworks are programmes for leadership skills, acquiring knowledge in the fields of psychology, sociology, philosophy.

Courses related to art: theatre, creative writing, music, visual arts, are *not* provided by VTC.

VTC contributes to the development of the community at the national level through its network of regional training units, inasmuch as, through projects, it provides professional training for stimulating personal adaptation and growth. Particularly important – the training is free of charge for the end-users, who are socially weak, groups in risk or disadvantaged groups, which cannot afford participating in such courses through their own investment:

...considering the crisis situation in our country, considering the situation in our southern regions – Rudozem, Madan, where the ore extraction industry is on the verge of being shut down completely and people are left without work, these people are offered the necessary courses for re-qualification. They are starting to be re-qualified, because, they have worked, for instance, underground as miners for 20 years. And secondly, in order to be motivated for this, they should know that they won't need to move from their homes. This motivates them greatly. In my opinion this is an unoccupied niche just now. (p. 2)

STAFF CONDITIONS

At present, the organization has no regular staff members other than the two manager posts – executive director of the organization and director of VTC. All other employees and teachers are recruited from the sector of formal education and work under civil contracts for provision of certain services. The remuneration of teachers is considerably higher here than in the formal education system:

...the training staff work under civil contracts, because all our lecturers are experienced teachers, we call them licensed, but in fact when you have a teacher who teaches in high school or in university, it's clear to you that he is a habilitated teacher, in other words, the quality is guaranteed, they were appointed under work contracts there and we hire them for a given kind of service and under civil contracts. (p. 4)

TARGET GROUPS

The Centre offers qualification and re-qualification courses for persons over 16 years of age in the following categories:

- persons without a completed degree of education and qualification;
- socially disadvantaged persons;
- unemployed;
- employed in need of updating their acquired qualification;

- persons with higher education who wish to acquire new scientific knowledge or to increase their qualification level.

*The first rule in the statutes of our organization is that **we work only with adults**, we don't work with children. There are different groups, naturally, employed people differ – they have different interests, different demands and questions about qualification connected with their work. Because in these dynamic times of ours, one often works one thing up to a moment, then the firm grows, re-qualification or additional qualification are needed. That is when people turn to us. We also have target groups consisting not of unemployed needing re-qualification to find a job, but of people who have a concrete job and need additional training. I have to say we hardly have minority groups. At present we do work with prisoners, who are also a specific kind of group. They are disadvantaged and the aim of the project is their integration after release from prison. They are given re-qualification courses so they will have the necessary documents and have the opportunity after release not to go back to their risky occupations and go back to those institutions again, but to find work; it might not be qualified work, because we train them to be bricklayers, plasterers, elementary computer literacy, park gardening, but we give them the possibility to find a well paid job that will really integrate them and tear them away from their previous career, if I may call it that. (p. 1)*

The gender differences of course takers are predetermined by the specific features of each profession they are training for. Overall there is an evident feminization of the language courses.

Employed people prefer training in NGOs due to the briefer terms of training and the lack of strict requirements for attendance at all class sessions.

The size of the groups varies between 10 and 20 persons, but the standard size is 10 persons.

CONNECTIONS TO THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

According to the respondent, no interaction is evident between the NGO sector and the formal education system. This is due to a number of factors, such as the lack of institutionalized mechanisms for advancing to higher courses or inclusion in the formal education system, the lack of concrete normative regulations, the lack of mechanisms for recognition of prior schooling.

There are no, there are no practices for recognition of prior learning. But there should be, because in Western countries they do have it and this is an aspect that should be paid attention to and to start in the direction that non-governmental organizations will work in close connection with formal education. (p. 5)

The formal education system is assigned the role of active subject in conducting negotiations and initiating interaction with the non-governmental sector:

...perhaps meetings should be held in order to reach agreements under what conditions, on the basis of what exams they would recognize the education coming from the non-official organizations, because our programmes are made taking into account the programmes of the Ministry of Education and Science, in other words we work under the same programmes, consequently when a person desires it, it ought to be possible to... through an exam assessing equal level of attainment or some other exam, on the basis of some kind of exam to recognize this education. (p. 5)

The respondent sees the role of non-governmental organizations as consisting mostly in the political process of passing legislation and new (innovative) practices, since this is a newly emerging field:

...(NGOs) should tackle the people on whom it depends. At the political level – in this case it's impossible to avoid politics – there should be lobbying, work should be done in this direction, but this is a difficult process, in Bulgarian there are simply no established paths, it's very hard to be the first one doing something and there will be much work to be done, much time will pass before this thing is achieved, but it's not impossible... (p. 6)

The organization conducts different events such as discussions, round tables, and informal meetings with representatives of various state institutions; it maintains good relations with state institutions but has no practice in organization visits of course takers to schools of the formal education system. Visits are limited to attending courses that are held in the buildings of schools of the formal education system, but no additional explanatory work is done, no targeted visits are made, such as open doors, information campaigns, etc. The connection between the formal education system and the non-governmental sector may be defined in this case as indirect and informal.

Generally we're in very good relations with the Ministry of Education. For instance we were invited to yesterday's event... and we discussed these issues, as for events... on that point we have taken no steps... work with schools is done, we use their bases, but that's as far as it goes... we also use their teachers... (p. 6)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

With regard to recognition of prior learning, the respondent defines the main problem as being the lack of established procedures and mechanisms, because this is an uncultivated field that is just now emerging. The proposed solution for this problem is the creation of procedures and institutional mechanisms for recognizing prior learning.

There's a lack of procedure, lack of established ways in which this can happen, there are no procedures, no rules, there is nothing in this direction. (p. 6)

Despite this, informally in the framework of the organization, competencies and skills are recognized on the basis of length of service.

Naturally. If he can prove he has worked for five years in a specialty, for instance he was a valet in one of the large hotels, for instance Radisson or Grand Hotel Bulgaria, and he has no diploma, he can take something like a refresher course, sit exams before a commission and obtain his diploma (not diploma but certificate). So that's exactly the advantage of informal education. Especially as our programmes allow a person to pass just one training module, not the whole programme. A programme of 600 hours is very long, he might

need just one specific part of it; so he studies that concrete part, respectively he can take a distance exam, he can be given the study materials. We're simply more flexible and open. (p. 9)

OUTREACH TO MARGINALISED GROUPS

When working with marginalized groups the organization has a strictly individual personal approach, for people of such groups are highly sensitive and should be approached with care. Mostly personal contact is used and work is on an individual basis:

...there is more to be desired on this point, but yes, using various contacts, informal, different sorts... according to the situation... because these are the disadvantaged groups. Each one of them must be reached, an individual approach is needed, a careful approach, they are a rather particular group of people. (p. 6)

Each course may be initiated in one of two ways – either by the NGO itself or by interested people:

...to some degree it is on a personal basis, it is announced that such and such a course will be given or a small group of people comes, they inquire and we respond, that's simply how it's done. (p. 6)

Groups in a disadvantaged social-economic position – unemployed, are reached through the intermediation of the employment offices, as stipulated by the regulations for the operation of the Agency for Employment.

The Labour Office generally organizes most of the training for unemployed. They keep track, they know what people they have, they organize a course and respectively send us a request for a course in a given specialty. A contract for provision of services is signed and a course is conducted. We constantly have feedback, we have contacts with the Agency for Employment, so this thing is regulation-based to some degree, it is known, to some degree, how the work is to be done, and there are some good results. (p. 6)

The communication channels for disadvantaged people and groups in risk are mostly informal.

TUTOR TEACHING METHODS

There is no institutionally organized teaching of the tutors in this organization; they rely mostly on self-training:

...the teachers, since they're active teachers in schools and universities, they are constantly training themselves... the scholastic programmes change, dynamic changes are going on, the style of teaching is changing, so they train constantly, they go to seminars. They do it personally, because they have access to more information about where such seminars are to be given, and because you can't send an English teacher to a seminar in chemistry. So they are the ones who keep track, they educate themselves, it's in their own interest. The on-going education of the tutors is also based on self-training. As I said before, part of our tutors are employed to teach in other institutions and schools. They teach themselves in order to increase their qualification and to rise in the hierarchy... (p. 7)

In their work the teachers apply the principles of training of adults, which include: a) active study on the part of the trainees; b) dialogue and sharing opinions during the training sessions; c) the possibility of sharing teaching goals; d) attempts at connecting the contents of the course with the life experience of the trainees.

The feedback method used is most often to administer questionnaires at the end of the course indicating the opinion of the trainees about the contents of the course and the way it was conducted.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

According to the respondent, there is no strategy for development of the informal sector at national or regional level. This personal opinion of the respondent may be counted as an expert opinion, because she has long years of practical experience in the non-governmental sector with different kinds and types of NGOs – charitable and tourist organizations. In the respondent's view, the main priority of a future strategy should be partnership relations between various stakeholders and a serious emphasis on practical training in a real-life

environment of trainees. A serious shortcoming seems to be the lack of skills in client-oriented behaviour:

...perhaps there should be closer contact between the government structures and the informal sector, between branch structures and the informal sector, because branch structures are also informal organizations. They are non-profit organizations, but they say it's not an object of their activity.... the issue was brought up once again yesterday at the discussion with branch organizations... For instance in tourism there's a pressing need for training – and not just now, but there has been for the past 10 years and there will be in the next 5 years perhaps... Yes, some people graduate the vocational high school in tourism, but they don't have practical experience... But it's not everyone who can formulate precisely what the behaviour should be, the behaviour style, but this is a very difficult matter, it isn't taught anywhere in the formal or the informal sector. (p. 9)

III. MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. RE-QUALIFICATION OF ADULT WORKERS UPON IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES (TRAINING PLUMBERS TO WORK WITH POLYPROPYLENE PIPES)

Objectives of the practice: Training plumbers to work with polypropylene pipes in the framework of **Qualification training of unemployed and employed persons** (under art. 63, par. 1, points 1, 3, and 4, and par. 2 of the Employment Promotion Act); training is conducted for professions needed for occupying job vacancies, for the future needs of the labour market for qualified workers, and for preserving jobs.

Target groups: Workers in the sphere of water supply and sewerage (infrastructural projects).

*Yes, in my opinion good practices exist, for instance the re-qualification of occupations so as to avoid substituting a good worker. **Everything related to***

keeping a very good worker on the job is, in my opinion, a very good practice, and I can't say it doesn't exist. I'm referring not only to large companies, but to smaller ones too... There was a firm for which we trained 7 persons, simply because until then they had worked with metal pipes, worked on water and sewerage installations, now polypropylene is used, this is new equipment, a new way of welding, and it was necessary to re-qualify people, workers, who were very good ones and who had to be given what was partly a basic qualification and partly an enrichment of knowledge. They turned to us, we conducted the training, and it was completed last month. The fact that the employer did not start looking for 20 or 30-year olds with a document, but without practice, but instead preferred to pay for the training of these people, in my opinion this is a very good practice. (p. 6)

Funding sources: The trainings are funded by the employers through Operational Programme for Human Resources Development. Each concrete training course is conducted on the basis of already concluded agreements between the directorates of Employment Office, the training institutions, the trainees, and the employers.

For the most part the courses are provided free of charge for the end-consumer:

Free of charge, if someone else is funding the training. For the end-consumer there are free ones, and there are paid ones. If it's a course announced by the Vocational Training Centre for recruiting course takers for the end-consumer, then – yes. If the employer has ordered the training, then it's free for the end-consumer. In other words, all these courses are free of charge for them, they only enrich their knowledge, they [course takers] only acquire knowledge. (p. 9)

The fee for the paid courses varies according to the subject, according to the programme, because the programmes have different numbers of training hours, there are 300-hour ones, there are 600, there are 80-hour ones. And according to this the prices vary. Approximately from 150 to 400 leva (120-200 euro). (p. 9)

A stipend is paid to the unemployed persons during the period of qualification training. The amount of the stipend depends on the location of the training – whether it

is in the settlement of residence of the person or in a place other than the permanent place of residence of the person. The stipend is calculated on the basis of the days of attendance at the training sessions.

In the cases when the professional qualification or motivation training of the unemployed is conducted in a different settlement, accommodation expenses and travel expenses of the trainees are provided. These funds are accounted for on the basis of presented documents (invoices for night's lodging, transportation tickets).

The maximal amount of resources for professional qualification training, for motivation training of an unemployed person, accommodation and travel expenses, and the size of the stipend for the person undergoing qualification training, are determined each year in the National Action Plan for Employment.

History of the model: These training courses are conducted under the Programme for Promoting Employment 2007 – 2013. The Programme was launched in 2008.

Number of participants: The number of persons re-qualified under this concrete programme was 7 persons a year for the needs of one concrete firm.

Location: This concrete training course was conducted in Sofia.

The Centre has the capacity to conduct training courses in different settlements and to organize simultaneous training for adults who live in different settlements.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: In organizing the training courses difficulties arise, for the trainees form small groups and live in different settlements. For a number of older trainees traveling to another settlement to attend the training sessions proves to be a problem. Hence it is necessary to develop and intensively use some forms of distance training or “on-the-spot” training. However, organizing such training courses would require additional financial and staff potential.

Priority needs for expansion of the model/service: Under conditions of dynamic social changes and of economic crisis, it is becoming increasingly clear there is a need for organizing timely training courses for improving the qualification and for re-qualification of workers in various branches. These programmes should be coordinated at national level in order to guarantee their effectiveness.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The basic method for evaluation of the quality and adequacy of the provided training is to obtain information whether the trainees have preserved their employment.

Though not yet used, there are plans for applying a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods – number of participants, number of people who have received diplomas, interviews with trainees in order to study their opinions about the conducted training.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: It may be presumed that the consequences of the economic crisis will lead to increased demand – in most branches of the economy – for training courses and re-qualification in the field of new technologies.

Literature:

<http://www.fssk-bg.com>

<http://www.az.government.bg/>

Prison Fellowship Bulgaria – Non-formal Education Organization

Interview with IE (Executive Director)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

- **General information**

Prison Fellowship Bulgaria (PF Bulgaria) (<http://www.pfbulgaria.hit.bg/>) is an independent national fellowship, and part of the international association "Prison Fellowship International", which comprises fellowships from 83 countries. The main targets of the international fellowship are: to ensure that the national fellowships work jointly on problems of prisoners; persons who have already served their imprisonment; their families; and all those who have been victims of crimes.

"Prison Fellowship International" consists of independent national organizations committed to work in prisons; these organizations are members of a united association. The association has the status of a consultative member (2nd category) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Prison Fellowship Bulgaria has been a member of Prison Fellowship International since 1994. It is an Eastern Orthodox Christian community of clergymen and lay persons, united by the desire to organize the spiritual, material, and religious support for those in need serving time in penitentiary institutions, reformatory homes, reformatory homes for minors, reformatories for children and minors, and other places where convicts serve prison sentences; the fellowship is based on Christian morals and charity and strives to help restrict the crime problem in Bulgaria.

PF Bulgaria is a non-profit legal entity under Bulgarian legislation and carries out its activity in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Bulgaria, the international human right pacts ratified by the Bulgarian parliament, and its own statutes.

PF Bulgaria carries out its activity with the blessings of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

PF Bulgaria achieves its main goals through the mechanisms it has already created for conducting religious services in the penitentiary units; by conducting various, targeted ethical, cognitive, educational, and cultural programmes; by individual visits to the cells of prisoners; by enhancing its social activities to include those who have already served their sentence; through work with the families of the incarcerated.

In carrying out its programmes, PF Bulgaria works actively with various governmental and non-governmental organizations. It has partnership relations for various projects with the following organizations and institutions: the Ministry of Justice; the Central Prison Administration and all prisons; the Bulgarian Orthodox Church; the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God Foundation; the Association for Assistance to Convicts and their Families; the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee; the Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors; the Institute for Universal Encouragement; the Biblical Association Christian Unity; the Door to Hope Foundation; the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance; the Federation of Fellowships for the Dissemination of Knowledge (FFDK), and others. In its activity so far, PF Bulgaria has worked on the following projects and programmes:

- collecting resources for assistance in the form of food, clothing, medicaments, etc., for imprisoned persons and their families, and basic necessities under the Avicenna Programme;

- creating the necessary conditions for conducting regular religious services in all prisons;

- completely restoring the Orthodox church Saint Anastasia in Sofia Central Prison, a task including fundamental renovation and covering all walls and ceilings with wall paintings; making a wood-carved iconostasis and painting the icons;

- Angelic Christmas Tree Programme, consisting in providing Christmas gifts for children of incarcerated persons in order to consolidate and maintain the ties between children and their incarcerated parent;

- annual courses for volunteers working with incarcerated persons.

In October 1997, at the Second National Conference of PF Bulgaria, several important decisions were taken, which had an impact both on its activity and on the institutional environment in which the fellowship works, i.e. the judiciary system, the structure of penitentiary institutions, and public opinion, the basic social regulator. As a result of these decisions, the Fellowship initiated the creation of a chaplain service in prisons; initiated the adoption of the Law for Execution of Penalties (LEP); took an active part in the discussions on abolishing the death penalty; thanks to the Fellowship's extensive activity, Bulgaria was the host of the world congress of Prison Fellowship International in 1999.

In the period 2000 – 2005, PF Bulgaria worked for enlarging its social activity and building better coordination at the national level; as a first step in this direction the First National Chaplains Conference was held in the city of Pleven on January 27-29, 2000.

In recent years PF Bulgaria has directed its efforts to enhancing activities related to the families and children of the imprisoned, to the imprisoned themselves after they have served their sentences, as well as to the creation of volunteer structures throughout the country.

PF Bulgaria has launched its pilot project Life Outside Jail, implemented jointly with Sofia Prison and the prison in Bobov Dol. By the year 2001, 12 people were assisted with clothing, foods, and money after their release from prison.

In the period from December 2000 until June 2001, PF Bulgaria prepared a handbook entitled "Life After Release", targeted at prisoners whose release is forthcoming. The handbook contains information about the steps to be taken by those who have served their prison sentences and by the institutions to which former prisoners should turn for support. The book contains data about the Labour Office, the municipal services for social assistance, and the NGOs throughout the country.

A special 5-year programme was launched in 2005, entirely aimed at education and re-qualification, and which is part of an integral conceptual scheme for applying practices of rehabilitating justice. In the last 2 years PF Bulgarian, jointly with the Federation of Fellowships for Dissemination of Knowledge, has been implementing a project for re-qualification courses of prisoners in Vratsa Prison.

- **Target groups**

The basic group to which the activities of PF Bulgaria are directed are prisoners. This basic target group is sub-divided into sub-groups with differing characteristics, more specifically, minority groups, the group of people with addictions, groups of people according to their various kinds of sentences and various kinds of offenses. A group not targeted by the activities of PF Bulgaria is that of people with mental problems.

- **The mission of the institution**

The basic mission of PF Bulgaria is to “organize religious services, spiritual and material assistance to persons in need in the penitentiary institutions on the basis of the evangelical principles, Christian ethics, and charity”.

...the mission of the organization is the spiritual care, support and rehabilitation of persons after they serve their sentence. In general the aim is to preserve human dignity. Part of the mission is education and raising the educational level of these people and their professional qualification. (p. 1)

- **Availability of special services for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

The services provided by PF Bulgaria, particularly in the previous period of its functioning (2000-2005), are basically aimed at enhancing its social support for imprisoned persons and their families. In this connection the fellowship has developed the projects Complete Support (a two-year project aimed at solving the problem of low literacy in prisons), and the project Adaptation Environment (jointly with Sofia Prison). Under the latter project a centre was created in the prison itself, offering individual counseling, group work, the possibility to spend time in the last days of the sentence in an almost “domestic” atmosphere. An Adaptation Environment Centre has also been created outside the prison, which represents a natural continuation of the activity of the one inside the prison, but which offers services to the whole family as well as additional services according to the specific conditions of life outside prison (legal counseling, mediation in finding work, humanitarian support, family counseling).

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

BACKGROUND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

As the name of the fellowship indicates, it is an organization for “spiritual and public support for incarcerated persons”. The financial sources for the activities of PF Bulgaria are mostly donations and various projects and programmes. The annual budget is between 60 000 and 70 000 leva (approximately 30 000 to 35 000 Euro). The respondent estimates it as quite modest. The size of the sum does not permit maintaining a large staff. The organization in fact has only one employee, who performs administrative, managerial, and coordinating functions. All the other collaborators work under civil contracts (for performance of concrete services) or on a volunteer basis. There is a lack of traditions of volunteer work in Bulgaria, and in this respect the fellowship comes up against serious difficulties.

The number of courses has grown in the last 5 years thanks to the target programme (2005-2010) aimed entirely at education and vocational qualification.

As was indicated, this programme is part of an integral conception being implemented for applying practices of rehabilitating justice in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian fellowship is the third in Europe to apply this methodology.

The number of course takers in recent years has grown considerably due also to the interest shown by the prisoners themselves and the commitment of the prison administration.

According to the respondent this organization is specific as regards encouraging access of disadvantaged groups, for, unlike other NGOs, participants are not paid, i.e. the utilitarian motivation for participation is absent. Participation is achieved through obligatory modules for motivation and social skills.

We do not pay people to take part in our courses, so I can say we are in a different sphere – I don't know whether it is more developed or not. We encourage people in a slightly more special way - we include obligatory modules training motivation and social skills. When a person has passed them, then he can take part in the educational programmes. In other words, the people who take part in the educational programme are usually very motivated

people, who want to complete these courses. With us the model is slightly different. (p. 2)

COURSE CONTENT

According to the respondent, prisoners are a severely discriminated group as regards public acceptance, and, when this is combined with low education, they are additionally discriminated on the labour market. That is why the most useful thing for them, as regards building in them confidence that they can continue their education and confidence they can contribute to the development of the community or region, are the courses related to the performance of a concrete task. On the other hand, due to the purely psycho-emotional state of an adult person and his attitude to learning, the learning process itself must be target oriented.

A course as such is not applicable for an adult person, in other words, education as such should be oriented to some task. In this case, it's our marginal group, let's call them the incarcerated, and their concrete task is that, since they aren't able to compete after they are released, due to several reasons – one reason is their low level of education or complete lack of it, and the second is the high level of discrimination. [...] Yes, there's a concrete task... (p. 2)

PF Bulgaria has a licensed centre for professional training attached to Vratsa Prison, where the projects for educational services are implemented. The permanent courses are in literacy and computer skill training. Since 2008 courses in construction skills have been included, and in 2009 the range of specialties within the frame of construction training was expanded. Landscape gardening courses are also offered. The objective of the vocational training centre is to offer skill training in approximately 10 specialties next year, in 2010, for people with completed 6th grade education.

The courses are roughly divided in this way: about 10% of them are literacy courses: since there is a school in the framework of the prison, and in order not to duplicate functions, the organization mostly provides summer accelerated courses in literacy. The other courses are for personality development and are strictly professional.

Most popular of all are the computer courses, which offer the receipt of a certificate valid for Europe; but there is an additional requirement for course takers – they have to have some vocational qualification. On the other hand course takers should meet higher requirements – they have to pass a pre-access test that guarantees the curriculum will be assimilated and the final tests will be passed successfully. With the methods used, successful completion is in the range of 80%.

The organization contributes to the personal development of prisoners by forming skills in conflict resolution, parenthood skills, skills for coping with the loss of close friends or relatives, skills for dealing with bias, self-knowledge programmes.

This is precisely the obligatory part of our educational programme, the project is called “adaptation environment” – well, it starts out with sensitivity training, communicative skills, conflict resolution, these are the obligatory three levels through which all pass before they can even enter the professional training courses... that is the way we work. (p. 3)

Classes on art - theatre, creative writing, music, visual arts, are offered in the prison itself, but not by the Centre for Professional Training.

The centre also offers a special module for professional orientation in two variants: one is after obtainment of vocational qualification and is directed to training in seeking, finding, and settling into a job, and the other is for groups oriented to entrepreneurship.

PF Bulgaria has no ways and no activity in tracking how the people who have served their sentences realize themselves in their local communities after leaving jail, because the prisoners come from different regions, to which they return after serving their sentences. Thanks to their participation in various courses, some of the prisoners develop and are recognized by the prison administration as good informal leaders.

STAFF CONDITIONS

The teachers in this organization work mostly on a volunteer basis, except in the cases when they are funded under a specific project, national or European. In general, the remuneration is not high and the motivation of teachers is mostly based on inner conviction and commitment to the problems.

Now, we're a volunteer organization. Part of the teachers does it on a volunteer basis, yes, completely voluntarily. What we pay them is travel expenses, basic things like that... so as to pay at least part of the invested time, after all. There are projects that envisage payment of a fee... There are projects that are on a fixed-term contract basis, for full day or half a day work, or up to 40 hours a month, but basically, in most cases the teachers work on a voluntary basis. When there is funding or expansion of activity or introduction of new things, then they take part as paid associates, but otherwise they are basically volunteers. (p. 4)

The funding of PF Bulgaria is not based on a historical principle and is not carried out regularly. Incoming resources from donors and the private sector have been almost discontinued due to the recession. Funding is only done when a project is initiated and won by what is in fact the only staff member – the director of the organization. The duration of funding depends on the duration of the project.

TARGET GROUPS

The activities of PF Bulgaria are targeted at the inmates of the respective prison. It is hard to make analyses by gender, for in Bulgaria there are 5 men's prisons and 1 women's – so the prisoners are divided by gender to begin with. The educational projects being conducted are in men's prisons. In the women's prison other activities are conducted, mostly charity campaigns.

Classes formed for training sessions generally consist of 12 persons; in the course of time the group decreases to 10 or even 8 people, as some drop out. The causes of dropping out are various, but most often this is due to completion of the prison sentence and release from

prison. Students do not drop out for reasons of personal refusal to continue or failure to cope with the material.

CONNECTIONS TO THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are no established paths for advancing from a lower to a higher course. In accordance with the Law for Professional Education and Learning, however, there are requirements that a certain grade must have been completed in order to enroll in a course for obtaining vocational qualification.

According to the respondent, in order for the formal educational institutions to recognize prior schooling, including informal education, it is necessary to build a standardized system for evaluation of cognitive capacity – knowledge and skills, and this can be achieved using a specially constructed entry level test.

According to the respondent there is no two-way connection between the formal and informal sector. These two sectors function as two independent systems, which do not encompass all cases and interested persons. There is no system that mediates and fills in the gaps not covered by either of the systems. Some people have practical professional experience, but which cannot be accounted or certified, because, on one hand, they do not meet the formal criteria for the general education minimum as set in the legal basis, on the other hand, there is no existing mechanism for distinguishing and assessing their competencies and skills. This responsibility, according to the respondent, should fall on the formal educational system:

...the formal educational system can do this, because in the country there are a sufficiently great number of people with a low level of education capable of acquiring vocational qualification, but who, under this law, cannot obtain vocational qualification. I don't recall what the rule was regarding crafts, I believe a lower degree of education was required for crafts, I'm not sure – I think you have to have completed 4th grade. There are some people who have experience, years of work, but can't get vocational training... yet such an instrument can be constructed, but the kind that must be recognized by all institutions, by the employment offices, by the professional schools, etc., and, on the basis of this instrument, let's say - a testing system. People would be

able to obtain a certificate that they possess these skills and can practice them.
(p. 6)

But the respondent does not see any role for the informal education sector in activities such as lobbying, taking part in devising such mechanisms, etc. PR Bulgaria is in a passive position in relation to the formal education system – no activities or events are organized, no practical steps are undertaken for orienting the inmates to formal education and presenting it to them.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The respondent indicates that the main obstacles to establishing a mechanism for recognition of previous informal learning and experience, to opening access of adults to the education system, is the resistance to change on the part of the formal education system. The main cause of this resistance is connected with the lack of training and the fear of losing jobs:

...regardless of all the talk about this. For at least 10 years, or 15, there's been talk about life-long learning. This notion was introduced back in the 1990s, and the system continues to be slipping, not moving forward, and it hasn't been able to even change the law in years. But I think there's a fear, although it hasn't been formulated in these words, there are enormous forces of resistance, of course they don't talk about it, I mean, the main participants in the formal education process don't formulate it, because maybe they fear for their jobs. They aren't adequately trained, and this leads to resistance. (p. 7)

The respondent has no opinion as to how these obstacles can be overcome.

OUTREACH TO MARGINALISED GROUPS

PF Bulgaria reaches out to potential course takers through announcements in the prison and by consulting on the part of the prison administration. Participation is voluntary, a number of talks are held, as well as consultations with potential course takers and with the prison administration.

So we publicize an announcement telling about all the conditions of the programme, we talk to the officials, and ask who, in their opinion, are appropriate persons by formal criteria, after that we start a campaign, we do a

lot of personal informing, if needs be we go among these persons in the various groups. (p. 7)

The target groups of PF Bulgaria are made up of disadvantaged people; the majority of them can be classified in several different categories.

The respondent has no knowledge of practices in other countries. He qualifies as an innovation the combining of training for vocational qualification and the obligatory module for social skills.

I don't know about the practice in other countries, I don't know whether professional qualification is accompanied by the kind of obligatory modules that we have – an obligatory module for acquiring social skills... This might be a kind of innovation, but I don't know whether it is... It's something our team came up with. (p. 8)

The courses are free of charge for the end-beneficiaries. PF Bulgaria collaborates actively with the prison authorities and with a partner organization licensed to conduct professional qualification. The rooms are provided by the prison, but under the programme, renovation has been done by the course takers themselves, while the equipment is provided by the organization.

TUTOR TEACHING METHODS

PF Bulgaria provides brief informal preliminary training for the teachers giving vocational qualification courses, because they usually come from the formal education system and have no specific experience in work with prisoner students. The respondent points out the role of women as the most suitable teachers for these specific groups, since women have more suitable personal characteristics for work with these people.

Training, and quite brief at that... I don't really know whether its brief, but it's 6 hours in length, not more, on the particularities of the prison, because not everyone here was inside one before. There are some people who already know the system. But most of them don't know it and it's obligatory for them to get some notion about it... Before the professional teaching begins, the teachers go through training... in a room that is only slightly different from the teaching room. In this way the teachers become familiar with the specific

features of the prison and prisoners... they understand where the problem zones are and what would be the adequate behaviour towards certain individuals,... because some have a higher level of aggressiveness, there are people who have committed certain types of offenses... By the way, most of the teachers are women, because women are more inclined to work with the more difficult categories of people. They show more empathy – yes – that's the truth. And this too creates certain problems, so we train our trainers in this respect.
(p. 8)

The respondent plans to conduct more organized training in the near future, expecting that the team of teachers will grow in number.

The trainings apply no other principles but those of teaching adults, which include: active learning on the part of the trainees; dialogue and sharing opinions during class sessions; the possibility of shared study goals; attempts at tying the contents of the course to the life experience of the trainees.

...this is a principle in our work, and even if the teacher is not trained for what awaits him in the classroom, in an hour or two the group itself will teach him that things aren't done the way he is doing them... starting from the blackboard... but we... now, wait... here... they're pretty active... they're pretty prepared for more interaction with the teacher. So the teacher couldn't possibly miss this opportunity, since the group itself requires it of him... I mean, it's very, sort of... demanding. (p. 9)

Feedback is effectuated at two levels: by participants themselves and by teachers. From participants it most often comes through questionnaires with close-ended and/or open-ended questions. The questionnaires are structured in various ways depending on the module in which course takers are participating.

The teachers are required to give and receive mostly reports and opinions about the way the course is proceeding.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

As a main trend for the future development of the education courses of the organization, the respondent indicates enhancing the role of social skills courses. On the basis of an experimental project conducted in the framework of vocational qualification, the conclusion has been drawn that the lack of social skills training decreases performance with regard to vocational training. This is especially true with respect to computer literacy courses.

All the more so as we experimented with two groups at different times, so as not to allow informal conditions to influence the results, because, hypothetically, this could happen. It turned out that the ones who definitely had much higher grades were those who had taken social skills courses and afterwards took part in vocational training courses. (p. 9)

The fact that an increasing number of participants in a given course do not meet the minimal criteria is assessed as a factor with a negative impact on performance.

The respondent defines sustainability of the programme as the greatest challenge to the future development of the organization. A basic problem is the lack of traditions in funding the non-governmental sector for this kind of services - “vocational qualification”, through the state budget. Strategic plans for developing PF Bulgaria are connected mainly with educational activities. Educational activities and projects are part of a wider strategy for rehabilitating justice in Bulgaria.

The respondent has no opinion or vision regarding the development of the informal sector as a whole, because he lacks competence on this issue. His personal conviction is that the non-governmental sector, as an agent in the social field (of education services) must be situated and firmly established through a change in the whole configuration and by becoming integrated with already existing agents. This must be accomplished in a more pro-active way by non-governmental organizations, because considerable resistance exists on the part of the other organization engaged in education activities.

Maybe, to overcome, to win a place, to make formal education propose more flexible forms and to take part, together with other non-governmental organizations as well, in adult education. (p. 11)

According to the respondent, the advantages of the informal education sector, compared with the formal one, the thing that would attract trainees precisely to the non-governmental organizations instead of to the formal education institutions is the shorter duration of training, the effectiveness and practical orientation of the courses.

The respondent categorically indicates he has no knowledge of any existing national and regional strategy for the development of the informal education sector. A basic characteristic of such a strategy, in his opinion, should be innovation, the aim of which is to attract and encompass all marginalized groups not included in, or having dropped out of, the formal education system. His recommendation is to emphasize flexibility in resolving certain social problems and more practical orientation in mastering certain social and vocational skills.

The respondent's recommendation is for more careful targeting of, and contacts with, marginalized groups, for they are especially sensitive to outside intervention, and an intervention based on force and failing to take into account certain factors may lead to an extremely negative result and obstruct the path to further impact on the group (and on the individuals belonging to it).

We very often make mistakes, because we build our hypotheses on the basis of our own experience and knowledge. In fact we should always ask questions and seek the needs of the target group to which our programme is concretely directed, because we orient ourselves in our own ways, whereas everyone has personal motives of his own... We have some kind of motivation and we have some orientation regarding a certain group... but sometimes it may turn out that the group itself does not have such a need and that coercion over the group would rather lead to an extremely negative result. It might even happen that the next programme, which might be better organized, with better structures, with better ideas, might be rejected due to prior negative experience. So we must be very careful about the needs of the people we are going to work with. (p. 12)

As regards the strong sides of the non-governmental sector, the respondent indicates flexibility, adequacy, and an innovative approach; as regards the weak sides, these are the small scope of education activities, the small resources for implementing them, and the difficulty of introducing good practices learned from the informal into the formal education system.

The connection between the informal education sector and the work place he sees mostly in the possibility for participants in vocational training courses to work in their specialty in the framework of the institution in which a given project is being implemented.

According to the respondent, the recession has an impact mostly on the incoming funds and on volunteer participation, which are fundamental for the support and functioning of a non-governmental organization. Consequently, state funding of this organization and work under international and European projects become important.

III. MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR PRISONERS –

COMBINING SOCIAL SKILLS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vratsa Prison is for repeat offenders. In 2004, on the grounds of art. 68 of the Law for Execution of Penalties, the secondary general education school, which was closed down in 1989 at the start of the transition, was reopened. The school comprises the following vocational qualification classes: 1st to 4th grade – general training for work in metal-producing industry; 5th to 12th grade – wood processing and furniture production.

The capacity of the school is for 110-130 students per year; of these about 25-30% fail to complete their education.

The informal training provided by the “Adaptation Environment” programme, supplements and builds upon the education provided by the formal education school, without duplicating it.

Objectives of the practice: The goal of the programme is to provide informal training for prisoners in order to assist adaptation to society of prisoners after they have served their penalty. The prisoners are assisted by specialists for one year in order to acquire a specialty that will ensure their adequate presence on the labour market. What is offered is combined training oriented both to the formation of social skills and to vocational qualification. Through its “Adaptation Environment” programme, Prison Fellowship Bulgaria provides prisoners with religious education, conflict resolution training, life skills courses, and vocational training.

The PF Bulgaria programme for vocational training of prisoners was launched in 2008. It has a duration of 2 years and is implemented in partnership with the Federation of Associations for Dissemination of Knowledge.

Target groups: Currently, the programme operates in Vratsa Prison, serving repeat offenders for six months prior to their release.

Funding sources: The programme is funded by various sources – basically through a project under Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, but also through donations and volunteer work of teachers. The methodology under which the programme is carried out was provided by Prison Fellowship International.

History of the model: Elena Yoncheva, Prison Fellowship Bulgaria Executive Director, developed the “Adaptation Environment” programme with assistance from Angus Creighton in 2003. It was originally launched in Sofia and served first-time offenders with longer sentences.

The move to Vratsa required some adaptation in the programme with the change in prisoner profile and new environment. It is designed to operate in two phases. The preparatory phase provides the participants with vocational training and basic education classes as well as spiritual support. It takes place in the main prison area. Unfortunately, second phase implementation, which is designed to take place in a separate part of the prison, has been delayed. The prison administration had offered to renovate a specified area of the prison for the needs of the “Adaptation Environment.” However, this construction work is yet to take place.

While waiting for the space to launch phase two, Prison Fellowship Bulgaria is evaluating the first phase of the programme.

The Ministry of Justice will also organize a programme for the informal leaders of the prison community. The goal is to help them learn new skills for returning to the community and building better relationships with both prison staff and their families. Prison Fellowship Bulgaria has received support from prison staff for this new group.

Number of participants: From 2003 until 2005, the programme served 74 prisoners and built a good reputation with the Bulgarian Prison Service. The move to Vratsa prison in 2006 resulted from a Prison Service recommendation.

In 2008 29 prisoners participated in this first programme phase.

Location: Initially the pilot project has been implemented in Sofia prison. Currently the particular project has been developed in Vratza prison for repeat offenders.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: One of the exceptionally strong sides of the programme is that it is specifically adapted to a particular type of prisoner – in this case to repeat offenders with a low level of education and literacy. The organization of training, whereby both professional and social skills are provided, increases the possibilities for adaptation of prisoners after their release from the penitentiary system.

The Ministry of Justice faces many challenges in improving and fully implementing the programme. These include:

- delay in renovating the space to implement phase two of the programme, and
- lack of volunteer support for the programme.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: This programme could be implemented in each of the prisons where a formal school is available (currently 6 in Bulgaria).

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Responding to feedback from prisoners and prison officials, the Ministry of Justice recently held an information meeting with 50 prisoners. The representatives of the Ministry also met with informal leaders from the prison community. These meetings were organized by 3 programme participants and the programme manager. The goal was to improve communication between those working in the “Adaptation Environment” and the prisoners.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The recession is not expected to have a serious impact on this programme, as it is funded on a project principle and through volunteer work.

Literature:

1. Tchalakov, I. (2008) New Features in the Penitentiary System in Accordance with the Best European Practices. In: Prison Activities, Issue 2-3/2007: 270-275 (in Bulgarian).
2. <http://www.pfi.org/cjr/apac/where1/reports/bulgaria/pf-bulgaria-and-communities-of-restoration/?searchterm=bulgaria>

Prison Fellowship Bulgaria – Non-formal Education Organization Interview with ZhK (Teacher)

I. INSTITUTION'S PROFILE

See the interview with IE.

II. LIFELONG LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

BACKGROUND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

The respondent has no knowledge of the structure of the organization, because she is employed under a civil contract for provision of services: teaching professional qualification courses using the standardized system for training and certifying computer skills “Xpert European Computer Passport”, developed by the European testing centre in Hanover, Germany. These courses are provided at the Rehabilitation Through Education Centre in Vratsa Prison; the centre was created by Prison Fellowship Bulgaria, the Federation of Associations for Dissemination of Knowledge, and Vratsa Prison, in accordance with the Law for Execution of Penalties:

Art. 68. Educational institutions are organized for raising the education level and for professional training of individuals incarcerated in prisons and reformatories, jointly with the organs of education and science.

(4) Professional-technical training is also conducted in courses for qualification without discontinuing work, as well as training on a brigade basis or individual basis. With the permission of the Ministry of Justice, courses can be organized with discontinuance of work as well.

Art. 69. In prisons the necessary conditions will be created for theoretical and practical mastering of the specialty or profession by provision of a material basis for teaching, free textbooks, guidebooks, handbooks, etc.

COURSE CONTENT

The permanent courses offered all year round at the Rehabilitation Through Education Centre are:

1. Computer skills training “XPERT”: Windows – 50 hours; Word – 50 hours; Internet – 50 hours

Upon successful completion, inmates are awarded a certificate recognized throughout the European Community.

2. Literacy: Bulgarian language and literature – 300 hours; Mathematics – 100 hours

3. Courses for persons with secondary illiteracy. The duration is determined according to the needs of the formed learning group.

4. Trainings and courses for social skills

I am a teacher using the Xpert system for 1st level computer literacy. This means I teach students in the framework of three modules. The first module is Windows and Internet. The second is text processing in Word, and the third is Excel – electronic tables. This is the basic course, and upon completion of each module a certificate is awarded. When they successfully complete all three modules, the prisoners are given an international passport. Basically it's Windows and Internet, how to work with a computer, the control panel, what to do about certain minor breakdowns; how to work with the Internet – search engines, viruses, anti-virus systems. Text processing is in Word – how to write documents, letters, and electronic tables, which is a bit more special, but in case they happen to need it some day... how to be able to order goods, how to calculate. This is the basic course that I teach and that I've taught since last year (p. 2)

The Centre also provides mandatory trainings and courses in social skills that go with professional skill training:

1. Motivation training for “Continuing education for adults” – 36 hours
2. Behaviour training “Successful seeking, finding, and settling into work” - 36 hours

In our organization we also conduct training sessions that help the prisoners to adapt... for instance, we organize communicative training sessions, conflict training, training for seeking, finding, and actively settling into a job... these training seminars help the trainees greatly and really produce results for their personal development. (p. 2)

These seminars include teaching skills in conflict resolution, self-knowledge programmes, parenthood skills, dealing with loss of relatives or friends, life skills.

Acquiring social skills is very useful for the development of the students themselves above all; most of them have no education or have completed the 8th grade at most. And these courses could help them when they leave jail and apply for a job, to move forward and be more competitive, to be given a job. (p. 2)

STAFF CONDITIONS

The teachers at the Centre at first work on a voluntary basis and later under fixed-term civil contracts.

We have fixed-term contracts, with a time limit until the completion of the modules. We also have teachers on a voluntary basis. We start on a voluntary basis... We're under a work contract with another firm, we only come here for certain hours and – it's inevitable – not regularly. A few colleagues and I, we take turns teaching groups, I've been teaching one for, maybe, three months, after that – a half year later – I will teach another group (p. 3)

The respondent has no basis for comparison with remuneration in the formal education system and no knowledge about the funding of the organization.

Additional current training of the teachers is not provided.

I have been working here for 1,5 years now and so far we have had no current training courses. I presume that if there were, they would tell us about them and we would take part in them... (p. 5)

TARGET GROUPS

Recidivist inmates in Vratsa Prison – men. The target group is defined beforehand due to the specific nature of the prison.

I work in the men's prison – the group is defined beforehand. (p. 3)

It is especially important that the prisoners themselves be the active side in the training process. They must watch out on the notice board about the conditions and information about training, and must meet the deadlines for applying.

Candidates for the courses are subjected to preliminary tests determining their literacy and IQ.

The inmates are divided into groups on the basis of this test that we have them take... we are striving for some higher level of education and – let me put it this way – of intelligence. We select them from among people not attending school and working, and this is the difference, that we select those who are at a slightly higher intellectual level. They must have completed at least 8th grade – they must be able to write. (p. 4)

The study sessions of the Centre are attended mostly by working prisoners, because the school has a regular shift for training, while the Centre offers afternoon, evening, and weekend sessions.

I could give you this as an example: for those who work, I teach an evening course – after working hours. This wouldn't be possible in a [regular] school. These are people motivated to work during the day, and in the evening they get educated. It becomes something like an evening school, only for computers. My last group was just of that sort – working people, who went to work during the day, and in the evening they came to learn. Their work in my classes is calculated by the hour – the colleagues from the administration calculate according to the Law for Execution of Penalties. We send them

information about how many hours they were in our classes and they calculate it. (p. 4)

The size of the groups was initially no more than 12 persons, and it often shrank by more than 50% before the end of the course.

We start out with about 12 people and it sometimes happens that we finish with 5 people. (p. 4)

CONNECTIONS TO THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are no established paths for advancing from a lower to a more advanced course and entering formal education.

Here, with us, no – it's rather the opposite thing that happens – they come to us from formal education. (p. 4)

In this case the official education institutions recognize the professional training provided by the Centre.

I believe that, at least ours, the ones in Vratsa Prison, they recognize some of the computer courses we teach..., but I'm not a hundred percent sure. (p. 4)

According to the respondent, the informal education sector makes a considerable contribution to the development of the formal educational sector.

Well, I think that we're doing enough with these courses. I mean that most of the people who don't go to school come to our classes, and the fact that we hold teaching sessions in the evening is very useful, in the sense that we're helping the formal educational sector. In schools there is no opportunity to organize evening teaching. (p. 4)

The organization has no institutional means for students' access to the formal educational system. No opportunities are being created to organize events for presenting the formal educational system or for students visiting other formal educational institutions outside the prison school.

We don't organize such visits, and about the rest I don't know the answer. (p. 4)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The respondent has no opinion or competency regarding recognition of prior schooling.

OUTREACH TO MARGINALISED GROUPS

Outreach to marginalized groups in this case is facilitated, because the groups are concentrated within the boundaries of the prison and outreach is effectuated mostly by officials in charge.

Well, for us it's a bit easier, because we're in a closed society. When there's going to be a course, the inspectors for social activity are informed, they are the ones who work with the incarcerated. They spread the information about the courses,... respectively, there are notice boards on the floors of the prison. Announcements are put on them about what courses are forthcoming and the inmates submit applications if they want to take part in these courses. (p. 5)

The classes are free of charge for the end-beneficiaries, because the programmes are implemented in the framework of international projects.

Classes are held in the computer room on the territory of Vratsa Prison.

We conduct the teaching sessions outside the school building... the room is in the furniture workshop, in this part of the prison. (p. 5)

TUTOR TEACHING METHODS

Teachers use different classical and modern teaching methods, especially exercises and the learning-by-doing method. Also, in teaching social skills, they use methods like psychodrama, psychoanalysis, role games.

...we, those of us who want to become teachers, go through the Xpert system. The conditions are that we must be at a higher level than the other course

takers. For example, we have to get 98 points out of 100 in order to become teachers, while the others need 50 points out of 100 to pass the course. Most of them are doing it to get a certificate. (p. 5)

The principles of training adults are used, and a special emphasis is put on stimulating the trainees to be active, which is incorporated as a leading element in the programme, and keeping up dialogue and sharing opinions during classes:

...as for us, I feel committed. I look for methods of active learning to get the students interested, because these are adults, not children whom you could get to stand and read. I strive to teach in a way that is interesting for them so they will attend my classes regularly. There is always dialogue, that's a rule, and sharing of opinions during teaching sessions. I always comment on the teaching goals with them – what to study, what to emphasize, what they think they can learn faster. I make a special effort to have them learn the kind of computer literacy that will be useful for them in life – something that they will have to do some day, so they'll know how to do it – how to prepare various documents, letters... They don't have the right to use Internet, but I explain to them what I can theoretically. (p. 5)

Feedback from the students about the quality of the courses is provided regularly and at several levels.

Especially through dialogue with course takers at the end of each module that we complete; sometimes we fill out questionnaires. In most cases we discuss it after each module... we meet and comment – about the uses, the shortcomings, what we should change after each module. Sometimes we distribute questionnaires, but for me the best way is through dialogue and direct contact with participants in the courses. And I sum up this information and deliver it to Miss Yoncheva. [the executive director of the Association – author's note] (p.6)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Regarding the basic directions for future development, the respondent points out as most important the task of raising the general level of literacy of the incarcerated.

The role that the informal educational sector – in contrast with the formal – can play, i.e. that which might attract students to this organization, is, in the respondent's opinion, most of all the issuing of international certificates (valid for all Europe) of professional education, and flexible timing of teaching sessions.

The first thing is that we issue international certificates only for the Xpert programme, - I teach Xpert. This is the first thing that comes to my mind. The other thing I believe is important is that classes are held at a different time – I mean that students go to school from morning till noon, while here, with us, it's more flexible – it can be in the evening and in the afternoon. We also have classes on Saturdays and Sundays. (p. 7)

Regarding the development of the strategy for the informal educational sector at national and regional level and the impact of economic recession upon informal education in Bulgaria, the respondent feels she does not have the knowledge and competence to answer these questions.

III. MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. XPERT, ACCREDITED CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL COMPUTER SKILLS TRAINING FOR PRISONERS, ISSUING CERTIFICATES VALID FOR EUROPE

Objectives of the practice: Providing professional computer skills training in using Xpert European Computer Passport, a standardized system for training and certifying computer skills of prison inmates.

Target groups: Recidivist prisoners serving time in prison, who have completed the 8th grade.

Funding sources: The project is implemented in the framework of the Small Embassy Projects programme of the Royal Netherlands Embassy (MATRA KAP).

History of the model: This is an agreement for provision of training courses using a standardized programme within 56 Bulgarian prisons situated on the territories of the cities of Sofia, Vratsa, Boychinovtsi, Lovech, Sliven, Stara Zagora; it was concluded between Prison Fellowship Bulgaria and the Education for Adults Association for a term of 3 years in the period 2007-2010. Training is conducted by licensed teachers. Prison Fellowship Bulgaria carries out appropriate marketing and publicizing activities, and takes measures to ensure the quality of teaching in order to guarantee its good reputation.

Number of participants: In 2008, in Vratsa Prison, 29 inmates were trained in the framework of this programme.

Location: The training is conducted in the Rehabilitation Through Education Centre in Vratsa Prison.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: A feature assessed as strong in the programme is the fact that, in addition to professional training, it offers training sessions for acquiring social skills.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: Prison Fellowship Bulgaria is accredited to conduct this programme in the other Bulgarian prisons as well. The generally shared opinion is that inmates in all prisons should be given the opportunity to take part in these programmes, and that the programme would be helpful for their social adaptation after they serve their sentences.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: At the end of every semester, the representatives of Prison Fellowship Bulgaria submit to the Education for Adults Association a written report regarding the completed and planned activities related to the Xpert Programme; they supply information about the market situation and about the activity of eventual competing organizations on the territory on which the agreement is in force. The teachers, for their part, regularly conduct talks and surveys with the course takers in order to learn about their opinion on the quality and usefulness of the training offered.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: At this stage the recession is not going to have an impact on the programme implementation, because it is financially provided for up to the year 2010. After that time, the continuation of the programme will require concluding new agreements and ensuring new financial sources.

Literature:

1. Brochures:
 - a) Fellowship for Religious and Public Support of Prisoners (Prison Fellowship Bulgaria)
 - b) Visitors Centre, Vratsa Prison
2. Agreement for Accreditation of the Xpert Testing Centre
3. Law on Execution of Penalties, State Gazette, issue 30 of 15.04.1969, amendments 1977-2005, <http://www.mjeli.government.bg/Naredbi/ZIN.doc>

Chapter 3:

Seven Models of Good Practice (Recommended as Transferable to the Contexts of Other Countries)

GOOD PRACTICE 1:

RESOURCE TEACHER

(Directorate “Policy in Vocational and Continuous Education”,
Ministry of Education and Science, Interview with VD, Director)

Objectives of the practice: Creation of normal conditions for study and work of children with special educational needs; support of a system of integrated teaching of children with special educational needs at normal, mass schools.

The resource teacher creates organisational connections, interrelationships and interaction with:

- children and students with special educational needs at kindergarten, class and school as well as all children and students in groups at kindergarten and the class;
- parents;
- teachers, educators, and resource teachers from the same kindergarten and the same school, as well as other kindergartens and other schools;
- managerial and administrative staff of kindergartens and schools;

- experts at regional inspectorates of education and at the Ministry of Education and Science;
- experts in the area of education in the municipality and other representatives of institutions of local authorities;
- higher schools, institutes and offices for teacher qualification;
- representatives of public organisations and organisations of juridical persons with non-profit goals, etc.

The work of resource teachers is connected with:

...the idea of supporting the system of integrated education. Resource teachers make liaison between children with special educational needs and teachers; they accompany children with impairment and make their stay at mass schools consecutive. (p. 9)

Target groups: Children with impairment.

At the moment in the country there are 7500 students with special educational needs and 1033 resource teachers. (p. 9)

In addition to the teams for complex pedagogical evaluation created at all regional inspectorates of education, there are teams of experts at kindergartens and schools where children with special educational needs are integrated. Such teams are formed at special kindergartens and schools where children with impairment are educated.

Funding sources: The training of resource teachers is financed by the Ministry of education.

It has developed work profile of the resource teacher. Regional inspectorates of education offer methodological support. Resource centres exist in regional towns.

In 2005 the “Teachers of children with impairment” programme includes 174 unemployed teachers and other 176 individuals. The funds spent are 560 000 BGN. For the first quarter of 2006, the programme employed for one month 221 teachers; 200 012 BGN have been spent. Teachers work by special rules for children with impairment.

History of the model: Legislative changes of 2003 and the implementation of National plan for integrating children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases in the education system imposed the training and introduction at schools of the “resource teacher” profession. The idea of integration of children with impairment in mass schools has become a part of educational policies and practices in Bulgaria. Before, these children were placed at assistance schools for children with impairment. The new approach is that they should be adapted and integrated more successfully if they are in an environment of normal physical and mental development. The “resource teacher” profession exists in all 28 former regional towns where resource centres are established.

Number of participants:

At the moment in the country there are 7500 students with special educational needs and 1033 resource teachers. (p. 9)

Location:

In all former 28 regional towns there are resource centres. (p. 9)

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: Resource teachers make liaison between children with special educational needs and teachers; they accompany children with impairment and make their stay at the mass school.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: Creating opportunities for children with special educational needs to be integrated in mass schools.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The results of children who study with resource teachers and those who stay at special assistance schools.

Perception regarding the impact of the recession on this model: Recession will have a negative impact because funds are needed for the teaching of children with special educational needs.

Training of resource teachers

Below we present a training programme for acquiring qualification “Resource teacher”.

ONE-YEAR LONG SPECIALIZATION STUDY FOR FURTHER PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION “RESOURCE TEACHER” AT THE CENTRE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AT THRACIAN UNIVERSITY IN STARA ZAGORA

(Directorate “Policy in Vocational and Continuous Education”,
Ministry of Education and Science, Interview with SN, Expert)

Objectives of the practice: Including in the system of higher education of resource teachers whose work is directed at working with children with physical and mental impairment at mass general education schools instead of special schools.

The one-year long specialization for obtaining the professional qualification “Resource Teacher” is 3 semesters long. The curriculum includes disciplines such as special psychology and psychodiagnostics, special pedagogy, integration and social adaptation of children with special needs, integral education, teamwork, sign language and ductile speech, Braille script, ethnic pedagogy.

The courses are organized with a minimum number of 12 candidates. Individual specialization studies are organized after negotiating and approving an individual study plan.

Target groups: Individuals with pedagogical education.

Funding sources: Studies are paid by the individuals enrolled in the course. Fee per student – 300 EURO.

History of the model: The specialization course has been offered since 2002 when the Centre was established.

Number of participants: 30-40 individuals are taught annually.

Location: Centre for Continuing Education at Thracian University, Stara Zagora.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The training of a sufficient number of teachers who can work with children with impairment is a way of realizing the idea of integration of impaired children in mass schools.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The extending of the preparation of resource teachers will allow more children with impairment and special learning needs to be integrated in mass schools.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The basic criteria for assessing the results of the specialization study are the number of graduates who began working at schools and also the results achieved by the children working with resource teachers in comparison with those who remain in special schools.

Perception regarding the impact of the recession on this model: Recession will influence negatively because it influences peoples' income. That will impede some of those willing to enroll for further teacher training because it is paid.

GOOD PRACTICE 2:

ASSISTANT TEACHERS

(Directorate “Policy in Vocational and Continuous Education”,
Ministry of Education and Science, Interview with SN, Expert)

Objectives of the practice: Acquiring of qualification by Roma young men and women which contributes for:

- improving attendance of school by Roma children,
- active participation of parents in the process of education and integration,
- desegregation of education and participation in the education process of Roma children at Bulgarian schools.

According to the work profile of the assistant-teacher approved by MES in 2003, some of the new responsibilities include:

- support of teachers in the teaching to children and students for the achievement of the required level of mastery of Bulgarian language;
- support of communication between teachers and students;
- cooperation in the interaction with parents;
- participation in the educational process and extramural activities under the guidance of a teacher;
- assistance of teachers in the choice of appropriate methods, approaches and materials for the teaching process.

Work profiles of assistant-teachers of non-governmental have a different focus. They are usually called mediators or school coordinators/advisers; the focus is on the social rather than pedagogical functions.

The training of assistant-teachers includes theoretical preparation, practice at schools and joint training with teachers. It is a priority of NGOs with the participation of RIO at MES.

MES supports the preparation of assistant teachers, a position which is connected with the Strategy of MES for the educational integration of ethnic minorities. (p. 5)

Target groups: Roma young men and women with completed secondary education. The selection is done by regional inspectorates of education, municipal experts, principals of schools and non-governmental organizations.

Assistant teachers depend on whether there are Roma children (and their number) at the respective Bulgarian school or class because according to Bulgarian legislation it is a question of parents' decision whether a child will be registered at a school. Parents decide if the child will attend a Roma school or will be included in programmes for attending a Bulgarian school. In addition, assistant-teachers are not present at every school and every region. In other words, the presence of the assistant-teacher is not a compulsory element of the school environment of Bulgarian schools. At the same time, MES has a Strategy for educational integration of children of ethnic minorities (2005-2015) which highlights the need and sustains the introduction of assistant teachers in the regions where there are Roma children.

Funding sources: The salaries of assistant teachers are provided by:

- non-governmental organizations which work on projects on desegregation;
- Centre for educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities at the MES which finances projects for schools and municipalities. The Centre was established with the purpose of executing the National Strategy for educational integration of children of ethnic minorities;
- municipalities.

History of the model: The beginning was laid by a project of non-governmental organizations for "desegregation of Roma schools". The goal was to have students from Roma quarters to be transported to the central parts of towns where they would study together with children of ethnic Bulgarians, Turks, etc. The project began in the

town of Vidin in the 2000-2001 school year and later was continued in 6 other towns – Montana, Pleven, Sliven, Haskovo, Stara Zagora and Sofia. The idea of the initiative and its financing came from the Programme of Roma participation of Open Society Institute in Budapest. In parallel, a desegregation project is realized in Samokov and Kjustendil financed by SEGA Foundation and the British Council. The objective of the projects for desegregation is the creation of ground for intercultural education in which students of different ethnic groups study at common schools and teachers helped by assistant-teachers (representing the same ethnic group of the children) contributing to the integration of minority children and respect for their ethno-cultural differences. The essence of the project (directed at overcoming of educational deficits of Roma people) embraces the need for stirring up the Roma community as an active subject – parents, assistant-teachers and children.

The next step in the establishment of the “assistant-teacher” is the Strategy for educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities (2005-2015) whose priorities are the full-fledged integration of Roma children and students by desegregation of kindergartens and schools in the separated Roma quarters and the creation of conditions for equal access to quality education outside them. For the purpose of implementing these measures, there is a five-year National Action Plan (June 2005) which foresees concrete actions, division of responsibilities, evaluation of the necessary finances and expected outcomes. As a result of the measures undertaken for the execution of the first priority of the Strategy in the 2005-2006 school year, the following results have been achieved:

- 106 assistant-teachers support educational integration of Roma children at general education schools;
- 150 assistant-teachers have passed training courses at higher schools.

The Strategy has no budget financing. In order to support its implementation, a Centre of educational integration of children and students of ethnic minorities at MES which finances projects for schools and municipalities.

Number of participants: About 30-40 per year.

Location: At present, assistant-teachers work in most regions in which there are Roma schools.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: The preparation and work of assistant-teachers contributes to:

- the building of broad cooperation between institutions and organizations at local level engaged with the issue;
- the formation of teams of teachers and assistant-teachers;
- the formation of social skills for work with Roma families;
- the application of modern interactive methods.

The appointment of assistant-teachers creates new opportunities for education and employment. It facilitates the formation of interest in education in young Roma people. Education is a prerequisite for studies in the programme “Primary school pedagogy with Roma language” (VTU).

In the process of integration of Roma children in concrete schools, there are various problems which affect the interrelationships Roma – Bulgarians, teachers – Roma children, Roma parents – teachers. In many cases, Roma assistant-teachers cannot solve them on their own.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: In Bulgaria, there are 330 schools in which 50% and more of the children are Roma. Because of that, it is necessary:

- investments on the part of the state;
- extensive work with Roma parents;
- continuing the process of desegregation of education at Roma schools and integrating Roma children in Bulgarian schools.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Comparison of learning achievement of Roma children at integrated and segregated schools

This is done in two detailed publications of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC). The first one is of 2002 representing the “first steps” in this direction (BHC, *The First Steps*, Sofia, 2002). On the basis of interviews with leaders of project, representatives of regional inspectorates of education, parents of children included in the project, principals of schools, Bulgarian parents of children of host schools, Roma activists, Romas working in the administration, the activities, problems, obstacles, advantages¹ and practices are analysed.

The other publication is of 2005 (BHC, *Non-governmental projects for desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria*, Sofia, 2005). In it, BHC presents the project and its effectiveness. It is shown by defining learning success of students included in the desegregation projects in the six towns and the ones who remained at segregated schools.

¹ A special place is reserved for the criteria for success [Kanev, K. (Ed.) *The First Steps*. 2002, 119]: number of participants and number of children remaining in the educational ghetto, success of children, outreach of schools in the town or municipality, effective support of Roma children at the host schools, attracting Roma parents to the process of desegregation, provision of extramural activities, provision of support of local authorities, financial effectiveness.

GOOD PRACTICE 3:

BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMME

“PRIMARY SCHOOL PEDAGOGY AND ROMA LANGUAGE” – VELIKO TURNOVO UNIVERSITY (VTU)

(Directorate “Policy in Vocational and Continuous Education”,
Ministry of Education and Science, Interview with VD, Director)

Objectives of the practice: Integration of Roma people into the system of higher education:

In connection with the integration of unprivileged groups (ethnic minorities and underrepresented groups) in the higher education system and their preparation for primary and secondary school teachers, two universities may be pointed out: VTU and Thracian University. In 2003/2004 academic year VTU opened a programme in Primary school pedagogy and Roma language in which Roma students are admitted. (p. 5-6)

The programme is new in the country. Graduates get a Bachelor’s degree and pedagogical qualification. Graduates may practice teaching, educating, methodological and organisational-managerial activities at primary Roma schools; they may work as consultants at centres dealing with Roma children.

Target groups: Roma ethnic groups in the country holders of secondary school certificates.

Funding sources: Roma students are taught on scholarships from various NGOs. VTU does not grant scholarships and does not cancel fees for Roma students.

History/background of the model: The programme has existed since 2003/2004 academic year at VTU in professional area “Pedagogy”. It is accredited with a “very good” grade until 2013. It is established by a Roma professor who has studied at different universities. He has published in the area of Roma people and their socialisation. At present, he is head of the programme.

Number of participants: 30 young women and men are admitted annually. In 2008/2009 30 Roma students were also admitted.

Location: Professional area “Pedagogy” at VTU:

Formation of total score:

- a) doubled grade from competitive entrance examination
- б) grade in Bulgarian language from school certificate
- c) grade in history from school certificate the total score is formed as a sum of all abovementioned components.

Competitive entrance examinations:

- Bulgarian language and literature or History of Bulgaria
- Test of speaking-communicative skills (in Roma language)

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The basic problems of the realisation of the programme are connected with the keeping of its stability and the attraction of Roma students because the educational level of Roma people is too low – only about 7% of Roma students have finished secondary education.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The need for extension of the programme is determined by the fact of 330 schools in the country in which over 50% of the students are Roma.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Number of registered students, number of graduates who began work (at respective schools).

GOOD PRACTICE 4:

CENTRE FOR CONTINUOUS EDUCATION TO SOUTH-WEST UNIVERSITY “NEOFIT RILSKI” IN THE TOWN OF DUPNITSA

(University_1, Interview with PT, Vice Rector)

Objectives of the practice: The Centre is an education, research and consultation unit integrated in the structure of South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, founded with a decision of the Academic Council of 24 January 2007. It is based in the building of the former Teachers’ Institute in the town of Dupnitsa.

The mission of the Centre for Continuous Education is to implement teaching, scientific research and applied studies activities in the area of adult education.

The main strategic objective of the Centre is to establish itself as a significant, modern and influential research and social centre in the region, in Bulgaria and on the Balkan peninsula for educating people of pre-career and career age as part of their professional qualification and career development in the context of life long learning.

In the short term the Centre aims to provide courses for teachers as part of their professional excellence. In the long term the Centre plans to offer continuous education to people of all ages in support of their career development. In this area the Centre envisions:

- √ organizing and conducting of continuous education (short term and one year courses) for increasing the professional competence of those working in the education sphere;
- √ organizing and conducting qualification courses for specialists from different professional spheres;
- √ development of education and research projects within different national and international programmes;
- √ expanding social partnerships – contacts with non-governmental organizations, pedagogical centres, regional inspectorates for education; work with children of

different age groups and different ethno-cultural communities and their parents, relations with employers and staff recruiting firms etc.

The Centre's main focus of activity includes education, research, information, publishing and consulting activity in the area of continuous education.

The following types of **training activities** are provided:

1. Specializations for additional professional and pedagogical qualification;
2. Specialized courses for additional professional training;
3. Thematic courses and individual consultations.

The forms of training are fulltime or correspondence courses, distance learning, intensive courses. They are conducted at the Centre for Continuous Education, at schools, at the offices of firms or organizations. Following the successful completion of training, participants obtain certificates in compliance with the Regulation of the state requirements to the content of the main certificates issued by higher education schools (State Gazette, issue 75, Council of Ministers' order № 215/2004).

The Centre for Continuous Education offers the following training services:

1. One year qualification courses

The course has two semesters (1 year). The form of training is by correspondence. On completion participants obtain a certificate for professional qualification in compliance with the Regulation for the unified state requirements (Council of Ministers' order № 151 of 09.04. 1997) and (Council of Ministers' order № 162 of 17.04. 1997).

2. Qualification courses for obtaining professional and pedagogical qualification in "Teaching and integration of Roma children"

Trainees' qualification (nursery, primary or middle school teachers) is officially stated by a certificate for professional and pedagogical qualification.

3. Courses for the qualification of "Assistant instructor in the raising and coaching of children"

The curriculum is developed in compliance with Regulation №10 of 4 December 2006 for acquiring qualification for the occupation of "Assistant instructor" (enforced on 13.02.2007).

It is founded on the technological model developed by a SWU team within a project funded by the Phare Programme in 2003.

4. Courses for obtaining the qualification of “teacher”

The curriculum is developed in compliance with the Regulation for the unified state requirements for obtaining the professional qualification “teacher” (State Gazette, issue 34 of 29 April 1997).

The centre offers the following short term qualification courses:

- √ Civic education through classroom and extracurricular activities
- √ Project development and implementation
- √ Career orientation and consulting of secondary school students
- √ The teacher as class manager
- √ Prevention of students’ drop out from school
- √ Prevention of aggression and risk behavior of children
- √ Conflict resolution
- √ Sex education of students
- √ Communicative skills and team work
- √ Diagnostics and stimulating of children’s non-traditional thinking.

Target groups: Teachers (nursery, primary and middle school), school directors, pedagogical advisers, young people without higher education, including Roma youths; people of all ages.

Funding sources:

The setting up and activity of the Centre was initially funded by a project of the Roma Education Fund, Budapest. The project entitled “National centre for qualification of teachers for the education and integration of Roma children” is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Municipality of Dupnitsa, representatives of the academic faculty of the former Pedagogical College in Dupnitsa and Future for Roma Association. (p. 5)

History of the model: The Centre for Continuous Education is integrated in the structure of South-West University “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad (Decision of the Academic Council of 24 January 2007); it is located in the building of the former Teachers’ Institute in the town of Dupnitsa. It develops as a “*National Centre for qualification of teachers for the education and integration of Roma children*” and is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Municipality of Dupnitsa, representatives of the academic faculty of the former Pedagogical College in the town of Dupnitsa and Future for Roma Association. A new term of funding for this activity by the Roma Education Fund, Budapest, is expected to commence from 20 May 2009.

Number of participants: The Centre trains 40-50 people annually, when project funding is available.

Location: The Centre is located in the town of Dupnitsa.

Perceived strenghts and weaknesses: The main problem for the Centre’s development is how to find additional funding for its activity as it is not funded by SWU and needs external financial support.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: Training of teachers for working in a Roma environment, training of young Roma people for assistant teachers, improving teachers' qualification.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Conducting meetings of course members at the Centre to share work experiences, on site visits of tutors from the Centre to schools and maintaining contacts with the course graduates; monitoring by the funding institution Roma Education Fund, Budapest.

GOOD PRACTICE 5:

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR PRISONERS – COMBINING SOCIAL SKILLS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

(Prison Fellowship Bulgaria – Non-formal Education Organization,

Interview with IE, Executive Director)

General information: Vratsa Prison is for repeat offenders. In 2004, on the grounds of art. 68 of the Law for Execution of Penalties, the secondary general education school, which was closed down in 1989 at the start of the transition, was reopened. The school comprises the following vocational qualification classes: 1st to 4th grade – general training for work in metal-producing industry; 5th to 12th grade – wood processing and furniture production.

The capacity of the school is for 110-130 students per year; of these about 25-30% fail to complete their education.

The informal training provided by the “Adaptation Environment” programme, supplements and builds upon the education provided by the formal education school, without duplicating it.

Objectives of the practice: The goal of the programme is to provide informal training for prisoners in order to assist adaptation to society of prisoners after they have served their penalty. The prisoners are assisted by specialists for one year in order to acquire a specialty that will ensure their adequate presence on the labour market. What is offered is combined training oriented both to the formation of social skills and to vocational qualification. Through its “Adaptation Environment” programme, Prison Fellowship Bulgaria provides prisoners with religious education, conflict resolution training, life skills courses, and vocational training.

The PF Bulgaria programme for vocational training of prisoners was launched in 2008. It has a duration of 2 years and is implemented in partnership with the Federation of Associations for Dissemination of Knowledge.

Target groups: Currently, the programme operates in Vratsa Prison, serving repeat offenders for six months prior to their release.

Funding sources: The programme is funded by various sources – basically through a project under Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, but also through donations and volunteer work of teachers. The methodology under which the programme is carried out was provided by Prison Fellowship International.

History of the model: Elena Ioncheva, Prison Fellowship Bulgaria Executive Director, developed the “Adaptation Environment” programme with assistance from Angus Creighton in 2003. It was originally launched in Sofia and served first-time offenders with longer sentences.

The move to Vratsa required some adaptation in the programme with the change in prisoner profile and new environment. It is designed to operate in two phases. The preparatory phase provides the participants with vocational training and basic education classes as well as spiritual support. It takes place in the main prison area. Unfortunately, second phase implementation, which is designed to take place in a separate part of the prison, has been delayed. The prison administration had offered to renovate a specified area of the prison for the needs of the “Adaptation Environment.” However, this construction work is yet to take place.

While waiting for the space to launch phase two, Prison Fellowship Bulgaria is evaluating the first phase of the programme.

The Ministry of Justice will also organize a programme for the informal leaders of the prison community. The goal is to help them learn new skills for returning to the community and building better relationships with both prison staff and their families. Prison Fellowship Bulgaria has received support from prison staff for this new group.

Number of participants: From 2003 until 2005, the programme served 74 prisoners and built a good reputation with the Bulgarian Prison Service. The move to Vratsa prison in 2006 resulted from a Prison Service recommendation.

In 2008 29 prisoners participated in this first programme phase.

Location: Initially the pilot project has been implemented in Sofia prison. Currently the particular project has been developed in Vratza prison for repeat offenders.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: One of the exceptionally strong sides of the programme is that it is specifically adapted to a particular type of prisoner – in this case to repeat offenders with a low level of education and literacy. The organization of training, whereby both professional and social skills are provided, increases the possibilities for adaptation of prisoners after their release from the penitentiary system.

The Ministry of Justice faces many challenges in improving and fully implementing the programme. These include:

- delay in renovating the space to implement phase two of the programme, and
- lack of volunteer support for the programme.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: This programme could be implemented in each of the prisons where a formal school is available (currently 6 in Bulgaria).

Methods of feedback, evaluation: Responding to feedback from prisoners and prison officials, the Ministry of Justice recently held an information meeting with 50 prisoners. The representatives of the Ministry also met with informal leaders from the prison community. These meetings were organized by 3 programme participants and the programme manager. The goal was to improve communication between those working in the “Adaptation Environment” and the prisoners.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The recession is not expected to have a serious impact on this programme, as it is funded on a project principle and through volunteer work.

Literature:

Tchalakov, I. (2008) New Features in the Penitentiary System in Accordance with the Best European Practices. In: Prison Activities, Issue 2-3/2007: 270-275 (in Bulgarian).

<http://www.pfi.org/cjr/apac/where1/reports/bulgaria/pf-bulgaria-and-communities-of-restoration/?searchterm=bulgaria>

GOOD PRACTICE 6:

TRAINING UNEMPLOYED AND OBTAINING CERTIFICATE RECOGNIZED IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

(Federation of Fellowships for Dissemination of Knowledge –
Non-formal Education Organization, Interview with BM, Executive Director)

General (personal) impression: In this case the interviewee was not willing to reveal details related to the so called good practices. Being aware of the competitive situation in the realm of these services he knew that a ‘good practice’ is a resource which gives advantage to the Federation. As a typical market actor he ‘preserved’ the details of the ‘good practice’ – in other words he did not provide information, which might help other actors to emerge.

Objectives of the practice: Providing educational services for enhancing the qualification and re-qualification of unemployed and issuing certificate recognized in the European Union. The Federation teaches unemployed, without providing job. Depending on the degree of qualification the duration of the course (without the comprehensive exam) is as follows:

- 300 academic hours for I qualification level
- 660 academic hours for II qualification level
- 960 academic hours for III qualification level

Out of the 55 provided courses 10 are for III qualification level.

The objective of theses of these courses are:

- obtaining initial vocational qualification
- obtaining additional vocational qualification
- re-qualification

The organization of the courses for professional qualification is done by the ‘Labour offices’ under the following conditions:

A) with written consent by an employer to hire the students for a period of at least 6 months after they finish the course. The teaching can be carried out by an educational institution chosen either by the employer or by the 'Labour office'. This is according to Paragraph 59, Article 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law of Employment Stimulation (Paragraph 63, Article 1 of the Law of Employment Stimulation.)

B) Without job provided by the regional Labour offices after completion of the course. This is according to Paragraph 59, Article 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law of Employment Stimulation (Paragraph 63, Article 1 of the Law of Employment Stimulation.).

Target groups: The unemployed participants in the courses are recruited according to special methodology. This is done by a Committee which is appointed for the occasion by the local branch of the Labour office. The procedure is of three stages:

At the first stage are checked the following requirements:

1. Declaration by the unemployed of his/her intention to enroll in a course for obtaining qualification or when obtaining qualification is part of the action plan for the unemployed according to Paragraph 19 Article 1 of the Low of Employment stimulation.

2. Correspondence between the level of education of the unemployed and the required educational level for acquiring the vocational qualification (according to Paragraph 8 Article 5 of the Law of vocational education and training).

The level of education is proved with a diploma or certificate.

The unemployed can study only courses which correspond to the vocational qualification he/she already has and only if this course is for higher level of qualification from their own.

3. Health certificate issued by the authorized units showing that this profession will not harm the health of the student (according to Paragraph 14, Article 3 of the Law of vocational education and training).

The first stage finishes with informing each of the unemployed who meets the requirements that he/she is eligible to enroll in a given course.

At the second stage of recruitment are included only the unemployed who have met the requirements of the first stage.

In case the number of people meeting the requirements is smaller than the number of students scheduled for the course some applicants who meet only the requirements of Paragraph 8 Article 4 of the Law of vocational education and training. They however are informed that instead of diploma of professional qualification upon finishing the course they will obtain certificate for vocational education.

At the second stage are assessed the needs of education of the unemployed person. For each indicator the unemployed is given a score. The evaluation criteria are defined according to the risk groups targeted as follows:

1. How long has the person been unemployed. Three groups are defined: a) up to 6 months with permanent registration; b) 7 to 12 months with permanent registration; c) more than 12 months with permanent registration.

2. Professional experience. In three groups: a) no professional experience; b) with less than 2 years professional experience; c) with more than 2 years professional experience.

3. Obtained qualification in the profession for which the course is designed. There are three groups; a) no qualification; b) partial qualification in the profession; c) with obtained certificate for a certain level of professional qualification.

4. Belonging to one of the following target groups on the labour market. Four groups are defined: a) young person up to 29 years of age; b) woman over 50 years of age or men over 55 years of age; c) disadvantaged person.

People who belong to more than one group are privileged.

5. Participation of the unemployed person in courses financed by the Employment agency in the last 3 years: a) the unemployed has not participated in a course; b) the unemployed has participated in one course; c) the unemployed has participated in more than one course.

6. Receiving dole. In three groups: a) the person is not receiving dole; b) the person receives monthly dole or dole for particular needs such as electricity, heating, etc.

The second stage of recruitment ends with rating of the unemployed on the basis of the score each one of them has obtained.

The rated applicants enter the third stage of selection. The selection is carried out by the representatives of the Commission and of the educational institution, which was nominated according to the Regulation for implementation of the Law for employment stimulation. The selection is carried out by means of a pattern provided by the educational institution (interview, test or essay). As a result are selected the unemployed who are enrolled in the vocational course. The third stage ends with rating of the applicants.

Enrolled are the applicants with highest rate. If a student drops out within the first 10% of the duration of the course the next one on the list is accepted.

The application of the described methodology or recruitment is monitored by directorate 'Regional employment agency'.

Funding sources: The courses are state financed. The support is provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as part of the state budget. The Employment agency is the executive agency which distributes the money. The Labour offices have information about the educational institutions and the professions for the unemployed. The selection of the educational institution is by means of a tender. One of the main criteria for winning the tender is the cost of the course. Upon completion of the course the unemployed obtain document for vocational training. As part of the key competence courses are offered also language courses. If employers apply for vocational education the courses are financed by the programme "Human resource development".

On the basis of Paragraph 69 (1) (Changes - State Gazette N 95; 2005 enforced 01.10 2006, changes State Gazette N. 60 of 2008, enforced 04.07. 2008) and according to Paragraph 66 Articles 3 and 4 of the Law of employment stimulation the branches of Employment agency pay stipends, transport and accommodation of the students who

present a certificate issued by the educational institution that they have participated in the course.

In some cases in addition to the application for vocational course the employer is obliged to hire the participants at least 6 months after the course finishes.

History of the model: This procedure is part of the strategy for financing an active labour market policy, which is carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed within the framework of the National action plan for employment stimulation.

Number of participants: The Federation has no statistical data for the number of participants in the courses.

Location: Education and training takes place in all regions in which there are branches of the Federation and connections with the Labour offices.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The Federation has established long term relations with local authorities and the private sector in different regions of the country. In this way it is able to be flexible to react to the regional fluctuations on the labour market under the conditions of high dynamics.

A problem when organizing educational courses is the fact that sometimes there are discrepancies between the needs of the labour market and the interests of the people themselves. There are professions which the market need but are not very popular among the unemployed.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: The expansion of these practices is necessary due to the changing needs of the labour market and the necessity of flexible reaction to them.

Methods of feedback evaluation: Feedback is ensured through questionnaires and interviews among the participants. No statistical or marketing information is used. The interviewee suggested that it would be useful if sociologists help them evaluate the outcomes of their activities.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The interviewee predicted that there would be fewer courses offered on the free market of this service. With regard to the courses offered by the Labour offices he expected that it would be vice versa. Due to the fact that during recession the number of unemployed goes up there might be that this activity expands.

Literature:

Law for employment stimulation (2002) Changes 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

Regulations for implementation of the Law for employment stimulation. Enforced 27.06.2003 (changes 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008).

Methodology for recruiting and selection of unemployed for enrollment in vocational qualification courses organized by the Employment agency (according to Paragraph 63, Article 1 of the Law for Employment stimulation)
http://www.az.government.bg/internal.asp?CatID=15/02/02&WA=Training/edu_2.htm

GOOD PRACTICE 7:

SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR DISABLED ADULTS

(Secondary School, Interview with ZG, Principal)

Objectives of the practice: The school in this study offers a wide variety of educational methods to underprivileged adults, and these services can be classified as good practice. Of special interest of this study is the training and certifying of students with severe health problems, that prevent them to physically access the school building, and also with psychological problems. These people have an adapted curriculum and are individually taught at home. Teachers visit them on a regular basis and provide individual instruction and consultations, even though, most of the schoolwork is done by the students on their own. They also teach by means of information technology and the internet and other forms of distance education - e-mail and phone consultations.

Target groups: Individuals with severe disabilities, who are unable to go outside of their home on their own and persons with severe psychological problems and lack of social skills.

One of the students had cerebral palsy, another is disabled severely. We teach and test these students in their homes...our colleagues take a laptop with them when they are teaching electronic lesson and the test has to be taken also electronically. We have a lot of experience and are able to reach almost all of them. (p. 3)

These are predominantly people who are ill or have special needs. For instance Vassil and Konstantin, I told you, they are special kids, who cannot learn easily... some of them come with their parents, because they cannot leave them alone at home (p. 4)

Funding sources: The school is on a state's budget and the respondent does not give data regarding additional financing from donors or non-government charity organizations.

History of the model: This practice developed in the last 10-16 years. The school does not keep any statistics on the development over the years.

Number of participants: During the current school year 10 students are taught on an individual plan and four students are taught at home.

Location: The teachers from the school teach the students at home.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses: The individual learning plans, which also include home visits by the teachers, are some of the methods that the school uses in order to give opportunities to people with severe health problems to complete their secondary education. The main problem with this kind of education is that it requires additional staff and financial resources that the school can not always ensure.

Priority needs for expansion of the model: It is necessary that this model is further developed and expanded, so that more people with severe disabilities can complete their education and thus increase their chances for further social integration.

Methods of feedback, evaluation: The main methods for assessment of this model include students' feedbacks, as well as these of their family members. Data on the subsequent development and professional realization of the students is used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the model.

Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model: The recession will have a negative effect on the implementation of the individual training programs as they require additional funds and human resources.

Chapter 4:

Promoting Access of Adults to Formal Educational Institutions – A Common Aim Facing Common Problems

The conducted survey permits outlining several basic themes and problems related to access to education in general, and access to education of disadvantaged groups in particular.

4.1. Improving access to education: a social and academic problem

Improving access to education, especially access of disadvantaged groups, is a complex problem that has both academic and social dimensions. The respondents generally share the view that achieving this goal requires the united and coordinated efforts of various institutions at all levels.

The basic obstacles to enhancing access to education for disadvantaged groups are of an *economic* and a *cultural* kind. The first problem talked about is their low standard of living and high level of poverty. The lack of financial resources is a decisive social obstacle: formal education for adults is paid, except in evening high schools and the schools attached to prisons.

Training in vocational centres for professional qualification also requires investments, to be made either by employers or by the trainees themselves. But in frequent cases the employers have no interest to invest in the education of their workers, and they prefer to hire persons already possessing the needed qualification. Poverty is an obstacle to continuing of education, and not only in the direct sense of payments to be made. The secondary costs of education should be taken into account: the fact that participation in education implies leaving (or reducing the hours of) work, something that people with a low standard of living can hardly afford.

Some serious obstacles to improving access to education are related to culture and the mentality of certain social groups. For instance, past surveys have shown that education is not among the priority values for a large portion of the Roma minority. That is why the inclusion of persons of this ethnic group even in free-of-charge educational programmes is hard to accomplish; it requires overcoming cultural and psychological barriers.

An important social factor for broadening access to education is the existence of an adequate institutional network and infrastructure. A considerable part of the people of a low educational level live in remote settlements where there are few or no educational institutions, and if any, they are insufficient in capacity (in terms of teaching staff, libraries, information technology). Hence, to improve their education, these people must travel to other settlements, which increases the cost of their education.

The presence of an adequate infrastructure in the educational institutions is particularly important for improving access to education of people with disabilities. The building of an appropriate architectural environment and facilities for people with disabilities is still at an incipient stage.

Enhancing access to education for disadvantaged groups is also a serious *problem for the institutional policies of schools*. Regrettably, this problem is not included in the strategies of

Bulgarian educational institutions. Generally, our schools do not set themselves the specific goal of admitting a certain percentage of students from disadvantaged groups, and do not devise special programmes for such students. Improving access to education for disadvantaged groups is directly dependent on the institutional capacity of various schools. In Bulgarian schools there are no established structures (units, departments, committees) dealing with this problem. School children and students at risk of dropping out, or who have already dropped out, have nothing to rely on except individual consultations or repeated sitting of exams. The schools do not organize special programmes for them to help them reenter the educational process. The basic cause for this is the lack of financial resources. In this connection, a generally shared opinion among the respondents is that the state ought to ensure (among other ways, on a competitive basis) additional resources for organizing extra classes for learners who are at risk of dropping out of the education process.

The capacity of schools for training adults includes the presence of an appropriate teaching staff. In all educational institutions a sharp need is felt for specialized training of teachers to work with adult learners. The interviewees shared the opinion that improving the professional training of teachers working with adults, including teachers in non-formal education, should be a state policy, and funded and organized at the national level.

4.2. Enhancing access to education and social justice

When concrete policies for enhancing access to education of disadvantaged groups are being devised and implemented, the problem inevitably arises how social justice is interpreted in education and which policies are just from the viewpoint not only of the groups affected but of the other social groups in a given society. The interviews conducted in this survey show that these are topical issues for present-day Bulgarian society. Our society's sensitivity to the problem is understandable in view of our experience in the not-too-distant past, i.e. the policies, current during the period of totalitarian socialism, for privileged access to education (specifically to higher education) of certain social groups. For decades, special quotas were

set for admittance to higher schools on the basis of social origin, place of residence, ethnic affiliation, length of service in production, and place of work.

The prevailing view is that the introduction of quotas for disadvantaged groups (especially for representatives of ethnic minorities) is not a suitable measure. First of all, it is judged to be unfair, inasmuch as it places different social groups on an unequal basis. Secondly, it is unfair, because such a practice creates the conditions for lowering the quality of education and demotivating the other learners. As an argument against the introduction of admittance quotas for certain groups, the interviewees point out the observed demoralizing effect of this privilege on the privileged themselves. Not rarely, people privileged in certain ways become habituated to receiving benefits “without effort” and prefer to avoid making personal efforts and living on socially provided services even when these ensure only a minimal standard of living. Representatives of higher schools are particularly categorical in their rejection of the quota principle in higher education. Social justice in higher education is understood as consisting in equality by uniform criteria for evaluating competencies and knowledge.

At the same time, the interviewees are convinced that education can and should carry out social-integration functions as well. But no unanimity was shown regarding what the most appropriate policies are for enhancing access to education for disadvantaged groups. Opinions were voiced both in support of measures related to direct financial relief (such as tuition fee reductions), and also against them, inasmuch as they are said to benefit only certain categories of students, which is perceived as unfair with regard to the rest. We see it as a very important fact that financial incentives are not perceived as a passive and unconditional but as an active measure for social support. In other words, the interviewees felt that providing financial relief should be tied to a committed and responsible attitude to schooling (regular attendance and interest in class work) and to scholastic results.

Preparatory and supplementary courses and classes are assessed as being the most adequate measures for enhancing access to education for disadvantaged groups. The basic argument in support of this is that such courses ensure good quality education, as the representatives of disadvantaged groups will thereby receive the preliminary training they need in order to take

part with others in the educational process. The skepticism expressed in some interviews regarding remedial classes lead to the conclusion that the success of such special classes depends to a very great degree on the way they are conducted. They should be organized in a way that will not endanger the self-confidence of learners; designations such as “less capable or retarded in their mental development” should be especially avoided. It was indicated that the psychological effects that defining a group as disadvantaged may have on the people in that group, and on the attitudes of people outside the group, should always be considered.

4.3. Quality and methods of training adults

Enhancing access to education is inseparable from the other main goal of educational policies - ensuring good quality education. In this sense, it is more correct to refer not simply to “enhancing access to education” but to “enhancing access to quality education”. Ensuring quality education becomes all the more urgent when it is adults that are being educated. Adults are a specific group of learners, especially adults in a socially disadvantaged position. Ensuring a good quality education for adults would require taking initiatives and making changes at national and at institutional level. An urgent national-level measure that brooks no postponement is the implementation of a system of external evaluation of the vocational training centres. According to the regulations currently in force, these centres are licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education, but further than that, there is no institution or mechanism for monitoring their quality of training. In this connection it would be useful to introduce an accreditation system for vocational high schools, similar to the one used for universities.

The conducted interviews delineate several key problems in organizing and carrying out the training of adults in various educational institutions.

The training approaches and methods are of decisive importance for enhancing access to education and for guaranteeing the quality of education. It is a commonly shared conviction

that the most effective approach is the individual one, combined with flexible methods of work. Every separate case of an adult learner belonging to a disadvantaged group represents the concrete history of a personal destiny, often unfolding in a complicated life environment and marked by vicissitudes and misfortunes. That is why including such persons in an educational institution and, more importantly, keeping them there until the successful completion of the teaching programme, require taking into account the personal characteristics and life circumstances of each learner. The more varied the teaching forms an educational institution has to offer, the greater its capacity for enlarging the circle of people entering it. For adult learners the most attractive form is distance learning and evening learning.

For disadvantaged adult learners what proves especially important is emotional support. They need encouragement in order to overcome their lack of confidence that they can cope with something they have once failed to cope with and succeed in controlling their embarrassment (even shame) that they did not study when it was the proper time to study, and also to acquire self-esteem and stand up to family prejudices and traditions. That is why the presence of psychologists and pedagogic counselors in schools for adults is imperative.

4.4. Formal education as a closed system: lack of recognition of prior learning

In Bulgaria formal education is a closed system that functions independently of non-formal education. No mechanisms have yet been developed for recognition of prior education and experience. This is one of the basic problems, and on its solution depends the systematic connecting of the formal and non-formal educational sectors and the effectiveness of education for adults.

The main obstacles to creating mechanisms for recognition of non-formal training and work experience by formal educational institutions are linked, interviewees believe, to the insufficient administrative capacity at national, regional, and institutional level. The methods

used for evaluating knowledge and skills are assessed to be too limited. For instance, interviewees pointed out that one hampering factor with regard to recognition of non-formal training is the prevailing conviction that examinations are the best and most effective way in which people can prove their qualification and knowledge, and that proving knowledge through certificates or other forms of displaying past experience would lead to a recognition of qualifications that do not really exist. In this connection, the study and assimilation of experience of countries with more developed and varied practices for recognition of prior education is imperative.

Some other obstacles to creating mechanisms for recognition of non-formal education that precedes the formal one are the low prestige, in the eyes of the public, of some non-formal educational institutions and the widespread fears of decline in the quality of education. That is why recognition of prior training must unfailingly be tied to the creation of standards and qualification frameworks for evaluating acquired knowledge and skills.

Recognition of knowledge and skills cannot be accomplished without a change in the normative basis. According to the law currently in force, every rise in a person's professional qualification requires obtainment of some educational degree. These normative requirements practically eliminate the possibility for obtaining a higher professional qualification by people with a rich professional experience but low educational level.

The lack of mechanisms for recognition of prior training is also connected with the insufficient flexibility of formal education. As a rule the institutions of formal education are more conservative, loaded with traditions, and particularly suspicious of innovations coming from sources outside their own sphere.

4.5. Enhancing the access of disadvantaged groups

and collaboration between educational institutions and the state

Improving the access to education for disadvantaged groups is an objective that can be attained only by joint and coordinated initiatives at the institutional but also at the national level. The interviewed representatives of all educational institutions teaching adults clearly distinguished the need for a systematic and consistent state policy for enhancing access to education. In the last few years several national strategies were undertaken (see chapter 1 of the report), which have a direct bearing on this issue. Their practical implementation, however, requires additional efforts and concrete measures that will support and stimulate educational institutions to conduct active policies for inclusion of disadvantaged groups in education.

The existing positive practices (such as the creation of the specialty “Primary school teaching with Roma Language” in the University of Veliko Tarnovo) are assessed to be insufficient and incidental. The state does not offer incentives for higher schools to launch initiatives for enhancing access of disadvantaged groups. The tuition fee concessions stipulated in the Law on Higher Education are used not only by the higher schools themselves, but by individuals as well. Article 68(3) stipulates that the following categories of applicants for university who have successfully passed their competition exams are admitted under alleviated requirements and through a procedure defined by the statutes of the higher school: those classed with an equal score; disabled persons with permanent disabilities and a 70 percent, or more, decreased working capacity; war invalids; parentless children; mothers with three or more children; twins, when they have applied simultaneously in the same professional field and same university, and when one of them has been admitted. According to art. 95 of the Law for Higher Education, the following categories are entirely exempted from paying tuition for higher schools: parentless children, persons with permanent impairments and with 70 or more percent decreased working ability, war invalids and persons reared until attainment of majority in homes for children deprived of parental care. But the experience of some of the surveyed higher schools shows that in cases when these schools have displayed initiative and

have admitted more representatives of disadvantaged groups, this has created difficulties in the functioning of the higher school and has created problems between that university and the Ministry of Education and Science.

A generally shared opinion is that special national programmes are needed for stimulating, financially and in other ways, educational institutions to enhance access to education for disadvantaged groups. An appropriate national policy in this respect is the targeted funding, on a competitive basis, of educational institutions for conducting a more active campaign among disadvantaged groups and organizing courses (preparatory, special help courses) for representatives of these groups.

Precisely because this is a complex problem, education for adults from disadvantaged groups requires active collaboration between various institutions:

- School and family: a considerable number of adult learners combine study with family duties and therefore need the support of their relatives
- School and employers: in order to be committed to learning, adult learners should work in a flexible working regime and working hours
- School and social services: the timely inclusion of adults from disadvantaged groups in suitable social programmes would increase the probability that they will continue their education.

Instead of a conclusion: Social justice and quality as educational values

The policies for access to education are an essential element of the education system as such. No other element of the system is so strongly connected with two basic education values at the same time: social justice and the quality of education. These are values which, on one hand “are inescapable in the expectations of attentive publics in the modern period, the interests of government officials themselves, and the attitudes of academic workers” (Clark 1983: 241), and, on the other, are mutual rivals, so that striving to achieve both simultaneously creates tension. Hence, for every education system the question, “How to conjoin quality and social justice in education?” is a real and big challenge. This challenge becomes all the greater at the higher educational levels, inasmuch as they are not compulsory.

The principle that attempts to combine the two fundamental values in education – social justice and quality of education – is equal educational opportunities. The big issue is how this principle is understood.

According to the liberal view on equal opportunities, “everyone should have an equal chance to achieve the various benefits and rewards that a society makes available, that there should be no artificial barriers holding some people back, and no special privileges giving others an unfair advantage. The place that a person gets to in a society . . . should depend only on that person’s efforts, abilities and free choice” (Miller 1995: 200). This interpretation excludes applying preference policies in the form of quotas for certain social groups. But it does permit “soft” forms of promoting certain social groups: by means of scholarships, preparatory courses, active publicity campaigns, incentives for schools.

The basic argument against the liberal view on equal educational opportunities is that formal equality of access does not guarantee an equal start. According to Anthony Giddens, the liberal model, i.e. meritocracy, is an indefensible view, because first of all (even if it were practicable), a radically meritocratic society would create profound inequalities of the results,

which would endanger social cohesion. Moreover, the idea of an entirely meritocratic society “is internally contradictory”. With such a social order the privileged are guaranteed the possibility to transmit advantages to their children – thus destroying meritocracy. But Giddens emphasizes that these remarks do not signify that the principles of meritocracy are irrelevant to equality, but that the principles in question cannot exhaust it (Giddens 2000: 96-98). However, the supporters of the strong version of preference policies stress the achievement of preliminarily defined end results and thus reformulate ‘equal educational opportunities’ into ‘equal educational results’. In the perspective of such a standpoint any preferential policies for access to education (and especially to higher education) targeted at groups perceived as disadvantaged – particularly the setting of quotas – are not only acceptable but imperative.

The development of policies directed at affirming the social dimension of education requires an integral consideration of their possible social and academic consequences. It is our deep-felt conviction that an authentic change in the social dimension of education at all levels is possible only as a result of long-term strategies, which would necessarily include both social policies that are external to the sphere of education and reforms at all levels of education, with a special emphasis on pre-school and primary education. Only in this case will the attainment of greater social justice not give rise to tensions and conflicts between different social groups and, most importantly, will provide the possibility for improving the general quality of education.

Literature:

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the last few years national programmes were developed in Bulgaria and a series of initiatives were undertaken, directly relevant to enhanced access to education for all strata of the population; in these initiatives special attention is devoted to the access to education of disadvantaged people. A very positive fact is that, at the end of 2008, a National Strategy for Lifelong Learning was adopted. The Strategy defines the improvement of opportunities for access to lifelong learning as one of the two priority directions and identifies the following problems:

- the coordination between participants in education for adults is insufficient at the national and regional level;

- the learning environment is not sufficiently stimulating as regards the presence of a modern infrastructure and social attitudes to constant improvement of knowledge and skills;
- the geographical and economic distribution of institutions is oftentimes inadequate;
- the social and family environment have an impact on inclusion in different forms of lifelong learning. The existing financial problems and problems related to providing sufficient time for learning are such that the individual is not always stimulated to enhance his/her personal and professional competencies; in many cases these problems have a negative impact regarding the decision whether or not to take part in lifelong learning.

Envisaged in the strategy are concrete activities for overcoming the delineated problems. But, as emphasized, the deadlines for the basic ones among these activities are set too far ahead in time: the deadlines for developing a national qualification framework, validating and certifying the results of informal and independent learning, establishing a module system for obtaining qualification, building a system for accumulating and transferring credits in the sphere of vocational education and training, and the development of distance training, are in 2013 (see Chapter I of the present report).

The survey we have conducted permits formulating the following recommendations regarding the national and institutional policies for enhancing access to education for all groups of the population, especially the disadvantaged ones:

- A review and evaluation should be made by expert commissions regarding the envisaged deadlines, set in national strategies and plans, for implementing the measures for enhancing access to education – the purpose of this is to mobilize additional resources and shorten the terms for accomplishing these measures.
- To stimulate the building of institutional (or flexible) structures in the educational institutions - centres, commissions – which will specifically deal with enhancing access to education.
- To make systematic and targeted efforts for improving the interaction between the formal and non-formal education sectors with regard to education of adults.
- At the national level, to create a system of incentives, including financial ones, for formal and informal institutions engaged in initiatives for expanding access to education for disadvantaged groups.
- To stimulate educational institutions to organize special programmes for dropout schoolchildren/university students, and thus assist them in reentering the education process.

- To develop mechanisms for funding preparatory classes, attached to various educational institutions, for representatives of disadvantaged groups.
- To create a permanently functioning system for improving the professional training of teachers working with adults; the system should be based on systematic and state-funded training courses for the teachers.
- To develop and widely publicize the mechanisms for recognition of prior education and to stimulate educational institutions to apply them.
- To implement module and credit systems in education for adults in educational levels lower than higher education as well.
- To improve the legal basis of access to education and training for adults, with a special emphasis on the mechanisms for recognizing the results of informal and independent learning.
- To develop a variety of effective financial tools and mechanisms for motivating individuals to engage in different forms of lifelong learning, and employers to support adult learners.

- To continue the initiatives for developing an adequate infrastructure and environment for learning, especially as concerns learners with specific needs.

- To create an effective and accessible information system regarding the different options for inclusion in training courses and the requirements for admittance.

- To stimulate marketing research conducted by the training institutions themselves, thus investigating education needs and offering education programmes corresponding to those needs.

GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE LLL2010 RESEARCH PROJECT

In March 2000, the then 15 European leaders committed the European Union to become by 2010 “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment”. The Lisbon strategy, as it has come to be known, was a comprehensive but interdependent series of reforms, which has significant implications for a whole range of social policies, including policies for learning.

As part of the Lisbon strategy, the European Union has set the goal of raising the number of adults participating in lifelong learning to 12.5% by 2010. However, the proportion of learning adults in Europe differs widely across countries. The project **"Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the contribution of the education system"**, which forms part of the European Commission's 6th Framework Research Program, is dedicated to identifying the reasons behind these differences and to studying the policies and practices related to adults' participation in and access to lifelong learning in a number of European countries (see project's web-page <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>).

The project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia.

Project objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

- Show to what extent the countries differ in terms of patterns of lifelong learning.
- Reveal how these differences depend upon specific institutions and policies of each country.
- Assess the contribution of each country's education system to the development of lifelong learning.
- Trace the ways institutional and policy prerequisites for lifelong learning have been developed in European countries.
- Identify the barriers to participation in lifelong learning in terms of policies, educational institutions, enterprises' practices and potential learners' motivation.
- Identify the best solutions and most successful practices in terms of participation in lifelong learning and to decide to what extent these would be applicable in other countries.
- Propose changes, which would enhance adult participation in lifelong learning and decrease social exclusion.

The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

Potential impact

Project is expected to contribute both to competitiveness and cohesion of the EU by (a) developing and carrying out a joint agenda for a better understanding of the tensions between the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of enlargement of the EU and globalisation, (b) identification of best practices and suggestion of ways for implementation in order to reach the objectives for lifelong learning.

Disseminating the knowledge

The project aims to examine and report on national differences in approaching formal lifelong learning, but also to assist policymakers and practitioners in learning appropriate lessons from contrasting practice in other countries. Therefore, disseminating knowledge to relevant audiences – individuals, institutional actors and policymakers – is of the core issues within this project, and so dissemination activity will take place throughout the life of the project.

The preliminary results will be discussed in the workshops and conferences and introduced to national as well as international audiences. The results of the different research projects within LLL2010 will be presented in five comparative reports – one per subproject – and a final report, and two books will be published as a result of the project. A Conference “The Contribution of the Education System to Lifelong Learning”, scheduled in the end of the project, is aimed at discussing findings, conclusions and expert opinions on a European level.

To contribute to scientific discussion and enhance comparative studies in the field, further analysis of the results of the research will take place in articles published in specialized and interdisciplinary journals. As LLL2010 will undertake a number of original studies, the data, questionnaires and codebooks, and all the other relevant materials generated in the project will be made available to the scientific community at large.

Research Institutions in LLL2010 Consortium

1. Institute for International and Social Studies, Tallinn University, Estonia
2. Higher Institute for Labour Studies, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium
3. University of Nottingham, England, United Kingdom
4. Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom
5. Educational Disadvantage Centre, Centre for Human Development at St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland
6. Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, Oslo, Norway
7. Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, Ljubljana, Slovenia
8. TÁRKI Social Research Centre, Budapest, Hungary
9. Centre for International Relations and Studies, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania
10. Institute of Sociology, Sofia, Bulgaria
11. St. Petersburg State University: Department of Sociology, Department of Retraining and Improvement of Professional Skills for Sociology and Social Work, Russia
12. 3s research laboratory, Vienna / Danube University, Krems, Austria
13. The National Training Fund, Prague, Czech Republic
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