

# European Inventory

on validation of informal and non-formal learning



# **European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning Bulgaria**

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# 1.0 Introduction

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Bulgaria has developed a national policy for lifelong learning which is now in the process of being implemented. This chapter aims to present issues surrounding Bulgaria's approach to the validation of informal and non-formal learning, which is linked to the developments in policy for lifelong learning.

Bulgaria's long tradition of adult education mirrors that of its neighbours (such as Romania) and of other countries in the Balkan region and Western Europe. The first written legislative articles to regulate education in the Principality of Bulgaria were introduced in 1878. In 1924, the education law for trade and industry was enacted, which divided all the country's vocational schools into secondary, practical and additional schools. The purpose of the latter group was to raise education and qualification levels amongst employees in specific vocational sectors, who had not finished vocational or grammar schools.

During the period 1944-1989, education was characterised by its highly ideological orientation, centralised administration and the weakness of education structures brought about by many reforms. In addition, there was a multiplicity of informal institutions that offered education in the form of courses, rounds and correspondence. The subject matter mainly centred on the improvement of the knowledge and proficiencies of workers in specific fields of work. Further education, as well as re-education was usually organised by factories according to changes in their workforce requirements necessitated by the economy. The Ministry of Education was responsible for overseeing further education and re-education. The Ministry of Labour, its branch ministries, and authorities were responsible for their organisation.

Since 1989, the education system in Bulgaria has undergone a process of reform aimed at achieving coherence with other educational systems, especially those in the other EU countries. The Bulgarian authorities have already made, and must continue to make, considerable efforts to guarantee sustainable development of the education system with a view to providing valuable and competitive knowledge and skills for its population.

Within the context of post-1989 Bulgaria, numerous transformations and new challenges were initially posed by the EU accession criteria, then by post-membership developments and as a result the lifelong learning (LLL) agenda developed slowly. A new legislative framework for adult training in Bulgaria progressively emerged through, for example, labour market training for the unemployed, continuing adult education as part of the formal education system (mainly in the form of involving schools in providing training for the unemployed), promoting a more comprehensive approach to non-formal learning and

tackling the quality issues and recognition of prior learning as well as actions towards designing a national qualifications framework.

Although some initial steps have been taken forward already, the process of re-integrating the education system into one whole, corresponding to the needs of the knowledge society and knowledge economy, has in practice developed slowly. Achievements are rather modest and scattered initiatives have mainly been brought about by foreign companies. It seems that it is still too early for the issues of identification, assessment and recognition / validation of non-formal and informal learning to appear among the priorities on the national policy agenda<sup>1</sup>. Recent initiatives related to the implementation of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy and further development of the National Qualifications Framework are laying the foundations for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and may change the situation in the future.

<sup>1</sup> This statement is made on the bases of the wide range of consultations and interviews with the national stakeholders.

## 2.0 Public Sector

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### 2.1 General legal framework

The process of implementing policies and measures targeted towards the identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning has already started in Bulgaria, mainly using the respective common principles from the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration. However, the developments are still at a very initial stage.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of lifelong learning (LLL) in Bulgaria was initially defined in the Law on National Education adopted in 1991 with its Article 4.1., which stated that “Citizens shall be given the right to education. They can enhance continuously their education and qualification”.

Prior to the most recent developments which have resulted from the work carried out in order to meet EU accession requirements and then the preparation of a national lifelong learning strategy and a national qualifications system, lifelong learning was only partly or indirectly mentioned within Bulgarian legislation. Now, legal acts or their amendments are starting to be defined with consideration for the issues of lifelong learning, which in turn set the foundation for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the future. For example, the new provisions of the National Education Act<sup>2</sup> and the Rules of Procedure for Application of the National Education Act refer to the aspects of transparency of qualifications and acquired competences. The Vocational Education and Training Act<sup>3</sup> contains certain provisions allowing the recognition of informal/non-formal learning, though still with little practical application.

Many other national strategic documents and programmes have been developed in the spirit of lifelong learning: the National Strategy for Continuous Vocational Education and Training 2005-2010, the National Action plan on Employment, the Employment Strategy 2004-2010, the Programme for School and Pre-school Education Development 2006-2015. Recently, an inter-ministerial working group has been created to elaborate a draft National Strategy on LLL.

<sup>1</sup> National Report – Contribution of Republic of Bulgaria to the 2008 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the European Commission on the Progress in Implementation of the Education and training 2010 Work Programme. Sofia, April 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Published, SG, issue 86 / 18.10.1991, last amended and supplemented, issue 41 / 19.05.2006, issue 105 / 22.12.2006

<sup>3</sup> Published, SG, issue 68 / 30.07.1999, last amended and supplemented, issue 62 / 1.08.2006, in force since 01.01.2007 – the accession date of Republic of Bulgaria to the EU, amended, issue 63 / 4.08.2006

The Action Plan 2007 of the National Strategy for Further Vocational Training 2005 – 2010 is among the few documents which already directly address aspects of lifelong learning. Besides the objectives aiming to improve the effectiveness of interaction and co-ordination between the responsible institutions, to increase investments and research assurance of further vocational training etc, the aims include the establishment of a system for validation of qualifications acquired by informal or non-formal learning.

Investing in professional qualification of human resources is part of the general employment policy, regulated by the Employment Promotion Act<sup>1</sup> and accomplished through the national action plans on employment and corresponding national programmes; in which the specific target is lifelong education programmes and measures aimed towards both the employed and the unemployed.

As already stated, the process of identification, assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Bulgaria is still in its initial phase. Legal provision is provided in the Vocational Education and Training Act, adopted in 1999. The Framework Programme on Further Vocational Training for Actualisation or Expansion of an Acquired Professional Qualification, approved by the Minister of Education and Science, regulates the conditions and the procedure for obtaining professional qualifications on the grounds of work experience without formal vocational training. The programme defines a procedure which enables employees with respective work experience to obtain a certificate stating his / her professional qualification (mainly under the defined conditions of state exams). So in fact the document aims to establish a validation procedure for competencies acquired through work experience. It is expected that the validation process will begin at the end of 2007, after the methodological and organisational base is set in place<sup>2</sup>.

The 2005 national action plan on employment provides for the development of a concept for the legal and methodological provision for validation. Some actions in this direction are included in projects by PHARE and by bilateral projects too. There are also assumed some possibilities for validation of non-formal and informal training.<sup>3</sup>

The highest expectations are now attached to the adoption of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning which, it is expected, would focus direction for further developments in the field concerned.

<sup>1</sup> Published, SG, issue 112 of 29.12.2001, in force since 01.01.2002., last amended and supplemented, issue 48 / 13.06.2006, in force since 01.07.2006

<sup>2</sup> National Report – Contribution of Republic of Bulgaria to the 2008 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the European Commission on the Progress in Implementation of the Education and training 2010 Work Programme. Sofia, April 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Implementing the “Education and Training 2010” Work Programme: 2005 Progress Report. Bulgaria. European Commission. Education and Culture. Lifelong Learning: Education and Training policies. Coordination of Lifelong Learning Policies. Brussels, December 2005.

## 2.2 The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy is one of the main strategic documents for initiating developments concerning lifelong learning in the countries where the culture and traditions were interrupted due to the political developments in the last century. In Bulgaria, the LLL Strategy is for the period 2007 – 2013. The Strategy is currently being drafted by an inter-ministerial working group and is expected to be forwarded to the Council of Ministers by the end of 2007. The draft of the LLL Strategy is based on the objectives of the National Strategic Reference Framework, the Employment Strategy, the National Strategy for Further Vocational Training, the National Strategy for Human Resources Development, as well as other legal documents. The main priorities of the LLL Strategy regarding the common European trends can be defined as follows: access to Lifelong Learning; possibilities for validation of key competencies, knowledge and experience acquired through informal and non-formal learning; high quality and access to information; support for social inclusion and training.

The draft of the Strategy was developed within a project under the PHARE programme by a broad inter-institutional working group, which included representatives from the responsible ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Finance) and social partners, with the assistance of a consulting company.

The draft of the document is based on the concept that lifelong learning is a base for achieving economic, social and mental prosperity of individuals and the country. The purpose of the project was to ensure the interlinking and consistency of learning at the different stages of human life, taking into account its specific features. It defines lifelong learning in specific relation to the economic and the social development of the country and the personal development of every individual.

The document sets out the key areas for action which in turn are harmonised and are in line with the broader strategic national objectives for LLL and correspond to the relevant documents adopted at European level<sup>1</sup>. Necessary amendments are being made in the legal documents that are already in place, for example, the National Programme for School and Pre-School Education Development (2006 - 2015), the National Strategy for Introducing ICT in the Bulgarian Schools (2005 – 2007), National Strategy for Further Vocational Training (2005 – 2010), Employment Strategy (2004-2010), as well as the Human Resources Development Operative Programme (2007 – 2013). A further legal framework which is needed to support the Lifelong Learning Strategy is being developed

<sup>1</sup> National Report – Contribution of Republic of Bulgaria to the 2008 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the European Commission on the Progress in Implementation of the Education and training 2010 Work Programme. Sofia, April 2007.

using support that usually comes through the PHARE programme. For example, the Adult Training Strategy (2007 – 2013), developed in 2006, aims to lay the foundations for the further development of adult training and foresees assistance to its effective functioning.

The development of the National Qualifications Framework is another very important part of the process of building the lifelong learning system in Bulgaria, which creates possibilities for the validation of competencies, knowledge and experience acquired through informal and non-formal learning in the future.

### **2.3 The National Qualifications System and its links to VET**

The establishment of a national qualifications system and frameworks that are in line with the European Qualification Framework (EQF) is ongoing in Bulgaria. Initial steps were already taken back in 1996 when the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) started to develop professional standards. In 2001 the Minister of Education and Science approved the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training, which corresponds to the International Standard Classification ISCED-97. The List of Professions is developed in conjunction with the traditions, work experience and accomplishments in the development of Bulgarian vocational education and training system. In relation to accession of the Bulgarian system to the European Standards, recent tendencies have been detected in the development of the Vocational Education and Training, such as enriching the variety of professions, flexible curricula and possibilities for continuous training during the preparation period. At the time, the classifications were interlinked through the codes established by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (hereafter NAVET), but there were difficulties with their implementation in practice. To improve this situation a working group was established consisting of MLOSP, NSI, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), and the National Employment Agency, with the aim to investigate how to make this implementation more effective in order to provide adequate VET for the labour market.

The process gained new shape and content with the start of Bulgaria's accession to the EU consultation process, which resulted in the further development and implementation of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) which is now ongoing in the country.

At the moment, seminars are carried out with broad representative participation from the education sector, local authorities, social partners and non-governmental organisations.<sup>1</sup> Discussions and analyses cover the compliance of degrees of professional qualification

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

regulated by the national VET Act and the general recommendable degrees and assigned competences to them from the EQF. They also try to interlink with sectoral qualifications.

The EQF document has been translated and disseminated in the Bulgarian language and a major national seminar for popularising the national content of EQF has been carried out, with the participation of more than 150 representatives from educational institutions, public authorities, employers and social partners. The present stage of the consultation process is aiming to assure better transparency of qualifications and raise the mutual trust between educational institutions and social partners and interlinks EQF / NQF, the mechanisms for accumulation and transfer of credits, the EUROPASS and the PLOTEUS portal. Efforts are made to ensure that the process is supported and “owned” by stakeholders both from the national and sectoral levels. Therefore wide informative dissemination is part of the process, for example, the outlines of the ECVET system were published in the national newspaper “Azbuiki” and sent out to all vocational secondary schools and social partners. Two seminars have been carried out, with more than 100 participants from all stakeholding entities.

A new structure of the State Educational Requirements’ (Standards) for the acquisition of qualifications by professions in Bulgaria, was recently proposed by NAVET, which is expected to provide opportunities for easier comparison and recognition of qualifications acquired in Bulgaria and abroad, using the EQF, as well as gradually introducing ECVET in the Bulgarian VET system. The developments are building on the previous attempts to improve the quality of the national VET system by defining national requirements for vocational training.

For example, as a result of the PHARE project “BG 9506: “Vocational Education and Training Development ” which started in 1996, 18 vocational education and training standards were developed on a pilot basis and a modular approach was introduced in the VET system. A total of 33 pilot schools from 18 towns were involved in the project to implement the modular curriculum approach for vocational training in 18 occupations. After completion of the project, a total number of 31 VET schools introduced the modular approach between 1999 and 2003 and in the school year, 2003-2004 - 64 VET schools (288 classes and 7000 students). The number of teachers trained in the modular approach was 594 in 2004 (compared to 217 in 1999).

The National Employment Service, along with the MLSP, designed and proposed a methodology for the establishment of national requirements for vocational training. When the draft national requirements were agreed, training was organised on an experimental basis by established training organisations with a view to checking their usability and validity. Piloting activities were successfully completed and the first set of requirements

was ready to be applied on a broader basis. Similar requirements were worked out shortly after for other occupations and specialities with appropriate conditions for sector and branch being created gradually. It was expected that these actions would standardise the content and conditions as well as assessment, recognition and documentation of job skills acquired that in turn would improve the quality of the vocational education and training process, the skill level of the labour force and the country's competitiveness within the labour market in the broader sense<sup>1</sup>.

Bulgarian vocational schools (except those involved in the piloting projects) currently use the list of vocations for education that were developed and applied in 2003. Experience from the other EU member states show that the development of standards (either vocational or professional) takes time. To date 71 professional standards have been developed and approved by the NAVET and MES in Bulgaria. These standards are applied to both initial and continuing training. According to the MES procedures, piloting of the finalised standards started in 2003 and was followed by the gradual development of new vocational curricula in accordance with the standards. The implementation of the new curricula started in 2004/2005 and the process may continue up to 2008.

In Bulgaria implementation is based on laws and the respective documents are worked out by individual ministries. Except single documents, they usually do not include targets for implementation, in terms of people, measures, timing and financial recourses. This might reduce the commitment and in turn the impact of the reform process and hinder implementation under the National Employment Plan and PHARE. Yet the actions are limited to the general projects which are still to be translated into concrete measures.

The detailed description of competences acquired through formal learning will contribute to the development of tools for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the future and is seen to link training institutions with enterprises. To this end, the necessary examination materials need to be developed as well, in order to specify whether the candidate can (and to what extent) demonstrate knowledge, skills and competences assigned to each of the results listed in the respective State Educational Requirement (standard). Methodical support to the pedagogical staff for further vocational training for adults needs to be developed as well as the information database for the support of research activities and activities for popularising and introducing good practices in this field. Methodical Guide for training of adults in the Vocational Education and Training system has been developed and distributed.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

## 2.4 Links with Higher Education

The structure of higher education is now in line with ISCED 97. This gives opportunities for the improvement of the educational and qualification level of training within the LLL context and in turn lays the foundations for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the future. The present legal framework and legal acts that regulate aspects of education and training (set out above) now define the necessary knowledge, skills, and professional qualifications to be acquired within the framework of high and higher education, as well as the acquisition of professional qualifications for those, who have chosen a vocational form of training<sup>1</sup>.

A new draft of the National Education Act is now being prepared, aiming to regulate and expand the legal framework for provision of the existing forms of training – individual study, distance and correspondence training methods. The Vocational Education and Training Act now defines full-time, extra-mural, and part-time studies or forms of individual studies of vocational training. It also gives an opportunity to provide flexible training by a form of short occupational courses, training by Framework Programme E with the possibility for further training as well as non-formal and informal learning. Since the end of 2004, the provision of distance learning has been legally approved within the framework of higher education; its provision in vocational training centres has been under development too.

But despite these developments which aim to introduce more flexible forms of learning that are provided and recognised by educational institutions, informal and non-formal learning is not yet officially recognised by VET institutions of secondary education level and universities. Higher education institutions are still entitled to decide which results or exams taken in previous forms of study will be recognised upon applying for a certain cycle of study.<sup>2</sup>

Steps in this direction were taken in 2004, when the Framework Programme for further vocational training for actualisation or extension of already acquired professional qualification(s) was developed and approved by the Minister of Education and Science. With this respect, training seminars have been carried out in 2005 – 2006 in Sofia and Thessalonica, Greece, through a joint Bulgarian-German project on the theme “Promoting Adults Vocational Training and Employability”. Experts from the responsible ministries, the NAVET, the Employment Agency and representatives from the social partners have participated in them as well. Validation of informal and non-formal learning processes is

<sup>1</sup> Implementing the “Education and Training 2010” Work Programme: 2005 Progress Report. Bulgaria. European Commission. Education and Culture. Lifelong Learning: Education and Training policies. Coordination of Lifelong Learning Policies. Brussels, December 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Towards the European Higher Education Area, Bulgaria National Report 2004-2005

part of the process and it is foreseen that it will be started in 2007, after the methodological and organisational basis is assured<sup>1</sup>.

As previously mentioned, amendments and supplements of the VET Act (SG, issue 77 / 2005) have led to amendments and supplements in the Higher Education Act (SG, issue 77 / 2005) related to the attestation of professional qualifications. These establish a legislative base for the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes<sup>2</sup>. This is seen as a prerequisite for improving VET's appeal and quality, as well as for promoting LLL. It contributes to the achievement of compliance with the common European principles for the identification and validation of informal and non-formal learning. Yet practical implementation of this requires further action on the development of methodical documentation and handbooks to be carried out, corresponding legal entities to be defined, and for the validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning to be publicised among the potential users (employed, un-employed, employers, etc.)<sup>3</sup>. At the present moment, a working group on the development of a draft of Law on Recognition of Qualifications has been established and is working under the Ministry of Education<sup>4</sup>.

Widening partnership between institutions and stakeholders, which is now of high importance, would assure better trust, objectivity and trustworthiness of the processes that have started in recent years. That also will allow greater responsibilities to be taken towards the development of legislation, institutional work and strengthening mechanisms for the evaluation of competences – standards on competences, standards on validation, defining validation beneficiaries and quality assurance in this field.

<sup>1</sup> National Report – Contribution of Republic of Bulgaria to the 2008 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the European Commission on the Progress in Implementation of the Education and training 2010 Work Programme. Sofia, April 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## 3.0 Private Sector

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Social partners in Bulgaria are now more often involved into the decision making process concerning the increasing of adaptability, employability and career development of the employees, and in supporting the delivery of appropriate education and training<sup>1</sup>. Although tripartite bodies at the national, regional and local levels take part in consultations on the development and implementation of the policy on VET and employment, their involvement in developing validation initiatives is as yet very low. The nationally representative trade unions and employers have established vocational training centres themselves, in order to provide continuing training for both unemployed and employed people. For example, the Centre for Vocational Training at the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has been licensed by the NAVET to provide vocational training; the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA), which is another nationally representative employers' organisation, also operates a Centre for Vocational Training and the "Podkrepa" Confederation has established a special unit for syndicate training – a Syndicate Development Confederation Department. None of these entities are yet developing any initiatives concerning identification, assessment and recognition of learning acquired through informal or non-formal education.

Within individual companies, there are stakeholders interested in developing validation methodologies, although actions have so far been very limited. The importance of various LLL areas of training usually varies according to the sector, company size and activity type and those that are implemented are usually introduced as part of the working culture of foreign companies. Thus, whereas in the public sector an increasing concern is the need for validation of knowledge in foreign languages; in the private sector, trade and marketing issues are of increasing importance, whereas in mixed property units the target is personal skills development.

The private sector is encouraged to contribute to training: the state subsidy for higher education development was 0.8 % of GDP and 0.9 % of GDP in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Since the beginning of 2007, all training activities are now VAT free. It is expected that this would increase the provision of training activities, including training in the work place, as well as increasing the participation of the target groups.

### The Establishment of a Vocational Training Centre in Devnya

As a response to the need to upgrade the skills of workers at the Solvay Sodi Combined Works in Devnya, it was decided that a vocational training centre should be set up within the plant. The decision was related

<sup>1</sup> Social Partner Involvement in Lifelong Learning Examined (2005). European Industrial Relations Observatory.

to the need to improve the organisation of training, to develop better and more efficient methods of financing and to achieve a higher quality of training in line with specific requirements.

A self-contained Centre for Vocational Training for the personnel of the Combined Works will be established. There are plans to provide opportunities for training geared to specific needs, which will be identified annually, through validation methods such as observation. The occupations for which employees will be trained are included in the official classification of occupations in the manufacturing sector. The types of training available are to include initial training, additional training and retraining. Training will be linked to production needs in terms of use of specialist equipment, product mix and structural, technical and organisational change. Representatives of all the 23 social partners – government institutions, employers, and trade unions – are involved in the work for this Centre's establishment.

## 4.0 Third Sector

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As far as the third sector is concerned, there is already an awareness of the potential and relevance of methodologies and tools for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. On the one hand, possibilities to assess and recognise acquired knowledge and competences lift the profile of informal and non-formal learning and reflect a person as a whole. On the other hand, individual “social competences” are becoming increasingly important in all types of work.

Various NGOs have developed many initiatives under informal and non-formal learning programmes. For example, the Network of the traditional Bulgarian culture and its educational centres organise a range of activities including language courses, music lessons and theatre acting, as well as certain professional training. The Society for the Propagation of Knowledge is the largest non-profit-making Bulgarian adult education organisation. Similar activities are implemented by “Znanie” society (dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge), structures of the centre “Open Education”, schools such as “Europa” and “Faros”; foundations such as “Open Society”, “Potential”, “Development of the Civil Society”, “Incobra” and “Time”.

## 5.0 Conclusions

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Post-1989 Bulgaria, in common with the other acceding and candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe, has primarily focused on economic and political issues. Its priority targets were the creation of a modern market economy based on the development of an efficient private sector, lower levels of regulation and less state interference in the economy. After decades of existence under the totalitarian regimes, the Bulgarian education system also had to undergo a general reform process to become compatible with the education systems in other members states of the EU. Therefore Bulgaria's legislation on LLL is currently focused on establishing a general commitment to universal access to education, training and retraining over the individual life-cycle of a person and does not mention the active development of its components including validation of competences, tacit and explicit knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Within this context of transitional changes, the concept of lifelong learning has been partly embedded in Bulgarian VET / labour market reform (for example, improved access to education as well as to training of adults, and quality of education and training), but an integrated approach is still needed. Reference can be made in this respect to the development of organised and systematic access to LLL, jointly driven by the common support of enterprises and public policies. In Bulgaria (as in Romania and other ACCs), this issue has been lagging behind and is therefore still acknowledged as a key challenge.

There are intent and planned efforts for aspects of LLL already, but that could be put into practice only through considerable concerted efforts. This is due in some respects to the fact that the conditions under which Bulgaria has to develop its LLL policy are very different from those in other EU countries and therefore the implementation process is often much harder.

The assistance and competent support from European Projects and participation in the networks of ETF and CEDEFOP that Bulgaria received as a candidate country and still receives after becoming EU member, are of vital importance and in fact they are the only instruments that allow the implementation of reforms in the education system and are available for the country so far.

With the efforts to comply with the membership criteria and later joining the EU in January 2007, the development of lifelong learning in Bulgaria is becoming one of the main priorities in reforming its education system. The obvious reason for this is that in the near future Bulgaria has to continue and better focus on important targets. These include: reducing the imbalance between the formal and non-formal/informal components of the

LLL systems; supporting non-formal and informal learning by social and managerial recognition, extension and diversification of learning provisions; strengthening the coordination, links and pathways among formal, non-formal and informal learning by improving counselling and promoting cooperation among the different networks; shortening the delay between decision making and practical implementation; striving to achieve by different means better inter-ministerial coordination to encourage the shift from the sectoral approaches to systemic, integrated reform covering LLL; extending guidance and counselling services beyond the strictly vocational and educational dimension and including more social and citizenship aspects; substantially developing the new funding mechanism and providing more training and education incentives within economic, social and regional programs.

The last implementation stage of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy also foresees the development of tools and methodologies for validating informal and non-formal learning and the further development of the National Qualifications Framework show that Bulgaria is already committed to support the complex development of LLL. From a national perspective, this is seen as one of the major factors in improving employment and promoting “active citizenship” to achieve the targets of the Lisbon Economic and Social Strategy and the Copenhagen Declaration on Training and Education.