



# **Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills**

## **Full Country Report - Bulgaria**

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## **Full country report - Bulgaria**



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## 1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW (STATISTICAL ELEMENT TO BE INSERTED BY ECORYS FROM UPDATED COUNTRY OVERVIEW)

### 1.1 Trends for the entire population

#### 1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

**Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data**

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	76
<b>Bulgaria</b>	56.5	61.9	64.7	62.9	63	63.5	65.1	67.1	67.7		

*Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code lfsa\_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.*

*Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.*

#### *-Comparison to EU2020 target*

The 2016 employment rate in Bulgaria (67.7%) is 7.3 percentage points below the EU 2020 target (75%).

#### *-Comparison to National 2020 target*

The 2016 employment rate in Bulgaria is 8.3 percentage points below the national target set in the National Strategy Bulgaria 2020 (76%). The fact that the 2016 employment rate increased only by 0.6% in comparison to the 2015 employment rate, indicates that at the current rate of change, the national target of 76% will not likely be reached in the remaining years until 2020 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2016a: 38).

#### *-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016*

The 2016 employment rate in Bulgaria (67.7%) is 3.3 percentage points below the EU-28 average for 2016 (71%).

*-Evolution over time*

There has been a persistent, but not significant, increase in the employment rate in Bulgaria in the period 2000 - 2010 (from 56.5% to 64.7%) followed by a decrease in 2011. During the next two years – 2012 and 2013 – the employment rate started to increase again but almost undetectably. The years 2014 and 2015 were marked by an annual increase in the employment rate by 1.6, and 2 percentage points respectively. This positive trend continued in 2016 but at a slower pace, towards 67.7%. Despite this positive trend, Bulgaria is not improving at the required rate in order to be able to reach the national target set in the National Strategy Bulgaria 2020.

*1.1.2 Participation rate – entire population*

**Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data**

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	5%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	:	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.7	2	2.1	2	2.2		

*Source:* Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code trng\_lfse\_01, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

*-Comparison to EU2020 target*

Bulgaria is among the countries with the lowest participation rate in lifelong learning in the EU. The 2016 participation rate in lifelong learning in Bulgaria (2.2%) is a long way below the EU 2020 target of 15%.

*-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016*

Bulgaria is lacking behind almost all European countries regarding the participation of adults aged 25-64 in lifelong learning. The 2016 participation rate of Bulgaria (2.2%) is 8.6 percentage points below the EU-28 average for 2016 (10.8%).

*-Evolution over time*



There was a trend of increase, although very slow and statistically almost negligible, in the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults in Bulgaria in the period 2005-2014 from 1.3% to 2.1%. In 2015 the proportion of people participating in formal, non-formal and informal education or training fell slightly to 2%. The last year marked an increase in the participation rate to 2.2% (2016). However, Bulgaria is not improving at the required rate in order to be able to reach the national target goal for 2020 which is set at 5%, or indeed to have any realistic prospect of achieving the EU 2020 target of 15%.

## 1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

### 1.2.1 Share of low qualified adults

**Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016**

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
<b>Bulgaria</b>	32.5	27.5	20.9	20	19	18.2	18.9	18.1	17.7

*Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat\_lfse\_03, last updated 25 April 2017.*

*Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.*

#### -Comparison to EU-28 average

Regarding the share of low qualified adults Bulgaria is in a better position than that of the EU average. In 2016 the share of people with less than lower secondary education in Bulgaria is 5.3 percentage points below the average in the European Union, which is 23%.

#### -Evolution over time

There has been a persistent fall in the proportion of people with less than primary and lower secondary education (25-64 years old) in Bulgaria – from 32.5% in 2000, to 20% in 2011, 18.1% in 2015 and 17.7% in 2016. The proportion of people with less than primary and lower secondary education is unevenly distributed among different ethnic groups in Bulgaria, being highest among the Roma population. Across the same period, there has been a steady decrease in the EU-28 rate for the same measure (by 7.6 percentage points, compared to 9.8 percentage points for Bulgaria between 2005 and 2016).

### 1.2.2 Employment rate of low skilled adults

**Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016**

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
<b>Bulgaria</b>	38.7	40.8	41	38	37.4	38.1	40	40.3	40.3

*Source:* Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa\_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

#### *-Comparison to EU-28 average*

The 2016 employment rate of low skilled adults in Bulgaria (40.3%) is 14 percentage points below the EU-28 average for 2016 (54.3%).

#### *-Evolution over time*

The evolution over time of the employment rates of low skilled adults in Bulgaria has been uneven and fluctuating – there was an increase in the employment rate in the period 2000-2005, then almost no change between 2005 and 2010, followed by a decrease between 2011 and 2012, then again a trend of increase in the period 2013-2015. The 2016 employment rate of low skilled adults remains the same as in 2015 (40.3%). It should be emphasised that all these changes remain within a range of 1-2 percentage points which makes them statistically almost negligible.

### *1.2.3 Participation rate of low skilled adults*

**Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – EU average in comparison to national average**

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
<b>Bulgaria</b>	:	:	:	:	0.5	0.5	:	:	:

*Source:* Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and *trng\_lfse\_03*, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

#### *-Comparison to EU-28 average*

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The participation rates in lifelong learning of people with less than primary and lower secondary education is extremely low in Bulgaria and their value cannot be assessed statistically. There is data only for two years – 2012 and 2013 – which show that the participation rates in lifelong learning of people with less than primary and lower secondary education in Bulgaria was 0.5%. i.e. 3.4 and 4 percentage points below the EU-28 average for those years (3.9% and 4.5% respectively).

*-Evolution over time*

As there is data for the participation in lifelong learning of people with less than primary and lower secondary education only for two years it is not possible to trace any meaningful evolution over time.

## 2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

### 2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

Bulgaria has significant tradition in development of adult education and continuing education which originates in 1870s when the first Sunday schools were organised. After the liberation from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 Sunday and evening schools for adult education became widespread. During the communist regime (1944-1989) policies in the field of education for adults and continuing education were oriented in two directions: vocational education and communist rearing. The central role in adult education was taken up by evening secondary schools.<sup>1</sup>

In more recent times there are a wide range of institutions offering formal and non-formal education to adults.

The adult education sector in Bulgaria is heterogeneous and includes different kinds of institutions that are regulated with different normative acts. The main normative acts that define and regulate adult learning systems in Bulgaria are: the Employment Promotion Act<sup>2</sup>, the Pre-school and School Education Act<sup>3</sup>, the Vocational Education and Training Act<sup>4</sup> and the National Qualification Framework.<sup>5</sup>

Activities related to adult education are performed by different institutions: the Employment Agency; schools and higher education institutions; the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training; vocational training centres; trade unions; NGOs; and municipalities. The state, the municipal vocational schools and the centres for vocational training are financed by the state budget, the municipalities, by donations from different sources and by international programmes. The educational programmes that do not comply with the state educational requirements are financed by individuals and companies according to a signed contract.

The Vocational Education and Training Act<sup>6</sup> 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;

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<sup>1</sup> See Boyadjieva, P., Milenkova, V., Gornev, G., Petkova, K. and Nenkova, D. (2013). The Lifelong Learning Hybrid: The Case of Bulgaria. In: Saar, E., Ure, O.B. and Holford, J. (Eds.) Lifelong Learning in Europe. National Patterns and Challenges. Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, pp.27-30.

<sup>2</sup> Закон за насърчаване на заетостта (2002, last amendments 2016). [Employment Promotion Act], available at <http://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/-12262909> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>3</sup> Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование [Pre-school and School Education Act], State Gazette, issue 79, October 13, 2015, <http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=97879> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>4</sup> Закон за професионалното образование и обучение (1999, last amendments 2016) [Vocational Education and Training Act], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>5</sup> Национална квалификационна рамка на Република България (2012) [National Qualification Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria], available at <http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/nqf-bg>.

<sup>6</sup> Закон за професионалното образование и обучение (1999, last amendments 2016) [Vocational Education and Training Act], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57> (In Bulgarian).

- 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.

Vocational education and training centres are part of the formal education system: There are 1,041 such centres and 41 centres for information and vocational guidance had been licensed by the end of 2016.<sup>7</sup> The centres issue certificates for vocational qualification in 4 degrees of growing complexity, variability, and personal responsibility, and in accordance with state educational requirements. Vocational training centres are licensed and coordinated by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (established in 1999).<sup>8</sup>

During the period 2009-2014 the number of adult learners in formal education increased by more than 25% and reached 60,564 in the academic year 2013/2014.<sup>9</sup> In the 2015/16 academic year the number of adults in formal education was 40,553 or 5.4% of all students. Compared with the previous year, the number of adults in the education system has decreased by 8,019 people. There were only 713 adult learners in primary education<sup>10</sup>, which is extremely insufficient given that in 2011 there were more than 200,000 people aged between 16-60 with primary or below primary education and about 45,000 illiterate people aged between 16-60.<sup>11</sup> In the academic year 2013/2014 adult learners in programmes for acquiring different professional qualifications and degrees were 51,116, whereas in the academic year 2015/2016 this number decreased to 30,520.<sup>12</sup>

A wide network of institutions specialised in non-formal education are in operation. They predominantly offer vocational training, language and computer courses. Non-formal education and training is provided by enterprises, vocational education and training centres,

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<sup>7</sup>National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (2017). *Годишен доклад за дейността на Националната агенция за професионално образование и обучение през 2016 година*

[Annual report on the activities of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training in 2016] available at [http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/Doklad\\_NAPOO\\_2016\\_US\\_01.02.pdf](http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/Doklad_NAPOO_2016_US_01.02.pdf)

<sup>8</sup><http://www.navet.government.bg/>, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Ministry of Education and Science (2017e). *Състояние на сектора за учене на възрастни в област Русе* [State of the adult learning sector in Rousse District 2011 – 2015], p. 28 (In Bulgarian), available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/bg/resource-centre/content/sstoyanie-na-sektora-za-uchene-na-vzrastni-v-6-oblasti>

<sup>10</sup>Ministry of Education and Science (2016a). *Годишен доклад – 2015 за изпълнението на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година* (Annual Report – 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning). Sofia, available at

<http://www.mon.bg/?qo=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 17-18.

<sup>11</sup>[http://statlib.nsi.bg:8181/isisbgstat/ssp/fulltext.asp?content=/FullT/FullOpen/P\\_22\\_2011\\_T1\\_KN2.pdf](http://statlib.nsi.bg:8181/isisbgstat/ssp/fulltext.asp?content=/FullT/FullOpen/P_22_2011_T1_KN2.pdf)

<sup>12</sup>Ministry of Education and Science (2017e). *Състояние на сектора за учене на възрастни в област Русе* [State of the adult learning sector in Rousse District 2011 – 2015], p. 28 (In Bulgarian), available at <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/bg/resource-centre/content/sstoyanie-na-sektora-za-uchene-na-vzrastni-v-6-oblasti>

community centres (chitalishta), NGOs, foreign cultural centres, and private educational units.

The Community centres (chitalishta) play a crucial role in relation to the personal and citizenship perspectives on LLL and adult education. Being unique traditional self-managed units in Bulgaria, they function as "training fields" for acquiring skills for managing collective activities. Given their multitude (there are 3,450 chitalishta registered with the Ministry of Culture), location and institutional sustainability, they are a unique national resource for various educational initiatives, including LLL.

The body responsible for coordination of the national LLL policy is the National Lifelong Learning Council, established in 2014. The Council, chaired by the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education and Science, includes representatives of all relevant stakeholders. In 2009 the National Employment Agency introduced a new methodology for evaluating proposals for professional orientation and adult education and quality assurance by external experts nominated by the social partners. In addition, a mechanism for monitoring adult education has recently been developed.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age**

	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)			
Primary	174	1,135	1,309
Lower secondary	2,290	9,338	11,628
Upper secondary	6,750	26,437	33,187
Post-secondary non-tertiary education		910	
Short-cycle tertiary education		0	
Bachelor's or equivalent level		51,099	
Master's or equivalent level		42,135	
Doctoral or equivalent level		6,572	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ\_uoe\_enra02)", accessed 2017.08.21

<sup>13</sup>Ministry of Education and Science (2014d). *Методическо ръководство за мониторинг и оценка на политиката в сектора за учене на възрастни* [Methodological Guidance for Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies in the Sector of Adults Learning]. Sofia (In Bulgarian), available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/final.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/final.pdf); Ministry of Education and Science (2014e). *Модел на националната система за мониторинг на сектора за учене на възрастни* [Model of the National System for Monitoring the Sector of Adults Learning]. Sofia (In Bulgarian), available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/final.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/final.pdf)

## 2.2 Provision

Below is a list of the main providers of adult education in Bulgaria:

- **Basic and secondary schools** – provide adult education in basic skills courses and literacy.
- **Evening secondary schools**–provide secondary education for people aged over 16.
- **Vocational gymnasiums** – provides first, second, third and fourth degree of VET.
- **Art schools and Sports schools** – provide third degree of VET in arts and sports.
- **Vocational colleges** – provide fourth degree of VET.
- **Vocational training centres** – provide vocational education to adults and are licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET).
- **Employment agency**– provides vocational education and qualification (I-IV degree); education for acquisition of key competences; apprenticeships.
- **Trade unions**–provide training programmes as part of active labour market policies (ALMP) aimed at vocational qualification; acquisition of key competences; apprenticeship.
- **Nationally representative business organisations**–provide training programmes as part of ALMP aimed at vocational qualification; acquisition of key competences.
- **Craft chambers** – provide training for craft trade apprentices and are governed by the Commerce Act and regulations developed by NAVET.
- **Cultural centres 'Chitalishta'** – provide courses in Bulgarian language, arts and cultural activities. They are self-governing cultural and educational institutions which work closely with local authorities.
- **Znanie Association** – an umbrella NGO which is the umbrella organisation for 30 regional associations involved in adult education in different areas.
- **Scientific-technical associations** – NGOs providing vocational training mainly in technical occupations.

### 2.2.1 *Helps adults improve their Basic Skills*

**The National Strategy for Promotion and Improvement of Literacy Skills (2014 - 2020)**<sup>14</sup> envisages policies are to ensure access to quality and affordable courses for adult literacy and the appropriate environment to compensate for the problems in literacy - in the workplace and beyond.

**Programmes for Adult Education in Basic Skills Courses**, which include syllabus: 1) for Bulgarian Language and Literature, 2) Mathematics; 3) Man and Nature; 4) Man and Society.

**National Programme for Literacy and Qualification of the Roma Population**, Adult illiteracy is a problem among the Roma population in Bulgaria. The project used a double approach, comprising of an adult literacy module and a vocational education module. Initial

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<sup>14</sup>Ministry of Education and Science (2014g). *Национална стратегия за насърчаване и повишаване на грамотността (2014-2015)*. [National Strategy for Promotion and Improvement of Literacy Skills (2014-2020)], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian).

literacy courses are financed under the programme as a first step towards training for the first degree of professional qualifications.

**Project “New Chance for Success”** – The project was implemented during 2011-2015 under the OP “Human Resources Development”. It developed a comprehensive model for adult education – 14,145 adults were supported by it.

September 2016 saw a start in the new phase of the project “New Chance for Success” under the OP “Science and Education for Smart Development” – 3,343 illiterate adults had already participated in literacy courses. It is envisaged that a total of 10,000 illiterate or low educated adults will be involved in the project.

#### *2.2.2 Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

##### **Vocational Training and Education for Adults**

When adults enrol in regular schools, there are no special programmes for the vocational training of adults. Within the traditional Bulgarian education system, at ISCED Levels 1, 2 and 3 vocational education and training for adults is provided in a few schools; such as the evening schools and the schools in prisons. Additionally, some general and vocational gymnasiums offer evening courses and distance learning for adults. The number of participants is presented in Table 2.1. Upon successful completion of the course, every student receives the same certificate of the appropriate level of general education, plus the vocational qualification attained, regardless of age.

#### *2.2.3 Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes*

The main providers of liberal adult education are the cultural centres ‘Chitalishta’ and several NGOs. The most popular programmes are language courses and courses for acquiring computer skills. Their length is between 3 months and 1 year.

Data shows that Bulgarian adults participate less in liberal education than in job-related education:

- According to AES 2011, 7.73% of Bulgarian adults reported that they participated in their 1st *non-formal activity mainly* because of personal/non-job related reasons.
- According to AES 2011, 48.28% of Bulgarian adults reported that they participated in their most recent *informal activity* mainly because of personal/non-job related reasons.

#### *2.2.4 Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)*

In 2013 the Employment Promotion Act was amended with new measures aimed at encouraging employers to hire long-term unemployed young people up to the age of 29. According to one of the measures (Article 55g) employers may receive funding (for a maximum of 12 months) for every new workplace they provide for an apprenticeship to unemployed people up to the age of 29, with primary or a lower level of education and no qualifications. During the apprenticeship, an instructor (employee in the same enterprise)



should train apprentices, at the workplace. Article 63 of the Employment Promotion Act envisages enhancing employability of unemployed people through training in accordance with the demands of the labour market and the employers.

The National Employment Action Plan for 2017 includes the following **main programmes**<sup>15</sup>:

**Training and employment of permanently unemployed persons** – Providing employment, training and better qualification of permanently unemployed people as well as motivating them for active participation at the labour market. Main provider – Employment agency; target group of 2,540. .

**Step forward** – Matching the supply and demand of the labour force by enhancing their qualifications; training of key competencies and acquiring first degree of professional qualifications of concrete occupations. Main providers – employers, Employment agency; target group of 1,845.

**Chance for work 2017** – Overcoming unemployment of disadvantaged people by providing training at the workplace; training for acquisition of key competencies and basic qualifications for concrete occupations. Main provider – Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria; target group of 1,590.

**Horizons II** – Enhancing competitiveness and better access to the labour market for unemployed disadvantaged people by investing in skills and knowledge according to the needs of the employers; training of key competencies and acquiring basic qualification for concrete occupations. Main provider – Labour Confederation Podkrepa; target group of 1,496.

**New perspective II** – Training of key competencies and acquiring basic qualification for occupations. Main providers – employers, Employment agency; target group of 579.

**Training for adults at the Centre for Development of Human Resources and Regional Initiatives** – Providing training for enhancing professional qualifications. Target group of 300.

**Two-year plan for training at the Bulgarian-German centre for professional training** – Enhancing employability of unemployed people from disadvantaged groups with the aim of their successful professional realisation; vocational and professional orientation; training for professional qualifications; acquiring key competencies, such as "Social and civil competencies"; "Initiative and entrepreneurship"; training of trainers of adult people, including mentors. Main provider – Bulgarian-German centre for professional training; target group of 2 353.

**Youth employment** – Opportunities for young people under 29 years old for training/internship at the workplace for enhancing their competitiveness; informing employers for the opportunities of the programme and stimulating them to sign a permanent

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<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian)

contract with the young person on internship. Main providers – employers, Employment agency.

**Active** – Activating and motivating young people under 29 years old to seek employment at the labour market, with opportunities for training and acquiring professional skills. Main providers – employers, Employment agency, vocational training centres.

**Training and employment for young people** – Integration of unemployed young people under 29 years old by providing training and subsidies for long-term employment. Main providers – employers, Employment agency, vocational training centres.

**New job** – Prerequisites for opening workplaces for the unemployed and inactive by different types of training, including training at the workplace, and by providing various stimulus for the employers to open new workplaces. Main providers – employers, Employment agency.

**Training of employed people** – Training of employed people to be prepared to overcome the rapid changes at the labour market as a result of globalisation, technological advancement and aging of population. Main providers – employers, Employment agency.

**Active participation** – Enhancing the quality of life of disabled people by motivating and training them to become active participants at the labour market; creating opportunities for the care-givers of disabled people to return to the labour market. Main providers – employers, Employment agency, vocational training centres.

**Project "Training of adults who have undergone literacy courses"** – it will build and supplement the activities under the project "Literacy of adults - Phase 1" under the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2015-2020", implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science. Target group – unemployed persons with basic and lower education or without education, registered at the labor offices. Main providers – secondary schools.

### *2.2.5 Opens up Higher Education to adults*

High numbers of adults are enrolled in higher education institutions. Thus in 2015 35.78% of all students in higher education institutions were over 25 years of age.<sup>16</sup> There is a clear tendency of increase in the number of adult students. Thus the number of students aged 25-49 in Bachelor programmes increased from 40 428 in 2013 to 50 260 in 2015. During the same period the number of students aged 25-49 enrolled in Master programmes increased from 36 447 to 41 264.<sup>17</sup>

At the end of March 2017 Sofia University announced the launch of an educational programme targeted at old people (people from the "third age").<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>, own calculations

<sup>17</sup> Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ\_uae\_enra02)", assessed 2017.10.10

<sup>18</sup> Sofia University (2017). В Софийския университет стартира Университетска образователна програма за третата възраст [In Sofia University started University Educational Programme for the "Third Age"], <https://www.uni->

### 2.2.6 *Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills*

Within section 2.2.4 there are several programmes listed, that are providing VET for both unemployed and employed people. Below are some figures in relation to this:

- 20% of the employees participated in guided on-job-training out of the employees in all enterprises (CVTS 2010). (Data code: trng\_cvts50).
- According to data from National Statistical Institute in 2015 20.2% of enterprises offer training to their employees.<sup>19</sup>
- According to AES 2011, 94% of non-formal education and training was job-related; 89% was sponsored by the employer.
- According to AES 2011, 22.1% of adults participated in job-related non-formal education and training sponsored by employer (Data code: trng\_aes\_120).

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sofia.bg/index.php/novini/novini\_i\_s\_bitiya/v\_sofijskiya\_universitet\_startira\_universitetska\_obrazovatelna\_programa\_zatretata\_v\_zrast

<sup>19</sup><http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3520/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BF%D0%BE>

### 3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

#### 3.1 Context

##### 3.1.1 *Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning*

Responsibility for adult education and lifelong learning lies with three national ministries, and their executive agencies. In addition, guidance and development is undertaken by advisory bodies, Employment Agency Employers and trade unions, who also have a role in both representation and vocational training.<sup>20</sup> The main institutions and their responsibilities regarding adult learning are:

**National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria:** has policy responsibility for all matters, including all aspects of education, employment and social services.

**Ministry of Education and Science:** implements state policy in the sphere of education and science. It develops strategies, concepts and programmes related to pre-school education, general education, vocational education, higher education and lifelong learning and is responsible for their implementation. Regional units at the Ministry of Education and Science are 28 inspectorates who are responsible for the management and control of the public education system.

**National Lifelong Learning Council:** the national body responsible for coordination and consultation among the central government bodies, local government bodies, trade unions on the national level, and employer organisations on a national level for implementation of the national lifelong learning policy.

**Ministry of Labour and Social Policy:** implements state policy in relation to the labour market, the protection of the national labour market workforce, training and the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market. It maintains the national classification of occupations, develops programmes and measures for enhancing employment and training of employees, and develops methodologies for enhancing the effectiveness of adult education.

**Employment Agency:** an executive agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which implements state policy for encouraging employment. It is responsible for ALMPs aimed at unemployed people, and carries out (in collaboration with other organisations and units or independently) projects and programmes in the sphere of employment, vocational training and qualifications, and social integration which are funded by EU pre-accession funds and/or other international funds (using also Bulgarian resources). The **Directorate Regional Employment Offices** are territorial units of the Employment Agency.

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<sup>20</sup> Boyadjieva, P., Ilieva-Trichkova, P., Stoilova, R., Kirov, V. (2017) An overview of adult education provision in Bulgaria, in: Whittaker, S.; Boeren, E. & Riddell, S.: Mapping providers and provisions in adult education. Horizon 2020 project deliverable D2.1. Brussels: European Commission.

**Ministry of Culture:** defines the strategies, priorities and mechanisms for implementation of state policy in relation to community centres, libraries, Bulgarian literature, cultural heritage, museums and arts. It develops curricula, state admission plans, national examination programmes for professional qualifications, programmes and topics for entrance exams for art schools.

**National Agency for Vocational Education and Training:** responsible for issuing and revoking licenses for vocational training and vocational guidance, supervising the activities and assessing the quality of training in licensed institutions in the system of vocational training.

**Licensed Vocational Training Centres:** institutions for adult education and training, which may be run by the state, the local authorities or private providers and are licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAPOO) to teach vocational courses for specific occupations stated in the license.

**Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre State Enterprise:** provides vocational training of the unemployed and the employed over the age of 16, to gain a vocational qualification, degree or qualification in a part of a profession, key competences training and vocational guidance.

**Centre of Human Resources Development (CHRD):** organises, consults, coordinates and carries out projects and studies in the sphere of education, vocational education and training, labour market and human resources in Bulgaria.

**National Institute for Training and Qualification in the Educational System (NITQES):** supports the implementation of state policy in secondary education by means of training management staff of Bulgarian schools; development, investigation, sharing and implementing innovations in secondary education; development of training programmes and participation in international projects.

**Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA) and Bulgarian Industrial Association - Union of the Bulgarian Business (BIA):** nationally represented employers' organisations in Bulgaria. Each has its own vocational training centre.

**Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB):** a nationally representative organisation of employees and the largest public organisation in Bulgaria. It organises training courses to assist employees in improving their professional skills and in adapting to both the Bulgarian and the European labour market.

**Confederation of Labour "Podkrepa":** a nationally represented organisation of Bulgarian employees. One of its main objectives is to conduct training, consultations and qualification courses in the fields of labour-law relations, social security, working conditions, ecology, industrial relations, employment, vocational training, retraining and foundations of civil society.

**Federation of Societies for Spread of Knowledge "Znanie":** a network of non-government organisations. It supports local structures in providing quality and affordable education for children, youth and adults, which supports personal and social development.

**Cultural Centres "Čitálišta":** cultural centres that are self-governing cultural and educational institutions with a separate legal status, whose tradition dates back to the 19th century. Their activities have expanded during the years and laid the foundation for many aspects of modern cultural life in Bulgaria.

### 3.1.2 Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning

The main strategic document for the socio-economic development of Bulgaria is **the National Reform Programme Europe 2020**. Its last update from 2017 include measures addressing Country Specific Recommendation 3 (*"Reinforce. . . active labour market policies, in particular for the long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training. Increase the provision of quality education for disadvantaged groups, including Roma."*)<sup>21</sup>. Among the envisaged measures are those which refer to adult education and learning, such as:

- Integration of the unemployed into the labour market through participation in training and employment programmes: Programme "Training of adults who have passed literacy courses"; Period: 2016-2018; Target groups: unemployed participants with a low level of education (below upper secondary – ISCED 3); Target value: 6 600; Budget BGN 159 million.<sup>22</sup>
- Organising and conducting literacy courses and courses for acquiring competences for basic educational level for illiterate or poorly literate people over 16 years old: Project "New Chance for Success" - training in literacy courses has begun for adults in 123 schools, where 263 groups were formed and 3,343 trainees were included; Period 2017-2018; Target value: 10000 people; Budget BGN 25 million.<sup>23</sup>

Another strategic document for the socio-economic development of Bulgaria governing the provision of adult learning is the **Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria** for the period 2013-2020.<sup>24</sup> The Strategy defines development of lifelong learning, and especially adult learning, as one of the main factors for enhancing the quality of the labour force according to the requirements of the workplace, and for increasing the

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<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Finance (2017). Europe 2020: National Reform Programme. 2017 Updates, Sofia, available at <https://www.minfin.bg/document/19894:1>, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Finance (2017). Europe 2020: National Reform Programme. 2017 Updates, Sofia, available at <https://www.minfin.bg/document/19894:1>, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2017c). „Нов шанс за успех“ по процедура „Ограмотяване на възрастни – фаза 1“ на Оперативна програма „Наука и образование за интелигентен растеж“ (Project "New Chance for Success" under Procedure "Adult Literacy - Phase 1" of the Operational programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020"), available at <http://sf.mon.bg/?go=news&p=detail&newsId=419> (In Bulgarian); Europe 2020: National Reform Programme. 2017 Updates, Sofia, available at <https://www.minfin.bg/document/19894:1>, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2013). Актуализирана стратегия по заетостта на Република България 2013-220 [Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2013-2020], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=CONTENT&I=382&lang=> (In Bulgarian).

productivity of labour. The Strategy envisages improving access to education and training for adult people, creating adult education programmes, conducting literacy courses and acquiring basic skills and competencies to continue education, further development of vocational training<sup>25</sup>.

Each year the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy develops **National Employment Action Plan**.<sup>26</sup> These plans envisage concrete programmes and measures aimed at providing better opportunities for employment and training of adults.

### 3.2 Adult learning policy framework

#### 3.2.1 A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010

National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the period of 2014-2020

The strategic framework of the state policy in lifelong learning is outlined in the **National Strategies for Lifelong Learning**. The first National Strategy for Lifelong Learning was adopted in 2008.<sup>27</sup> The second National Strategy for Lifelong Learning refers to the period of 2014-2020 and was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2014.<sup>28</sup> The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the period 2014-2020 defines the following strategic objectives and progress indicators:

- Increase the share of the children that receive preschool education and training from age 4 until first grade enrolment age from 87.8% in 2012 to 90% in 2020;
- Reduce the share of early leavers from the educational system aged 18-24 from 12.5% in 2012 to less than 11% in 2020;
- Reduce the share of 15-year olds with poor achievements in: reading – from 39.4% in 2012 to 30% in 2020; mathematics – from 43.8% in 2012 to 35% in 2020; natural sciences – from 36.9% in 2012 to 30.0% in 2020;
- Increase the share of those attaining professional qualification degrees in the broad areas of Informatics, Technical Equipment, Manufacturing and Processing, and Architecture and Construction to at least 60% in 2020;
- Increase the share of those completing higher education aged 30-34 from 26.9% in 2012 to 36% in 2020;

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<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2013). Актуализирана стратегия по заетостта на Република България 2013-220 [Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2013-2020], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=CONTENT&I=382&lang=> (In Bulgarian), p. 20-23.

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г. [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIES&I=249> (In Bulgarian); Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г. [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIES&I=249> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2008). Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2008-2013 година (National Strategy for Lifelong Education for the Period 2008-2013, available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2014a). Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година (National Strategy for Lifelong Education for the Period 2014-2020), available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian).

- Increase the employment rates of the population aged 20-64 from 63% in 2012 to 76% in 2020;
- Increase the participation of the population aged 25-64 in education and training from 1.5% in 2012 to more than 5% in 2020 (a 4-week reference period);
- Reduce the share of illiterate people: among people aged 15-19 from 2.0% in 2011 to 1.5% in 2020, and among people aged 20-29 – from 2.3% in 2011 to 1.5% in 2020.<sup>29</sup>

Elements of the LLL concept are also included in legislation - The Labour Code, the Employment Promotion Act, the Vocational Education and Training Act, the Higher Education Act, the Skilled Crafts Act, and the Pre-school and School Education Act. Also, in other national strategic documents and programmes, including the Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the Period 2015-2020, Updated Employment Strategy 2013-2020, Strategy for Promoting and Increasing Literacy (2014-2020), Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minority Groups 2015-2020, Strategy for Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020, etc.

### **Adoption of the new Pre-school and School Education Act<sup>30</sup>**

The main purpose of the new Education Act, which was adopted at the end of 2015, is to foster the modernisation of education in Bulgaria by providing a legal basis for improving the quality of education, raising the qualification of the pedagogical staff and stimulating the involvement of different stakeholders in the education process. The new act introduces several **changes which will affect the development of adult education**. In particular, the act:

- 1) Defines a new structure of education, according to which pupils would complete basic education after passing the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. By introducing this structure Bulgaria will be the only country in the EU where basic education is completed after the first seven grades. The upper secondary education is divided into two stages: from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade and from 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 2) Defines different forms of education and training – evening, extra-mural, independent, distance – for students aged above 16 years of age.
- 3) Defines non-formal education and the process of validation of competencies acquired through non-formal education and informal learning.
- 4) Authorises schools to organise and conduct literacy courses and courses for acquiring and formally recognising the attainment of professional competences for persons over 16 years of age.

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2014a). *Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година* (National Strategy for Lifelong Education for the Period 2014-2020), available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> *Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование* [Pre-school and School Education Act], State Gazette, issue 79, October 13, 2015, <http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=97879> (In Bulgarian).



5) Introduces dual education, which is considered as a means to improve the practical education of students and strengthening the links between education and business.

### **Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year<sup>31</sup>**

The Strategy defines as a priority increasing participation of adults in lifelong learning activities and encouraging adult engagement in continuous training as well as acquiring key competencies to complement professional knowledge and skills.

### **Change in the funding model and introduction of delegated budgets**

One of the main recent reforms in school education (primary, basic and secondary) was the change towards greater decentralisation of the financing model by the introduction of the so-called 'delegated budgets' in 2007. The municipalities received the right to allocate 80% of the school budget on the basis of the given formula and 20% on the basis of additional criteria. The positive aspects of this school financing system are: a) greater school autonomy and b) enhanced accountability of schools for better educational outcomes. Recent analyses have shown that the results of the introduction of 'delegated budgets' are mixed.<sup>32, 33</sup> The financing formula, based on the principle "money follows the student" has been criticised as leading to lower quality of education for disadvantaged groups.<sup>34, 35</sup>

### **Introduction of National Qualification Framework**

A National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria was adopted in 2012 by Decision No. 96 of 02.02.2012 of the Council of Ministers.<sup>36</sup> It defines eight qualification levels, which are based on the learning outcomes and cover the entire cycle of qualifications attainment.<sup>37</sup> The development of sector qualification frameworks is still in the initial stage.

Recently a process of updating of the National Qualifications Framework has started, urgently required bearing in mind the new structure of education introduced with the new Pre-school and School Education Act<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2014c). *Стратегия за развитие на на професионалното образование и обучение в Република България за периода 2015-2020 година* [Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>32</sup> World Bank (2014). How can Bulgaria improve its education system?: an analysis of PISA 2012 and past results.

<sup>33</sup> Zachariev, B. (2013). *Как училището обрича поколения на бедност?* [How School Condemns Generations to Poverty], <http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.aspx?ArticleId=2528548>

<sup>34</sup> Zachariev, B. (2014). *Сутрешна разходка до училището. Размишления за въвеждането на финансиране в съответствие с общ стандарт* [Morning Walk to School. Reflections about Introduction of School Financing according a Common Standard and Optimization of School Network]. In: Jakimova, M., Kabakchieva, P., Ljakova, M. and Dimitrova, V. (Eds). *On the Steps of the Other*. Sofia: Prosveta Publishing House, 188-217.

<sup>35</sup> World Bank (2014). How can Bulgaria improve its education system? An analysis of PISA 2012 and past results, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Available at: <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bq-BG&Id=719>

<sup>37</sup> Available at: <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bq-BG&Id=719>

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2017a). *Проект на План за действие за 2017 в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 г.* (Draft of an Action Plan for 2017 for Implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020), available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=381&subpageId=63> (In Bulgarian).

## **Amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act**

In 2016 some important amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act were made<sup>39</sup> some of which refer to the development of adult education and training. The amendments are as follows:

- 1) envisage validation and recognition of professional knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal education and informal learning;
- 2) define institutions which have the right to offer vocational education and training to students older than 16 years;
- 3) define 5 framework programmes for training people aged 16 or over;
- 4) define requirements for developing curriculum for a vocational training for people over 16 years of age;
- 5) define terms and conditions for admission of people over 16 years of age in vocational programmes;
- 6) define forms of training for persons over the age of 16: daily, evening, independent, individual, distance and work-based learning (dual training system);
- 7) envisage establishment of an internal quality assurance system in compliance with state education standards for acquiring a qualification.

## **Development of new framework curricula for initial and continuing vocational education and training**

From the beginning of 2017 the Ministry of Education and Science has developed 92 versions of the framework curricula for initial and continuing vocational education and training for acquiring professional qualification degrees for students and people over the age of 16<sup>40</sup>. These framework Programmes and the standards for acquisition of professional qualifications are the basis for the development of curricula for occupations. Framework Programmes regulate incoming age and educational and qualification level of applicants, contents and duration of vocational education and training. They are designed for daily, evening, part-time and dual system of education.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2016e). *Amendments to Vocational Education and Training Act*. Available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2017b). Рамкови програми А, Б, В, Г, Д, Е за професионално обучение за придобиване на различна степен на професионална квалификация за ученици и лица над 16 години (Framework Programmes A, B, C, D, E, F for initial and continuing vocational education and training for acquiring professional qualification degree for students and people over the age of 16), available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=2&subpageId=42> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>41</sup> Eurydice Adult Education and Training- Bulgaria, [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Bulgaria:National Reforms in Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Bulgaria:National_Reforms_in_Vocational_Education_and_Training_and_Adult_Learning)

## **Establishment of regional groups for lifelong learning**

The establishment of regional groups for lifelong learning during 2016 and 2017 addresses the need for better coordination of lifelong learning policies at national and regional level and for overcoming the large differences in participation in lifelong learning by region in Bulgaria. For example, the percentage of participation in lifelong learning in South-Western region was 3.5% in 2015, whereas in the North-Central region it was 0.9% and in the North-West region this percentage was so small that its value could not be assessed statistically.<sup>42</sup>

Other recent changes include: i) the development and implementation of a system of credit transfer in vocational education and training and improvement of the state requirements for 18 professions<sup>43</sup> and ii) the establishment of 33 youth information and advisory centres in the regional cities across the country.<sup>44</sup>

### *3.2.2 Priorities in the lifelong learning and adult education policies*

According to the expert, the following priorities in the lifelong learning and adult education policies in Bulgaria could be identified by<sup>45</sup>: a) Improving education and skills of unemployed people; b) Improving education and skills of Roma; c) Tailoring education, adult education included, to employers' needs.

## **Improving education and skills of unemployed people**

Recently Bulgarian's unemployment levels have fallen (unemployment as a percentage of the labour force has decreased from 13% in 2013 to 9.2% in 2015 and 7.6% in 2016; the EU28 average for 2016 is 8.6%).<sup>46</sup> However, people who are long term unemployed, young people who are not in education and training (NEET) and unemployed people above 50 years old remain as serious challenges for the labour market. Thus, the percentage of those who are long term unemployed has decreased from 7.4% to 4.5% however is still higher than the EU 28, which is 4.0% for 2016.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the share of unemployed people over 50 years old is 39.5% of all unemployed people and the share of those without qualifications is 56%

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<sup>42</sup>Ministry of Education and Science (2017d). Проект „Националните координатори в изпълнение на Европейската програма за учене на възрастни“ (Project "National Coordinators for Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning"), available at [http://ill.mon.bg/?page\\_id=52&lang=en](http://ill.mon.bg/?page_id=52&lang=en) Ministry of Education and Science (2016a). *Годишен доклад – 2015 за изпълнението на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година* (Annual Report – 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning). Sofia, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2016b). *Приложение 1. Отчет по План за действие за 2015 г. в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014 – 2020 г.* [Annex . Report on on Action Plan for 2015 in implementing the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014 – 2020], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?qo=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 29-32.

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2016b). *Приложение 1. Отчет по План за действие за 2015 г. в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014 – 2020 г.* [Annex. Report on on Action Plan for 2015 in implementing the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014 – 2020], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?qo=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>46</sup> Eurostat,  
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsdec450&language=en>;  
assessed 10.08.2017.

<sup>47</sup>Eurostat,  
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc330&plugin=1>,  
assessed 10.08.2017.

amongst the unemployed.<sup>48</sup> Bulgaria is among the countries with the highest NEET rates among all 28 EU countries both with regards to people aged 15-24 and those aged 25-29. In addition, Bulgaria is among the countries where the majority of NEETs have a lower educational level than average.<sup>49</sup>

Against this background, the following key **target groups have been identified by the government as the focus of active policy on the labor market in 2016**: a) Unemployed young people under 29 and youth who are neither in education nor employment (NEET's); b) Unemployed people over 50 years old; c) Long-term unemployed people, including Roma; d) Unemployed people with low professional qualifications and a shortage of key competencies, including those who are unemployed with low education levels (including Roma); e) Disabled; f) Persons outside the labour force.<sup>50</sup> The following **target groups have been identified by the government as the focus of active policy on the labor market in 2017**: a) Unemployed young people under 29 and youth who are neither in education nor employment (NEET's); b) Long-term unemployed people; c) Unemployed people over 50 years old; d) Unemployed people with low professional qualifications and a shortage of key competencies, including those who are unemployed with low education levels; e) Unemployed disabled; f) inactive, including discouraged.<sup>51</sup> Four groups have been defined as priority: a) Long-term unemployed; b) Unemployed young people under 29 and youth who are neither in education nor employment (NEET's); c) Roma; d) Marginalised people.<sup>52</sup>

### Improving education and skills of Roma

There are huge ethnic disparities in educational attainment in Bulgaria. This holds true even for the youngest age groups. Thus, whereas 20.87% of young Roma people are illiterate or have not completed any level of education, this proportion among young Bulgarians overall is less than 1%. The share of tertiary degree holders among Roma people aged 15-29 is only 0.33%<sup>53</sup>. According to a recent assessment, "Roma represent the vast majority (67%) of the poorest 20% of the entire Bulgarian population and are the group with the highest rates of illiteracy and early school leaving in the country. Unchallenged ethnic segregation of Roma in the education system is exacerbated by an increasingly socially stratified education system

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<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Eurofound (2012), NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIES&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 15.

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIES&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ilieva-Trichkova, P. (2014). *Education in Bulgaria and its Role in Positioning and Recomposition of Social Structure*. Unpublished manuscript, prepared within the project "Youth in Transition Countries - Innovative Potential, New Context, New Challenges and New Problems", Polish National Scientific Fund, 2012-2014, p. 5.

that confines students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds to lower quality education compared to peers from better-off families.”<sup>54</sup>

Against this background improvement of the educational attainment and skills of Roma has recently been defined as one of the main priorities of both national and regional policies. A *National Strategy for Integrating Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020)* and an *Action Plan of the National Strategy for Integration of Roma in Bulgaria (2012–2020)*<sup>55</sup> were adopted. Following the requirements of the National Strategy, municipalities, and also schools, attended by children from different ethnicity, have elaborated their own programmes for educational integration of pupils from ethnic minorities. In addition, a number of grant schemes were executed under the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (2007–2013) (OP HRD), the most important being “*Integration of children and students from ethnic minorities in the education system*”. The share of final beneficiaries, belonging to ethnic minorities, rose from 84.1% from all disadvantaged groups in 2010 to 87.4% in 2011 (two-thirds of these were Roma).<sup>56</sup>

As a rule, most of the activities of Bulgarian institutions – and of foreign institutions such as the World Bank, the Roma Education Fund, the European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants – are targeted at Roma children and students.<sup>57</sup> Recently, **Roma adult education has become a priority for the Employment Agency**.<sup>58</sup> Roma people are defined as a priority group for the active labour market policies for 2017.<sup>59</sup> Improving education and literacy of Roma adults is mentioned as one of the objectives of the National Strategy for Integration of Roma in the sphere of education.<sup>60</sup>

### Tailoring education and adult learning to employers’ needs

The unsatisfactory level and relevance of graduates’ skills to the needs of the labour market is a widely shared opinion amongst the main Bulgarian stakeholders. The relevance of matching education with labour market needs and demands has two different aspects: a) a structural one which refers to the correspondence between the structure of the graduates from different educational levels and labour market needs, and b) a qualification dimension which relates to the relevance of the people’ skills to the labour market.<sup>61</sup> There are serious problems in Bulgaria in relation to both aspects. In the sphere of higher education for

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<sup>54</sup> Roma Education Fund (2015). Advancing the Education of Roma in Bulgaria, REF Country Assessment – 2015, available at

[http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/bg\\_country\\_assessment\\_2015\\_web.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/bg_country_assessment_2015_web.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Action Plan for Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) and the Decade of Roma integration 2005-2015, available at:

<http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=125&id=1740>

<sup>56</sup> Milenkova, V., Hristova, S. (2014). Equity-related challenges in education and training, existing measures, assessment, proposals for future measures. Contry report on Bulgaria, Network of Experts on the Social aspects of Education and Training (NESET) RH/506656/VM-CRBL/2014, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> See for example

<http://eeagrants.org/News/2016/A-good-start-for-Roma-children>;

<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/evaluations/project-grant-evaluation>

<sup>58</sup> See the above quoted National Employment Action Plan for 2016], p. 22.

<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at

<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020), available at

<http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=125&id=1740>, p.12.

<sup>61</sup> Expert’s view.

example, data from the Bulgarian University Ranking System reveal that among 52 professional fields, approximately half of all students are concentrated in six of them<sup>62</sup>, whereas there is a shortage of specialists in key sectors relevant for the development of the economy.<sup>63</sup> Recent reform initiatives have started addressing this issue. These initiatives include:

- Approval by the Parliament of a new Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period of 2014-2020.<sup>64</sup> The Strategy defines the lack of correspondence between the higher education and labour market needs as one of the main shortcomings of the higher education system and, accordingly, sets up as the third aim of higher education: "Building up a sustainable and effective relationship between higher education institutions and labour market and achieving dynamic compliance between the supply and demand of specialists with higher education".
- Regular issuing of the Bulgarian University Ranking System (BURS)<sup>65</sup>, which collects data on educational outcomes and graduate employment. Starting from June 2011, targeted funds have been annually allocated to higher education institutions as a direct investment from the national budget on the basis of two criteria (measured through indicators from BURS): a) quality of education offered and b) correspondence of training to labour market needs.<sup>66</sup>
- Carrying out a number of projects at higher education institutions with the purpose of updating the curricula and aligning them to the labour market requirements, for example<sup>67</sup>: a) "Updating higher education curricula in compliance with labour market requirements" – 36 out of 51 higher education institutions have been implementing joint projects with employers; b) "Developing mechanisms for pupil and student traineeships" – more than 48,500 students have passed on-the-job training as of May 2014. However, there is an urgent need for the elaboration of a coherent mechanism for the evaluation and monitoring of the results and the impact of the above-mentioned projects<sup>68</sup>.

According to the National Employment Action Plan for 2016 investing in the quality of the workforce will be among the main priorities of active policy on the labor market in 2016 through training for vocational qualifications and key competences in line with business needs. It is envisaged that training of unemployed people will be organised in line with the results from a survey of the needs of employers of labour carried out by the Employment Agency in

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<sup>62</sup> These are: "Economics", "Administration and Management", "Law", "Communication and Computer Technology", "Pedagogy" and "Tourism".

<sup>63</sup> Boyadjieva, P., Ilieva-Trichkova, P. (2015). Institutional Diversity and Graduate Employability: The Bulgarian Case. In: Rosalind Pritchard, Matthias Klumpp & Ulrich Teichler (eds.) *Diversity and Excellence in Higher Education: Can the Challenges be Reconciled?* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 153-171.

<sup>64</sup> Стратегия за развитие на висшето образование в Република България 2014-2020 (2014). Strategy for Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020, available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>.

<sup>65</sup> Available at: <http://rsvu.mon.bg/rsvu3/?locale=en>

<sup>66</sup> National Report (2014) – Republic of Bulgaria's contribution to the Joint 2015 Report of the Council and the EC in regards to implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation Education and Training 2020, p. 11-12.

<sup>67</sup> National Report (2014) – Republic of Bulgaria's contribution to the Joint 2015 Report of the Council and the EC in regards to implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation Education and Training 2020, pp. 59-60.

<sup>68</sup> Expert's view.



2015.<sup>69</sup> The National Employment Action Plan for 2017 envisages continuing the process of developing sectoral competence models and extending the scope of the MyCompetence information system in order to achieve greater compliance with job requirements.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning*

The main normative acts which provide the legal conditions for the implementation of adult education and training and lifelong learning are:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria** (1991, last amendments 2015) – ensures the right of Bulgarian citizens, regardless of their age, to acquire basic, secondary and tertiary education and to continuously increase their qualification. Primary and secondary education in state and municipal schools is free of charge, including for adult learners.
- **The Labor Code** (1987, last amendments 2016) is the main normative act of the labor legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria. It regulates the opportunities for education and training of persons employed on the basis of an employment contract or of persons who prepare for work with the employer after completing the training.
- **Vocational Education and Training Act** (1999, last amendments 2016) – defines organisation, management, financing of the system of vocational training in and outside formal education system (for students over 16 years as well); defines institutions in the formal school system for vocational education and training of people over 16 years of age and develops state requirements for vocational education. The amendments to the Act of 25 July 2014 establishes normative conditions for the implementation of: 1) job-based learning (dual learning) as a form of partnership between vocational schools or a vocational training centre and one or more employers; 2) internal quality assurance system of the training institutions in compliance with the state educational requirements for acquiring vocational qualification; 3) credit system for accumulation and transfer of acquired learning outcomes; 4) validation of acquired professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired through informal and/or independent learning as well as on the basis of professional and/or practical experience; 5) list of professions protected by the state.
- **Pre-school and School Education Act (2015)** – defines the educational structure; defines educational institutions which can provide education to people over 16 years old.
- **Employment Promotion Act** (2001, last amendments 2016) – regulates vocational training for adults at the work place.

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<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], p. 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 37.

- **Law on Enforcement of Sentences and Detention** (2009, last amendments 2017) – regulates issues related to the education, training and professional qualification of persons serving the punishment "imprisonment".
- **Higher Education Act** (1995, last amendments 2017) – defines types of higher schools; defines the system for upgrading vocational qualification.
- **Crafts Act** (2001, last amendments 2015) – defines craftsman's training for students over 16 years old.
- **Community Centres Act** (1996, last amendments 2013) – envisages educational and training activities for adults.

### 3.3 National quantitative policy targets

**Table 3.1 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act**

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
Employment of the population aged 20-64 years - <b>76%</b> by 2020	2012	63%	67.7%	Some progress has been made
Participation rate in lifelong learning – <b>5%</b> by 2020	2007	1.3%	2.1%	Some progress has been made
Share of the people aged 30-34 with higher education – <b>36%</b> by 2020	2012	26.9%	33.8%	Considerable progress has been made
Share of early school leavers – <b>11%</b> by 2020	2012	12.5%	13.8%	No progress has been made

### 3.4 Quality assurance

The quality assurance in adult education is ensured by the Ministry of Education and Science, National Employment Agency, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and National Accreditation and Evaluation Agency.

The Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year envisages by 2018 to have developed systems for ensuring the quality of vocational training (including self-assessment) at the level of each



training institution.<sup>71</sup> External evaluation of skills and competences acquired by students and adult learners is also foreseen.

Since 2009 the National Employment Agency has been applying a new methodology for evaluating the proposals for professional orientation and adult education. It assesses the three main factors for providing training: teaching curriculum, teaching staff and facilities. The evaluation of proposals for vocational training is made by external experts nominated by the social partners.<sup>72</sup>

The quality assurance of higher education is a responsibility of the National Accreditation and Evaluation Agency, which follows the rules and procedures adopted in the European Higher Education Area. In accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act, each higher education institution develops its own internal quality assurance system.

### 3.5 Future policy developments

Bulgaria has recently started the implementation of its first operational programme in the sphere of education and science -- the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020". Two of its priority axes – Priority Axes 2 "Education and lifelong learning" and Priority Axes 3 "Educational environment for active social inclusion – improvement of the educational environment with aim to improve the social inclusion of marginalised groups such as Roma" provide financial opportunities for addressing the challenges the country is facing in the sphere of adult education. In addition, the following policy initiatives and measures have been recently undertaken:

- Bulgaria is currently in a process of preparation of a three-year action plan (2016-2018) for the implementation of the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2020. The plan foresees actions related to **the improvement of the quality of the sector for adult learning**.<sup>73</sup>
- **The introduction of a dual system** in adult education and training. The envisaged actions<sup>74</sup> include pilot testing and the practical application of vocational education and training through work (dual training); network expansion and strengthening the capacity of training institutions for validating the knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal and informal learning; increasing participation in adult

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<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2014c). *Стратегия за развитие на на професионалното образование и обучение в Република България за периода 2015-2020 година* [Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 34.

<sup>72</sup> [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Bulgaria:Quality\\_Assurance\\_in\\_Adult\\_Education\\_and\\_Training](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Bulgaria:Quality_Assurance_in_Adult_Education_and_Training)

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249>, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2015). *План за действие за 2015-2017 г. в изпълнение на Стратегията за развитие на професионалното образование и обучение в Република България за периода 2015-2020 година* [Action Plan for 2015-2017 on implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian).

education; and more active involvement from social partners in VET. The amendments to the Employment Promotion Act from 2015 provide an opportunity to stimulate employers to create jobs in order to hire unemployed people for training through work.<sup>75</sup> The new Pre-school and School Education Act, and the amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Acts from 2016<sup>76</sup>, ensure the legal conditions for the introduction of dual systems for students over 16 years old.

- In order to establish **a system for validation of the professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal and informal learning**, the Ministry of Education and Science is implementing the project "Creating a system for the identification and validation of non-formal learning, skills and competences". The project includes concrete actions to provide the necessary methodological and organisational basis for testing the system for validation.<sup>77</sup>
- The National Reform Programme (updated in 2016) envisages that throughout 2016 the OP HRD will support projects, "which will provide training and employment of young people and will grant enrolment priority to long-term unemployed, low-skilled and inactive individuals and young Roma."<sup>78</sup>
- The National Reform Programme (updated in 2017) envisages measures for integration of the unemployed into the labour market, through participation in training and employment programmes, organising and conducting literacy courses, and courses for acquiring competences for basic educational levels for illiterate or poorly literate people over 16 years old.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], <http://www.minfin.bg/en/page/867>, p. 46.

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2016e). *Amendments to Vocational Education and Training Act*. Available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2014). *Стратегия за развитие на на професионалното образование и обучение в Република България за периода 2015-2020 година* [Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 27-28.

<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Finance (2016). *Europe 2020: National Reform Programme. 2016 Update*, April 2016, <http://www.minfin.bg/en/page/867>, p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of Finance (2017). *Europe 2020: National Reform Programme. 2017 Updates*, Sofia, available at <https://www.minfin.bg/document/19894:1>, p. 18-20.

## 4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

### 4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time

There are four main **sources for financing** adult education and learning in Bulgaria: a) state budget; b) EU structural funds and operational programmes; c) employers and their organisations; d) adult learners.

The analysis of the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning during 2015 shows that 54% of the tasks were financed by operational programmes or programmes of the European Commission and 46% by the state or municipal budgets.<sup>80</sup>

Two **priorities for investment in adult education** could be outlined as: 1) raising adult literacy and 2) improving the qualifications and skills of adults.

Since 2011, the costs for training as part of active labour market policies (ALMP) have steadily increased to about 6.15 million Euro in 2014, which means that the share of funds for training has risen to 15.1% of total spending on ALMP.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, according to independent experts, it is advisable to increase the emphasis on "Training" in active labour market measures.<sup>82</sup>

### 4.2 Public national investment

Formal learning activities eligible for financial support from the state budget include: a) education of students over 16 years of age in the formal education system and b) programmes for vocational education and training aimed mainly at the unemployed and others vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market.

Training is one of the main parts of ALMP, funded by the state budget. It covers interventions aimed at increasing the employability of target groups through different forms of training. The scope of the line is the largest in the period 2004-2008, with the highest weight being the training, organised by the Employment Agency, for acquiring professional qualification.

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<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2016a). *Годишен доклад – 2015 за изпълнението на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година* (Annual Report – 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning). Sofia, available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). *Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г.* (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, available at [https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka\\_Ikonometrichen%20model\\_bg.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka_Ikonometrichen%20model_bg.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 136.

<sup>82</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). *Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г.* (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, available at [https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka\\_Ikonometrichen%20model\\_bg.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka_Ikonometrichen%20model_bg.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 142.

In the period up to the beginning of the economic crisis (2009) most of the trainings (apprenticeships included) were targeted at young adults; in the years after 2009 the scope of to the needs of the employers.<sup>83</sup>

According the Employment Promotion Act, the Employment Agency organises adult education in line with the needs of the labor market, and the requirements of the employers. Although recently the amount of public funds for vocational guidance and training of adults, administered by the Employment Agency, increased, the share of funds for vocational guidance and training of adults from the total spending on programmes and measures to foster employment remains very low, at 0.05% in 2014 (108 896 leva or about €55 000) and 0.31% in 2015 (390 234 leva or about €195 000).<sup>84</sup>.

Data from CEDEFOP show during the period 2008-2010 an amount of €65,000,000 was allocated to companies as grants for adult training - 70% of these grants were from the state budget.<sup>85</sup>

In Bulgaria there are **insufficient financial schemes for encouraging adults to return to formal education**, such as state-guaranteed bank loans, partial support to cover the costs incurred for education (e.g. transport, training materials, etc.), and retaining benefits for unemployed people. interventions also include other vulnerable groups, as well as training the unemployed according In addition, higher education institutions have introduced no specific financial measures tailored to the needs of non-traditional students. The only scheme to support adults who want to undertake formal education and training is the provision of leave for training. The existence of various financial instruments within adult learning policy for adult learning has not led to an integrated approach to funding. Each of the financial instruments provides impact that is limited by their targeted framework, and cover only single elements needed for adult learning overall.<sup>86</sup> A positive recent development is the introduction of a **new mechanism for financing the training of adults – training vouchers**.<sup>87</sup>

Training of adults is mainly **project based**. During the last two years the biggest **projects for vocational training of adults financed by the state budget** are: "Chance for Work",

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<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). *Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г.* (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, available at [https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka\\_Ikonometrichen%20model\\_bg.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka_Ikonometrichen%20model_bg.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> Employment Agency (2016) *Годишен обзор 2015* [Annual Review 2015] <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/4/204/>, p. 49.

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/FinancingAdultLearning/DisplayCountryDetails?countryName=Bulgaria&instrumentType=grant%20for%20companies&instrumentID=Employment%2BPromotion%2BAct>

<sup>86</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2013). *Анализ на сектора за учене на възрастни в България* [Analysis of the Sector of Adult Education in Bulgaria]. Sofia, available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/Analiz\\_adult.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/Analiz_adult.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 94.

<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2015c). *Анализ на състоянието на формалната училищна система за образование и обучение на възрастни* [Analysis of the formal school system for education and training of adults]. Sofia, available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/Analysis\\_AL\\_2015-last.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/Analysis_AL_2015-last.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 98.

“Compass”, “From Training to Employment”, “Horizons”, “New Horizons”.<sup>88</sup> The projects were realised in partnership with trade unions and co-financed by them.

**Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment**

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
Training organised by the Employment Agency	State budget, European Social Fund	€195,000	27,357		2015/2015
Project “New Chance for Success”	European Social Fund	€12,500,000	10,000		2016/2018

### 4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

#### 4.3.1 Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework

According to available data on financial support provided to Member States between 2014-2020, support most directly targeted towards adult learning (i.e. “investment priority 10.3 – “Enhancing access to lifelong learning”) amounts to 99 million euros. This funding, which became available to the European Commission in July 2016, comes from Operational Programmes for the European Social Fund (ESF).

#### 4.3.2 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework

The **main scheme within the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development” (OP HRD)** during the period 2009-2015 was the scheme “**Adult literacy**”, targeted at adults over 16 years of age who have completed lower secondary education. The total budget for the whole period was slightly over 8 million euros (about 1.7 million for 2015).<sup>89</sup> The **main project** realised within the OP HRD during the period 2010-2014 was “New Chance for Success.” The project aimed at facilitating the access of illiterate people and

<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2015 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2015], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 143; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249>, p. 116.

<sup>89</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2015 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2015], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 79.

people with low literacy levels aged over 16 (Roma included) to general and vocational education. The number of people covered exceeds the target indicators.)<sup>90, 91</sup>.

In the first programming period, investment in vocational training was also realised through other operational programmes, such as "Administrative Capacity", "Environment", "Transport", "Competitiveness", "Regional Development" – the funds amounted to approximately 4.15 million Euro and there was a trend of significant growth in last years of the 2007-2014 period.<sup>92</sup>

According to the Annual Review of the **Employment Agency during 2015, 25,609 unemployed adults and 1,748 employees were included in training**. Training of 16,221 from those adults was financed through the schemes and activities of the OP HRD.<sup>93</sup>

#### 4.4 Effectiveness of investment

**The Bulgarian National Audit Office** carried out an audit of the implementation of the grant scheme BG051PO001-2.1-02 "Qualification Services and Training for Employed Persons "(phase 2). The amount of the grant scheme paid during the period 01.06.2008 - 30.06.2011 was 39% of the contracted amount and 21% of the approved budget under the scheme. According to the audit report "[t]he low extent of grant funding absorption indicates difficulties in the implementation of the scheme. This is partly due to the financial and economic crisis which resulted in significant changes in the functioning of SMEs and influenced the overall business climate in Bulgaria."<sup>94</sup> It is important to emphasise one of the conclusions of the report, namely that part of the control activities were not adequate and that significant omissions and errors were made for example, lists with the names of the people who successfully kept their jobs are not presented<sup>95</sup>; thus, it is difficult to assess the real effectiveness of the activities.

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<sup>90</sup> European Literacy Policy Network (2016). Literacy in Bulgaria. Country report adults. Ed. by Jenny Litster and David Mallows. ELINET project, available at [http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user\\_upload/Bulgaria\\_Adults\\_Report.pdf](http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Bulgaria_Adults_Report.pdf), p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2015 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2015], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249>, p. 137.

<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). *Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г.* (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, available at [https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otcheta/Ocenka\\_Ikonometrichen%20model\\_bg.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otcheta/Ocenka_Ikonometrichen%20model_bg.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 70.

<sup>93</sup> Агенция по заетостта [Employment Agency] (2016). *Годишен обзор 2015* [Annual Review 2015] <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/4/187/> p. 50, 84..

<sup>94</sup> Bulgarian National Audit Office (2012). Audit on the implementation of the Grant Scheme BG051PO001-2.1-02 "Qualification Services and Training for Employed Persons "/phase 2/, available at <http://www.bulnao.government.bg/en/articles/reports-922>, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Bulgarian National Audit Office (2012). Audit on the implementation of the Grant Scheme BG051PO001-2.1-02 "Qualification Services and Training for Employed Persons "/phase 2/, available at <http://www.bulnao.government.bg/en/articles/reports-922>, p. 2.

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The training of adults organised by the Employment Agency in 2011 was positively assessed as 55.1% of adults who were trained managed to enter the labour market.<sup>96</sup>

There is need to carry out timely and comprehensive impact analyses of the implementation of all different programmes and measures related to adult education which are based not only on descriptive statistical data (number of participants, events and reports) but on a thorough, critical assessment of the cost-effectiveness and the impact of these measures on the main educational outcomes.<sup>97</sup>

It is a positive fact that the National Employment Action Plan for 2017 envisages a new assessment of the effects of measures and programmes, training programmes included, to be carried out in 2017.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015b). Последваща оценка на ефекта от активната политиката на пазара на труда на индивидуално ниво [Subsequent Evaluation of the Effect of Active Policy on the Labor Market on an Individual Level], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/NETNA-bq.pdf> Sofia (In Bulgarian), p. 68.

<sup>97</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г. [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 49.



## 5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.<sup>99</sup>

### 5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning

One of the underlying principles of the new Pre-school and School Education Act is that learners' positive disposition towards learning is a prerequisite for a successful educational process; this is why it should be encouraged as early as possible. As stated above, the Act defines "formation of sustainable attitudes and motivation for LLL" as one of the main aims of pre-school and school education.

A real policy challenge is improving the attitudes towards learning of most of the representatives of the Roma ethnic group. Many Roma people do not see school as having direct practical benefits, Roma females tend to marry early and traditionally drop out of school at the age of 12 or 13. In general, school is not perceived as an institution which matches the social norms and aspirations of many of the young Roma people.<sup>100</sup>

Another challenge stems from the fact that according to data from the Adult Education Survey (2011), about one third of Bulgarian respondents did not participate in education and training due to financial reasons<sup>101</sup> (in all other countries this percentage is lower). This means that improving learners' disposition would not significantly improve participation in adult education if it is not accompanied by other measures.<sup>102</sup>

### 5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning

As a rule, employers (except the big international companies) in Bulgaria do not consider training as an investment. The reasons are associated with the difficult financial situations of enterprises and a lack of incentive mechanisms for employers.<sup>103</sup> In 2012 companies reduced funds for education by up to 0.13% of their total labour costs.<sup>104</sup> Bulgaria is one of the four

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<sup>99</sup> Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all languages):

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe": <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> Council of Ministers (2013). *Доклад за младежта (2010-2012)* [Report on Youth (2010-2012)], available at <http://www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=966>; Boyadjieva, P., Milenkova, V., Gornev, G., Petkova, K., Nenkova, D. (2012a). *The LLL hybrid: Policy, Institutions and Learners in Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria*. Sofia, Chapter 4.

<sup>101</sup> <http://ill.mon.bg/system/download>; European Literacy Policy Network (2016). Literacy in Bulgaria. Country report adults. Ed. by Jenny Litster and David Mallows. ELINET project, available at [http://www.eli-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user\\_upload/Bulgaria\\_Adults\\_Report.pdf](http://www.eli-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Bulgaria_Adults_Report.pdf), p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2013). *Анализ на сектора за учене на възрастни в България* [Analysis of the Sector of Adult Education in Bulgaria]. Sofia, available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/Analiz\\_adult.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/Analiz_adult.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 95.

<sup>104</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). *Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г.* (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, available at



countries in which employers spent the least money for training of their employees. The direct cost for training per person decreased more dramatically in Bulgaria than in other EU countries.<sup>105</sup>

The National Employment Action Plan for 2017 envisages the organisation of training will be paid through vouchers, with employees being committed to co-financing 15% of training costs.<sup>106</sup>

### 5.3 Improve equity of access for all

The main target groups for access strategies to educational institutions and active measures to support insertion into the labour market, include early school leavers, ethnic minorities, the unemployed, prisoners and people with disabilities.

There are significant disparities in access to education, quality of education and educational results, caused by socio-economic factors. For example:

- Recent surveys reveal that Bulgaria is among the countries where inequity in access to higher education caused by socio-economic disadvantages is most salient.<sup>107</sup> Only 2.5% students come from families with parents who have not attained upper secondary education. Children of fathers with basic or lower education are 10 times less represented in higher education than men aged 40-60 with basic or lower education among all men aged 40-60.<sup>108</sup> Within the student cohort, students from a high socio-economic status background are overrepresented more than three times in Bulgaria<sup>109</sup>. There are huge regional differences in the country: the top-performing region is above the national target of 36% of people aged 30-34 with higher education by 2020 and the bottom-performing region is below 20%.<sup>110</sup>

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[https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka%20ikonometrichen%20model\\_bg.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvaniq%20otchet/Ocenka%20ikonometrichen%20model_bg.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 67.

<sup>105</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). *Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г.* (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, p. 68.

<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIES&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 36.

<sup>107</sup> Ilieva-Trichkova, P. and Boyadjieva, P. (2014). Dynamics of Inequalities in Access to Higher Education: Bulgaria in a Comparative Perspective", *European Journal of Higher Education*, 4(2): 97-117.

<sup>108</sup> Centre for Monitoring and Evaluation of Quality of School Education (2009). *Socio-economic Conditions of Student Life in Bulgaria. Results from participation of Bulgaria in EUROSTUDENT III.* Sofia (In Bulgarian), available at: <http://www.ckoko.bg/page.php?c=3&page=1>

European Commission, DG EAC (2014). *Education and Training Monitor 2014*, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor14\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor14_en.pdf), pp. 47-48

<sup>109</sup> Boyadjieva, P., Ilieva-Trichkova, P. (2017). Between Inclusion and Fairness Social Justice Perspective to Participation in Adult Education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 67(2) 97–117; European Commission (2016). *Education and Training Monitor 2016 Bulgaria* [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-bg\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-bg_en.pdf)

<sup>110</sup> European Commission, DG EAC (2014). *Education and Training Monitor 2014*, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor14\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor14_en.pdf), p. 39.

- Bulgaria is among the countries with highest social inequality with respect to the participation in lifelong learning – demographic obstacles to participation in formal adult education, such as being a woman, older than 45 years, having a small child, and living in the countryside, are one of the most pronounced. Bulgaria is also among the “leading” countries with regard to the existence of social barriers (low level of education, insecure or manual jobs, and low salary) to participation in formal adult education.<sup>111</sup>
- There are substantial differences among regions regarding early school leaving: only in one – South-Western region – the percentage of early school leavers is low – 5.9%. In all of the other five regions, this percentage is above the country average: 13% in South-Central region, 15.6% in North-Central, 16.8% in South-East, 17.9% in North-Central and 20.8% in North-West region.<sup>112</sup>

Raising funds for training in recent years is associated primarily with the implementation of various programmes for the training of vulnerable groups (Roma people included).<sup>113</sup> For the period January to December 2015, 11,641 unemployed Roma were involved in activities to enhance their qualifications.<sup>114</sup>

Bulgarian educational institutions offer two categories of services that – each in their own way – could potentially alleviate the problems of people wishing to continue their education. The first category comprises the services that can directly alleviate the financial burden of the learners and their families, but this class of services (e.g. grants for students; student loans; paid leave; educational leave benefits; and travel allowance) has not yet become adequately disseminated. The second category comprises services that promote an increased quality of life, which makes learning easier (e.g. internet access; functioning libraries; study advice and careers services; student dormitories and cafeterias and organised transport).

Regarding access to non-formal adult education it should be mentioned that throughout Bulgaria there are presently around 3,500 cultural centres (*Čitálišta*), with approximately 2,500 of them in rural areas, which offer different non-formal education activities.

#### 5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant

As already pointed out in 3.1, the unsatisfactory relevance of people’s skills to the labour market needs is a real problem in Bulgaria. That is why the national Strategy for Lifelong

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<sup>111</sup> Boyadjieva, P., Milenkova, V., Gornev, G., Petkova, K., Nenkova, D. (2012a). *The LLL hybrid: Policy, Institutions and Learners in Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, p. 202.

<sup>112</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/statistics-illustrated>

<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2015c). Последваща оценка на приноса на активната политика на пазара на труда за изменение на избрани показатели, характеризиращи икономическото и социално развитие на страната за периода 2000–2011 г. (Subsequent Evaluation of the Contribution of Active Policy on the labor market for Modification of Selected Indicators Characterizing the Economic and Social Development of the Country for the Period 2000-2011]. Sofia, available at [https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvanig%20otchet/Ocenka\\_Ikonometrichen%20model\\_bg.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/strategii%20izsledvanig%20otchet/Ocenka_Ikonometrichen%20model_bg.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Агенция по заетостта [Employment Agency] (2016). *Годишен обзор 2015* [Annual Review 2015] <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/stats/view/4/187/>, p. 46.

Learning for the period 2014-2020 defines "Promoting education and training aligned to the needs of the economy and changes on the labour market" as one of its priorities.<sup>115</sup>

The Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020 includes among its main activities "Implementing a system for forecasting the needs of the labour market of workers with certain characteristics."<sup>116</sup> The Bulgarian Industrial Association recently finished the "Development of Workforce Competence Assessment System by Sectors and Regions." project<sup>117</sup>. The project aims at a) Analysing and defining workforce competence requirements by considering EU, national and sector-level requirements and standards and b) Establishing a Bulgarian Competence Assessment Network by Sectors and Regions and a Workforce Competence Assessment System and updating them in accordance with current and future labour market demands. The Workforce Competence Assessment System (MyCompetence<sup>118</sup>) was created as part of this project.

However, the Bulgarian National Audit Office critically acknowledges that "[s]ince 2009 the employers' needs for training of the employed persons and the specific features of the regions have not been examined periodically by the Employment Agency. Therefore, there is a risk for funding training that does not correspond to the needs of employers in the conditions of economic crisis."<sup>119</sup>

## 5.5 Deliver learning that is of high quality

The Ministry of Education and Science, and the National Agency ensure through the quality of adult learning for Vocational Education and Training.<sup>120</sup> The Ministry of Education and Science regulates the quality of formal adult education<sup>121</sup> whereas the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training ensures the quality of formal and non-formal education in order to improve professional qualification and skills.

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act there are vocational state educational standards for acquiring vocational qualifications by adults. The Act defines specific

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<sup>115</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2014a). National Strategy for Lifelong Education for the Period 2014-2020), available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143>, p. 18.

<sup>116</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2015d). *План за действие в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 г.* [Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>117</sup> <http://en.bia-bg.com/project/view/arc/21108/>

<sup>118</sup> <http://mycompetence.bg/home/>

<sup>119</sup> Bulgarian National Audit Office (2012). Audit on the implementation of the Grant Scheme BG051PO001-2.1-02 "Qualification Services and Training for Employed Persons"/phase 2/, available at <http://www.bulnao.government.bg/en/articles/reports-922>, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.navet.government.bg/>

<sup>121</sup> Formal adult education in the Bulgarian context refers to education and /or training of adults in the school system and vocational training centres, see Ministry of Education and Science (2016a). *Годишен доклад – 2015 за изпълнението на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година* (Annual Report – 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning). Sofia, available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 17.

requirements for the development of curricula for professional training of people aged above 16.<sup>122</sup>

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training develops and updates **state educational requirements for acquiring of vocational qualification**. The 2015 updated methodological documents from 2015 define requirements for the development of state educational standards by describing professions with "units of learning outcomes", which are in accordance with the European Commission recommendation to create "a European system of credit transfer in VET".<sup>123</sup> The adoption of the National Qualification Framework<sup>124</sup> provides a reliable basis for monitoring the quality of adult education.

Ensuring a good quality education for adults would require creating further initiatives and making changes at both national and institutional levels. An urgent national-level measure would be the implementation of a system of external evaluation of the vocational training centres (in addition to the control measures carried out by the National Agency for Vocational Education).<sup>125</sup>

## 5.6 Ensure coherent policy

With the establishment of the National Lifelong Learning Council in 2014 the government has set conditions to ensure effective coordination among different stakeholders in the sphere of LLL – central government bodies, local government bodies, trade unions on a national level, employer organisations, and NGOs. The National Lifelong Learning Council prepares annual and interim reports on the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, as well as action plans, which are publicly available on the Ministry of Education and Science's website.<sup>126</sup>

There are two recent positive initiatives in this respect: 1) the establishment of regional groups for lifelong learning which will facilitate better coordination of lifelong learning policies at national and regional levels;<sup>127</sup> 2) the setting up of the National Platform "United for Adult Learning" at the beginning of 2016 with the aim to ensure effective coordination of stakeholder interaction at all levels.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Закон за професионалното образование и обучение (1999, last amendments 2016) [Vocational Education and Training Act], available at <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57> (In Bulgarian).

<sup>123</sup> National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (2016). Годишен доклад за дейността на Националната агенция за професионално образование и обучение през 2015 година [Annual report on the activities of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training in 2015], available at <http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/dokumenti/dokumenti-na-napoo/>, p. 23.

<sup>124</sup> Национална квалификационна рамка на Република България (2012) [National Qualification Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria], available at <http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/nqf-bg>.

<sup>125</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143>

<sup>127</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2017d). Проект „Националните координатори в изпълнение на Европейската програма за учене на възрастни“ (Project "National Coordinators for Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning"), available at [http://iii.mon.bg/?page\\_id=52&lang=en](http://iii.mon.bg/?page_id=52&lang=en) Ministry of Education and Science (2016a). Годишен доклад – 2015 за изпълнението на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година (Annual Report – 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning). Sofia, p. 24.

<sup>128</sup> [http://iii.mon.bg/?page\\_id=2160](http://iii.mon.bg/?page_id=2160)



## 6.0 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

### 6.1 Strengths

The **elaboration of a series of normative acts, strategies and action plans and the establishment of the National Lifelong Learning Council and regional groups for lifelong learning**. The new Pre-school and School Education Act and Amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act provide a conceptual basis and concrete mechanisms for bringing about profound reforms in Bulgarian school education that will have long-term effects on adult education as well. Among the strategic documents, the most relevant to the development of adult education are the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020 and related action plans, and the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year.

The **development of mechanisms for monitoring quality of adult education through:**  
a) the elaboration of state educational requirements for vocational qualifications; b) the functioning of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training as an accreditation, licensing and control body over the activities of providers of vocational education and training; c) the adoption of the National Qualification Framework.<sup>129</sup>

The introduction of **training vouchers** as a mechanism for financing the training of adults – both employed and unemployed. In connection with the new programming period of the OP HRD a new decree has been adopted which regulates the terms and conditions for the provision of training vouchers based on the best practices from the previous programming period.<sup>130</sup> Vouchers are provided for vocational education and for training in key competencies. There are some limitations in the use of vouchers – for example, for the entire 2014-2020 programming period; one person is entitled to receive only one voucher for vocational training and only one voucher to acquiring key competency. Providers who wish to offer training paid with vouchers have to meet some special requirements.<sup>131</sup>

### 6.2 Weaknesses

**The low overall effectiveness** of the way the reforms and policy measures have been implemented and as a consequence of the adult education system. On the one hand, each year concrete action plans for the implementation of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy and for employment are elaborated which include specific measures and programmes for

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<sup>129</sup> *Национална квалификационна рамка на Република България* (2012) [National Qualification Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria], available at <http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/nqf-bg>.

<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2016). *Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2016 г.* [National Employment Action Plan for 2016], available at <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=249> (In Bulgarian), p. 19.

<sup>131</sup> Council of Ministers (2015). *Постановление № 280 от 15.10.2015 г. за определяне на условията и реда за предоставяне на ваучери за обучение на безработни и заети лица* [Decree of the Council of Ministers No 280 of 15 October 2015 laying down the conditions and procedure for the provision of training vouchers for unemployed and employed persons], available at <http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/PMS-280-15-10-2015-vaucheri.pdf>

adult education and training. It is reported that in 2015 out of 147 tasks foreseen for the implementation of the national Strategy for LLL 100 tasks were "fully implemented" (68%), 15 were "implemented to some degree" (10.2%), 11 were "rather unimplemented" (7.5%) and 21 were "not implemented" (14.3%).<sup>132</sup> On the other hand, however, the participation rate of Bulgarians in LLL remains the second lowest among EU countries.

**The investment in adult education is not sufficient and the infrastructure for adult education and training is very unevenly developed** in different country regions. The main difficulties faced by institutions for adult education are associated with shortage of funds for modernisation, a lack of adapted adult learner textbooks, inadequate methodological training of teachers and trainers working with adults, and a shortage of funds to improve the qualification of teachers.<sup>133</sup> A considerable proportion of people with low educational levels live in remote settlements where there are few or no educational institutions, and if any, they lack 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 overall. For example, in Sofia there are 483 centres for vocational education whereas in the whole North-West region, in which the participation rate in LLL is negligible, they are only 35; in the district of Vidin they are only 4.<sup>134</sup> In Bulgaria, there are insufficient financial support schemes for input - return and retention of adult learners to formal education and training. Bulgaria lags behind in the supply and funding of flexible training suited to adults, short courses, distance learning and e-learning elements<sup>135</sup>.

**The lack of timely and comprehensive impact analyses and of systematic, evidence-based mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring of measures and programmes in adult education.** Several nation-wide programmes and projects have been realised in adult education. However, thorough analytical analyses of their results going beyond descriptive statistics and reporting have not yet been carried out. There is also a lack of systematic studies on adult education, attitudes and needs of adults.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2016a). *Годишен доклад – 2015 за изпълнението на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 година* (Annual Report – 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning). Sofia, available at <http://www.mon.bg/?qo=page&pageId=74&subpageId=143> (In Bulgarian), p. 56.

<sup>133</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2013). *Анализ на сектора за учене на възрастни в България* [Analysis of the Sector of Adult Education in Bulgaria]. Sofia, available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/Analiz\\_adult.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/Analiz_adult.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 96.

<sup>134</sup> National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (2017). *Годишен доклад за дейността на Националната агенция за професионално образование и обучение през 2016 година* [Annual report on the activities of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training in 2016] available at [http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/Doklad\\_NAPOO\\_2016\\_US\\_01.02.pdf](http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/Doklad_NAPOO_2016_US_01.02.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> <http://www.navet.government.bg/>, p. 18; National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (2016). *Годишен доклад за дейността на Националната агенция за професионално образование и обучение през 2015 година* [Annual report on the activities of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training in 2015] available at <http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/dokumenti/dokumenti-na-napoo/>, p. 21.

<sup>135</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2015c). *Анализ на състоянието на формалната училищна система за образование и обучение на възрастни* [Analysis of the formal school system for education and training of adults]. Sofia, p. 61.

<sup>136</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2015c). *Анализ на състоянието на формалната училищна система за образование и обучение на възрастни* [Analysis of the formal school system for education and training of adults]. Sofia, available at [http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/Analysis\\_AL\\_2015-last.pdf](http://ill.mon.bg/uploaded_files/Analysis_AL_2015-last.pdf) (In Bulgarian), p. 53.



There are some recent **alarming facts** which will have an impact on the future development of adult education and should be taken very seriously by all stakeholders<sup>137</sup>: these are a) **The increase in the percentage of early school leavers** from 12.9% in 2014 to 13.4% in 2015 and 13.7% in 2016<sup>138</sup>; b) **The decrease in the enrolment rates in all levels of education, except higher education**: pre-school – from 83.6% in 2013/2014 to 82.9% in 2014/2015 and 81% in 2015/2016; basic – from 95.5% to 94.8% in 2014/2015 and 93.2% in 2015/2016; lower secondary – from 79.7% to 78.6% in 2014/2015 and 78.3% in 2015/2016; upper secondary – from 83.0% to 82.2% in 2014/2015 and 81.5% in 2015/2016 and higher – from 39.0% to 39.5% in 2014/2015 and 40% in 2015/2016<sup>139</sup>; c) **The substantial differences among country regions and disparities** in access to education (adult education included), quality of education and educational results, caused by socio-economic factors.

Given the strengths and weaknesses of the adult education system, the outlined tendencies and being mindful of the overall economic situation in Bulgaria, it is not realistic to expect radical change in the participation rate of Bulgarians in LLL and adult education in the short term. The biggest problems required to overcome relate to the effectiveness of the developed policies and programmes, as well as the characteristics of the economic situation.

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<sup>137</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>138</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020\\_40&plugin=1](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_40&plugin=1)

<sup>139</sup> National Statistical Institute (2016). *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria*. Sofia: NSI., p. 102.



## 7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

Current national policies in the area of adult education are relevant and overall well elaborated. However due to their low effectiveness (measured with participation rates of Bulgarian citizens in adult learning as well as with investment in adult education and training) they are not able to sufficiently address the main challenges facing the national adult education system.

**Further reforms and new measures are needed to be addressed in the following areas<sup>140</sup>:**

- a) The low effectiveness of the educational measures and programmes in raising participation rates in adult education, especially with regard to Roma people and social groups with low social background;
- b) The lack of sufficient correspondence between people's education and qualifications, and the needs of the labour market;
- c) The disparities in access to adult education and educational results, caused by socio-economic factors;
- d) The lack of a clear vision and well-defined strategic objectives in the area of vocational adult education. Recently, the Bulgarian National Audit Office has recommended that the Ministry of Science and Education update the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year, which also refers to adult vocational education, by elaborating a clear vision, strategic objectives and guiding principles for the implementation of the strategy.<sup>141</sup>
- e) The insufficient employers' investment in adult learning.

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<sup>140</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>141</sup> Bulgarian National Audit Office (2016). *Одитен доклад № 0300100515 за извършен одит на изпълнение „Професионално образование за заетост“ за периода от 01.01.2012 г. до 31.12.2014 г.* [Audit Report № 0300100515 of the audit of execution of "Vocational Education for Employment" for the period from 01.01.2012 to 31.12.2014, available at <http://www.bulnao.government.bg/bg/articles/probojni-v-profesionalno-obrazovanie-ustanovi-odit-na-smetnata-palata-1614>, p. 63.

## 8.0 SUMMARY

Bulgaria has invested in various initiatives to reform its school adult education system. However, at this stage, many of these initiatives have not been transferred from strategic documents into concrete results that can show improved quality of education or increased equality of educational opportunities.

Recently, **Bulgaria has recorded uneven progress towards reaching its national targets:**

- The employment rate among those aged 20-64 years has increased and reached 67.7%, but it remains lower than that the target set in the National Strategy Bulgaria 2020 (76%).
- Bulgaria is among the countries with the lowest participation rate in lifelong learning in the EU. The 2016 participation rate in lifelong learning in Bulgaria (2.2%) is 8.6 percentage points below the EU-28 average and a long way below the EU 2020 target of 15%. In addition, Bulgaria is not improving at the required rate in order to be able to reach the national target goal for 2020 which is set at 5%.
- There has been a persistent fall in the proportion of people with less than primary and lower secondary education (25-64 years old) in Bulgaria – from 32.5% in 2000, to 20% in 2011, 18.1% in 2015 and 17.7% in 2016. The share of people with less than lower secondary education is 5.3 percentage points below the average in the EU (23%).
- The proportion of people with less than primary and lower secondary education is unevenly distributed among different ethnic groups in Bulgaria, being highest among the Roma population. The participation rates in lifelong learning of people with less than primary, lower secondary education is extremely low in Bulgaria, and their value cannot be assessed statistically.

Although the measures that have recently been undertaken are positive, they are not enough to overcome some of the major problems in the development of adult education in Bulgaria. The main problems are<sup>142</sup>:

- **The effectiveness of the way the reforms and programmes have been implemented is low** – although the data show an increase in the participation rate of people aged 24-65 in lifelong learning by 0.2% (from 2% in 2015 to 2.2% in 2016) this increase is insufficient to overcome the country's lagging behind the EU average and the national target. Each year concrete action plans for the implementation of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy and for employment are elaborated, which include specific measures and programmes for adult education and training (Ministry of

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<sup>142</sup> Experts view.

Education and Science 2017a; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2017). Given this, obviously there is a serious problem with their effectiveness.

- **The investment in adult learning is not sufficient** and the infrastructure for adult education and training is very unevenly distributed across the country.
- **There is insufficient correspondence between people's education and qualifications, and the needs of the labour market.** According to the recent country report of the European Commission measures within the Youth Guarantee; "so far have focused on young people with secondary and tertiary education and had only a limited impact on the low-skilled".<sup>143</sup>
- **The education and employment of Roma population remains a big problem.** In its report Bulgaria 2017 the European Commission refers to different sources which reveal that the "employment prospects of Roma remain precarious, mainly due to their low qualifications, social exclusion and discrimination" and that "the inclusion of Roma in professional trainings is also very low."<sup>144</sup>
- **Early school leaving is rising** with consequences for the development of adult education. The European Commission acknowledges that "early school leaving increased to 13.4 % in 2015 (above the national EU 2020 target of 11 %) amid high regional variations and urban-rural disparities" and that "it is particularly high among Roma (30)". It is also acknowledged that "EU funds are used to provide second chance education, literacy courses and qualifications to adults who dropped out from school."<sup>145</sup>

Largely, the updates of the Bulgarian NRP from 2015, 2016 and 2017 were relevant in light of recent developments and managed to address CSRs and most of the problems in Bulgarian education. A series of normative acts, strategies and action plans related to education, LLL and adult education included, have been elaborated and adopted. The most important among them are; the new Pre-school and School Education Act, the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020, the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 year. In addition, a National Lifelong Learning Council and regional groups for lifelong learning were established, and several nation-wide programmes and projects have been created in the sphere of adult education, targeted mainly at unemployed people and vulnerable groups (Roma included). However, well-developed normative regulations and strategic acts are only the first step

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<sup>143</sup> European Commission (2017a). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Country Report Bulgaria 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, Brussels, 28.2.2017 SWD(2017) 68 final/3, p. 31.

<sup>144</sup> European Commission (2017a). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Country Report Bulgaria 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, Brussels, 28.2.2017 SWD(2017) 68 final/3, p. 31.

<sup>145</sup> European Commission (2017a). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Country Report Bulgaria 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, Brussels, 28.2.2017 SWD(2017) 68 final/3, p. 34.

towards a successful reform. There are at least six **major problems that deserve special attention from all stakeholders** and urgent policy measures<sup>146</sup>:

- The low effectiveness of the way the reforms and programmes have been implemented.
- The insufficient correspondence between people's qualification and the needs of the labour market.
- The insufficient employers' investment in learning.
- The very uneven distribution of the infrastructure for adult education across the country.
- The disparities in access to adult education and its results, caused by socio-economic factors.
- The lack of timely and comprehensive impact analyses and of systematic, evidence-based mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring of measures and programmes in adult education. In addition, there is a lack of systematic studies on adult education, attitudes and needs of adults.

The country specific recommendations on the 2017 National Reform Programme of Bulgaria, issued by the European Commission on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017, do not explicitly refer to adult education. However, the recommendation "Improve the targeting of active labour market policies and the integration between employment and social services for disadvantaged groups", in fact includes further development and improvement of adult education as far as education and training of adults are an integral part of active labour market policies.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Expert's view.

<sup>147</sup> European Commission (2017b). Recommendation for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the 2017 National Reform Programme of Bulgaria and delivering a Council opinion on the 2017 Convergence Programme of Bulgaria, Brussels, 22.5.2017 COM(2017) 502 final, p. 7.

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*Българска стопанска камера* [Bulgarian Industrial Association] <http://en.bia-bg.com/focus/>

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European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants, <http://eeagrants.org/News/2016/A-good-start-for-Roma-children>

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**ANNEXES**

**Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws**

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
National Strategy for Lifelong Education for the Period 2014-2020	2014	Defines the strategic objectives, priorities and progress indicators in LLL; outlines the content, forms, environment, and interactions among all actors in the lifelong learning process; envisages support for the networking of providers of education and training.
Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020	2014	The Strategy defines as a priority increasing participation of adults in lifelong learning activities and encouraging adult engagement in continuous training as well as acquiring key competencies to complement professional knowledge and skills.
National Strategy for Promotion and Improvement of Literacy Skills (2014-2020)	2014	Defines priorities and measures for improvement of literacy skills of both students and adults.
Pre-school and School Education Act	2015	Defines educational structure, educational institutions and forms of education.
Amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act	2016	The amendments: 1) envisage validation and recognition of professional knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non - formal education and informal learning; 2) defines institutions which have the right to offer vocational education and training to students older than 16 years; 3) define 5 framework programmes for training people aged 16 or over; 4) defines requirements for developing curriculum for a vocational training for persons over 16 years of age; 5) defines terms and conditions for admission of persons over 16 years of age in vocational programmes; 6) defines forms of training for persons over the age of 16 - daily, evening, independent, individual, distance and work - based learning (dual training system).

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Employment Act	Promotion	2001 Last amendments 2016 Amendments from 2008 define the content of adult education and the institutions of adult education	Regulates vocational training for adults at the work place.
Decree of the Council of Ministers No 280 of 15 October 2015 laying down the conditions and procedure for the provision of training vouchers for unemployed and employed persons		2015	Regulates the terms and conditions for the provision of training vouchers for the new programming period of the OP HRD 2014-2020. Vouchers are provided for vocational education and for training in key competencies. Providers which want to offer training paid with vouchers have to meet some special requirements
Community Centres Act		1996 Last amendments 2013 Amendments 2009 – define their status, establishment and activities.	Envisages educational and training activities for adults.



## Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Organising courses for raising adult literacy	Ministry of Education and Science (2014). <i>Национален план за действие в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за насърчаване и повишаване на грамотността през периода 2015-2016</i> . [National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Promotion and Improvement of Literacy Skills (2014-2020)], available at <a href="http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pagelId=74&amp;subpagelId=143">http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pagelId=74&amp;subpagelId=143</a> (In Bulgarian).	HRD 2 000 000 leva (€1 000 000 )	3000 each year	x		x	x			Purpose: Increasing adult literacy and educational attainment.
Organising courses for										Responsible entity: Ministry of

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acquiring basic education raising adult literacy			10000 each year							Education and Science
Introduction of dual education	Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование [Pre-school and School Education Act], State Gazette, issue 79, October 13, 2015, <a href="http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pageId=7&amp;subpageId=57">http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pageId=7&amp;subpageId=57</a> (In Bulgarian).				x		x			<p>Purpose: Improving practical education of students and strengthening the links between education and business.</p> <p>Responsible entity: Ministry of Education and Science</p>
Organisation of trainings paid through vouchers,	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). <i>Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.</i> [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <a href="https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICI&amp;SI&amp;I=249">https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICI&amp;SI&amp;I=249</a> (In Bulgarian).				x		x			<p>Purpose: Improving professional qualification of employees</p>

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with employees being committed to co-financing 15% of training costs.										Stimulating employers' investment in training	Responsible entity: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency
Project "New Chance for Success" under Procedure "Adult Literacy - Phase 1" of the Operational Programme "Science	Ministry of Education and Science (2017c). „Нов шанс за успех“ по процедура „Ограмотяване на възрастни – фаза 1“ на Оперативна програма „Наука и образование за интелигентен растеж“ (Project "New Chance for Success" under Procedure "Adult Literacy - Phase 1" of the Operational programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020"), available at <a href="http://sf.mon.bg/?go=news&amp;p=detail&amp;newsId=419">http://sf.mon.bg/?go=news&amp;p=detail&amp;newsId=419</a> (In Bulgarian).	The budget of the project is BGN 24 994 462.50 (approximately 12 500 000 euros) (Ministry of Education	The main project target groups are: people without completed stages and levels of education, unemploy	x		x	x			Purpose: Increasing adult education and professional competencies.	Responsible entity: Employment Agency

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and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020		and Science 2017c).	ed and illiterate persons.							
Training programmes "Step forward", "Chance for work 2017"	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2017). <i>Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2017 г.</i> [National Employment Action Plan for 2017], available at <a href="https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICI&amp;ESI&amp;I=249">https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICI&amp;ESI&amp;I=249</a> (In Bulgarian).		Persons with basic and lower education or without education, registered at the labor offices.	x		x	x			Responsible entities: Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Project "Training of adults who have undergone literacy courses"										
Organising courses for raising qualification of adults educators	Ministry of Education and Science (2014). <i>Национален план за действие в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за насърчаване и повишаване на грамотността през периода 2015-2016.</i> [National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Promotion and Improvement of Literacy Skills (2014-2020)], available at <a href="http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pageId=74&amp;subpageId=143">http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pageId=74&amp;subpageId=143</a> (In Bulgarian).		500		x		x	x		Purpose: Increasing professional qualification of adult educators.

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										Responsible entity: Ministry of Education and Science
Development of framework curricula for initial and continuing vocational education and training for acquiring professional qualification degree for students and people over the age of 16.	Ministry of Education and Science (2014). <i>Национален план за действие в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за насърчаване и повишаване на грамотността през периода 2015-2016</i> . [National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Promotion and Improvement of Literacy Skills (2014-2020)], available at <a href="http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pagelId=74&amp;subpagelId=143">http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pagelId=74&amp;subpagelId=143</a> (In Bulgarian).			x			x	x		<p>Purpose: Increasing relevance of people's skills to the needs of the labour market.</p> <p>Responsible entity: Ministry of Education and Science</p>
Updating of the National Qualifications Framework	Ministry of Education and Science (2017). <i>Проект на План за действие за 2017 в изпълнение на Националната стратегия за учене през целия живот за периода 2014-2020 г.</i> (Draft of an Action Plan for 2017 for Implementation of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020), available at						x	x		<p>Purpose: Increasing relevance of people's skills to</p>

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in accordance with the new structure of education.	<a href="http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pagelId=381&amp;subpagelId=63">http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&amp;pagelId=381&amp;subpagelId=63</a> (In Bulgarian).									the needs of the labour market.
										Responsible entity: Ministry of Education and Science
Establishment of regional groups for lifelong learning.	Ministry of Education and Science (2017). Проект „Националните координатори в изпълнение на Европейската програма за учене на възрастни“ (Project “National Coordinators for Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning”), available at <a href="http://ill.mon.bg/?page_id=52&amp;lang=en">http://ill.mon.bg/?page_id=52&amp;lang=en</a>								x	Purpose: Improving coordination between stakeholders in LLL at national and regional levels  Responsible entity:  National Coordination Group for Lifelong Learning
Setting up of National Platform	Ministry of Education and Science (2017). Проект „Националните координатори в изпълнение на								x	Purpose: Ensuring effective

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<p>“United for Adult Learning” at the beginning of 2016.</p>	<p>Европейската програма за учене на възрастни” (Project “National Coordinators for Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning”), available at <a href="http://ill.mon.bg/?page_id=2160">http://ill.mon.bg/?page_id=2160</a></p>									<p>coordination of stakeholders’ interaction at all levels.</p> <p>Responsible entity: Ministry of Education and Science</p>
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