



**PEER REVIEW REPORT  
BULGARIA**



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SHARING EXPERTISE  
IN TRAINING

WORKING PAPER FINAL

# **CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN BULGARIA**

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*The contents, opinions and recommendations contained in this report are those of the peer  
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*ETF, 2004*



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to express their gratitude to all those who assisted the peer team in undertaking its research and consultations and who contributed ideas, comments and proposals as to how continuing vocational training in Bulgaria can be improved. The team was particularly impressed with the 'open door' policy of all key institutions and stakeholders that allowed easy access to information and constructive dialogue with all partners.

The team would like to thank the experts and officials of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of the Economy, Employment Agency, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, National Statistical Institute, Institute for Education and social partners. In particular, cooperation at grassroots level was greatly appreciated: regional and municipal administration in South Central and North Central regions, schools, training centres, universities, non-government organisations, companies, regional and local employment offices, and regional development agencies. This allowed the team to undertake a 'reality check' and was critical to the formulation of ideas and proposals that followed in the report.

Finally, the peer team would like to thank the staff of the Observatory in Bulgaria for providing background materials, the elaboration of a full and balanced programme and excellent logistics.



## PREFACE

In 2002 the European Training Foundation (ETF) launched a new peer review programme in South Eastern European countries that are preparing or already running EU funded CARDS<sup>1</sup> projects in the field of vocational education and training. The programme is a follow-up to the thematic reviews of education policy carried out by the OECD during 2000 and 2001, and is funded from the ETF's own budget. In 2002 peer reviews were carried out in Albania, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Kosovo<sup>2</sup>, while peer reviews in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Turkey followed in 2003 and thereafter.

The focus of this peer review programme is to evaluate recent progress in VET policy development and to propose activities that could be undertaken to help to bring the reform process forward. The ETF's peer reviews aim at both policy advice and capacity building in the region. They are organised in such a way as to:

- contribute to an exchange of policy experience and enhance learning processes among national stakeholders;
- contribute to develop policy analysis capacities in the countries of the region;
- promote, in an effective way, regional cooperation between actors involved in similar activities;
- contribute to the CARDS and Phare programming and implementation cycle.

The present peer review cycle contains five phases.

- A specific review topic is agreed with the country in question.
- National background material is prepared by both the host country and the country manager of the ETF, which includes the drafting of a briefing paper.
- A peer review team is set up and pays a visit to the country.
- A review report is formulated and circulated.
- The ETF organises specific staff development activities as a follow-up to the national review, as well as regional dissemination events to share experience between experts.

The aim of the final reports is to give policy advice and to identify short- and medium-term actions rather than to provide a complete academic analysis of the VET system and reform proposals. The reports contain substantiated and operational conclusions and recommendations that should allow policy makers in the country in question to design follow-up activities.

The ETF does not see the peer reviews as one-off events but rather as a continuous cycle during which the ETF would provide inputs into the VET reform processes in the relevant countries. It is therefore planned to arrange subsequent review missions with external peers every two to three years. After the completion of the first peer reviews in 2002 and 2003 an evaluation will be undertaken to assess the results achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> CARDS is the European Union's assistance programme to South Eastern European countries.

<sup>2</sup> Under international administration in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bulgarian government has attached high priority to developing continuing vocational training (CVT) as part of a general strategy to promote lifelong learning, which has been emphasised in many policy documents.

The government and the European Commission have agreed on the development of a strategy for adult learning (particularly including a methodology for the vocational training of adults with the support of the Phare Programme 2003). In addition, a national strategy for CVT is being developed that is expected to feed into the above-mentioned adult learning strategy under Phare 2003. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is progressing with its development and has set up a working group with representatives of the relevant authorities, such as the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), and the National Institute of Education.

Based on agreements between the MES, the MLSP and the ETF, a peer review team was set up to review the situation of CVT in Bulgaria in terms of the wider EU concept of lifelong learning (the latter encompassing all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies from a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective). In this respect the peer review report is expected to give an indication of how the recent policies of the Bulgarian government have contributed to the understanding of the concepts within the country and the progress of the implementation of the new policies so far. The main conclusions and recommendations focus on the development of the above-mentioned adult learning strategy in Bulgaria.

The review was undertaken in November 2003. The peer review team studied available policies, strategies, laws and other documents, and conducted interviews and meetings with policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders both at national level and in two regions: North Central and South Central. The Bulgarian authorities and the Delegation of the European Commission to Bulgaria proposed to concentrate on these two regions, with a view to complementing Phare initiatives. While the North Central region is considered rather poor in economic and employment terms compared to the South Central region, the characteristics and development trends in CVT follow much the same patterns in the regions visited as those in the whole country. As the team did not identify any region-specific factors that would affect the development of CVT supply or demand, the recommendations presented by the team can be applied to the whole system.

The team focused on a selected number of issues, including the perception of the concepts of CVT and lifelong learning in Bulgaria, and analyses of supply and demand, followed by concrete recommendations for improvement and suggestions for next steps in order to match supply and demand.

## PEER REVIEW TEAM'S FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This brief overview of the main findings and recommendations in the executive summary is based on Chapter 5 – Continuing vocational training supply and demand: how to match them, and Chapter 6 – Recommendations for next steps, where further details and information can be found.

The Bulgarian government has made good progress in including CVT issues in current policy documents and priorities. However, following the observations by the team of the need to support the development of the capacity of the providers on the one hand, and meeting the emerging needs of different client groups (including unemployed people, employed people, employers and marginalised/disadvantaged groups) on the other, the team recommends that relevant ministries (MLSP, Ministry of Economy, MES and branch/sector ministries) together with social partners and other stakeholders undertake in-depth analyses of the demand and supply sides in order to create a sound basis for policy making and monitoring.

The Vocational Education and Training Act, the Employment Promotion Act and the Crafts Act provide a good legal framework for CVT and lifelong learning, and stipulate the involvement of social partners in all relevant structures. Even so, the team concluded that the involvement of key stakeholders is often rather formal and that there is not enough evidence of coordination

between different policy fields. Therefore it is recommended that the MLSP and the MES, together with national agencies and relevant stakeholders, review the existing laws, strategic documents and structures, while developing the CVT and lifelong learning strategy. In addition, further involvement of the Ministry of Economy and branch ministries should be investigated. Furthermore, well-coordinated cooperation with key stakeholders (social partners, VET and labour market institutions) at national and local levels will assist in effective policy design and implementation. This approach will ensure that CVT is incorporated into different policy fields. The strategy must be followed by a concrete action plan and the allocation of resources for its implementation.

Despite the efforts made in the implementation of the policies and laws by the MLSP and the MES, the team observed low levels of awareness of the new concepts of CVT and lifelong learning, and of the new government policies in society, especially among employers, and relatively low level of motivation for CVT among some segments of the population. The team recommends that the MLSP and the MES launch a campaign to raise public awareness of CVT and lifelong learning.

Following the analysis of the supply side, the team concluded that the potential of public providers is under exploited for several reasons, with a deadlock in the current financial regulations requiring public training institutions to transfer self-generated income from CVT to the State Treasury, instead of investing it in improving the quality of provision. Therefore it is recommended that the current financial regulations be amended so that they provide incentives for public schools to invest in upgrading the delivery of initial vocational education and CVT, while ensuring financial transparency. The team has proposed several measures to enable the MES to support the development of CVT in vocational schools and universities with a view to improving the quality and responsiveness to the labour market.

Though interviews suggest that there are many private and NGO sector providers active in the CVT market, the range and quality of courses is variable and their visibility low. Therefore it is recommended that the MLSP together with other relevant ministries create favourable conditions for the involvement of private sector organisations and NGOs in the provision of high-quality CVT and support them through capacity building and networking measures. Building on and further developing existing structures and the initiatives proposed by the MLSP is the way forward.

Improving access to CVT and raising the skill levels of the workforce should be considered a major priority for enhancing the country's competitiveness. Measures to addressing this could include:

- better targeting of training to disadvantaged groups, combined with adequate support measures;
- increasing the level of motivation of individuals through promotion of better links between career development and training;
- supporting employers in understanding the value of CVT through appropriate awareness-promotion activities (for example, the identification and dissemination of good practice);
- developing flexible and more accessible forms of CVT provision (such as e-learning and second-chance schools);
- encouraging new ways of sharing financial responsibilities between the state, enterprises and individuals;
- ensuring effective and non-bureaucratic implementation of the recent financial incentives created by the Employment Promotion Law.

In order to create efficient interfaces between the clients of CVT and CVT provision, further development of support structures for CVT is required, together with the promotion of services and concepts of CVT and lifelong learning to the wider public. The team identified the qualification system, the career counselling and guidance system and a resource centre for

the methodological support of providers as the main structures that should be developed further or established.

As public funding related to CVT is mainly targeted at unemployed people, and in particular to disadvantaged groups, it is recommended that the existing financing schemes, including funding by international projects, be reviewed, and financial support extended to the entire workforce, as appropriate.



# 1. GENERAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY

## 1.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since the country committed itself to EU accession, several documents have been adopted by the Bulgarian government that outline human resource development as an important issue, and there is commitment from all stakeholders to develop human resources further, for the competitiveness, employability and adaptability of the Bulgarian citizens. The following documents are relevant in this context: the government policy document 'The People are the Wealth of Bulgaria', EU Accession 2007 and annual progress reports (Paragraph 18), the Joint Assessment Paper 2002 (CVT being a priority). The 'New Social Policy Strategy' (2002–05) concentrates on four aspects, including VET, and contains an action plan that describes measures at national and regional levels. Since 2001 the National Employment Action Plan has been developed; this defines concrete active labour market measures and the budget for implementation. Furthermore, in August 2003 the MLSP developed the Operational Human Resources Development Programme as an integral part of the Community support framework for utilisation of EU structural funds and the Employment Strategy for the years 2004–10.

## 1.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Eurostat data, GDP per capita in purchasing power standard (PPS) for Bulgaria was estimated at €6 400 in 2002, representing about 26% of the EU-15 average, up from €6 100 (2001) and €5 600 (2000). In 2002 the Bulgarian economy continued to develop rapidly. In 2002 GDP growth was 4.9%, up from 4.1% in 2001. In 2003 the increase in real GDP was 4.3% compared with 2002. The Eurostat forecasts indicate that this will increase to 5.0% in 2004 and 5.5% in 2005.

The economic activity rate (15–64 age group) is declining, with an average value of 60.9% in 2003 compared to 61.9% in 2002. The number of workers laid off in 2000–02 was more than 13% of the labour force; this has implications for CVT demand and supply.

According to preliminary data on sectors from the National Statistical Institute, in 2003 the number of persons employed increased in 13 economic activity groups and decreased in 15 groups compared with 2002. The highest increases were observed in public administration (12.6%), manufacturing of furniture and waste recycling (12.5%), manufacturing of food products (4.1%), manufacturing of wood and wood products (4.1%) and construction (4.1%). For the same period the number of persons employed fell in the manufacturing of coke and refined petroleum products (–10.6%), health and social work (–6.2%) and fishing (–5.1%). The branches in which employment levels have been maintained or increased in the past five years have been certain types of processing industries, construction, trade, tourism and public administration.

There are economic disparities between urban and rural areas, which are now being addressed under regional development plans and programmes.

Demographic developments in Bulgaria have been unfavourable, as the population has been declining since 1989 (11% in 2003), and is expected to fall by a further one million, or 12%, by 2020. The sharpest fall between 2000 and 2020 will be in the 15–29 age group (a decrease of over 40%), which has an impact on the education and training systems and, in the longer run, on the labour market.

### 1.3 KEY EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENTS

The unemployment rate has been at a high level since the late 1990s, but has shown a clear improvement in 2003. According to Eurostat data the level of unemployment was 13.6% in 2003, compared to 17.8% in 2002.

The high unemployment rate is due to the fact that large-scale restructuring and consequent job losses were not adequately matched by the creation of new jobs, due to the weakness of the private sector. Unemployment in Bulgaria has been characterised by sustained high levels of long-term unemployment. According to the national labour force survey (LFS) data the annual average number of long-term unemployed in 2003 was 293 700, more than half of those unemployed. Quarter III 2003 data show that a total of 40.8% of long-term unemployed people had low or no educational qualifications, which represents 27.1% of all those unemployed. The unemployment rate for women was slightly lower than that for men (12.4% for women and 13.0% for men in Quarter IV 2003).

Another feature of unemployment in Bulgaria has been the high rate of youth unemployment, which reached 39.3% in 2001, though it has since decreased to 28.1% in 2003 (29.3% in 2002).

The level of unemployment by region is extremely variable, with the lowest rates in Kardzali (5.5%) and the highest in Targovishte (26.9%) (Quarter III 2003). Unemployment tends to be high in former industrial areas, where companies have been closed and no jobs have been created, but also in rural areas.

### 1.4 PARTICIPATION IN CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Continuing vocational training in Bulgaria is defined as training delivered to persons over 16 years of age who are no longer in the formal education system. Information on participation rates in CVT is scarce and fragmented.

According to the latest available data published by the National Statistical Institute in May 2004 (<http://www.nsi.bg/SocialActivities/Education.htm>), in 2002 a total of 6 515 enterprises provided training for 176 030 participants. According to CVTS2 in 1999, a total of 151 450 employees participated in training, provided by 4 173 enterprises. This indicates an increase in the number of enterprises providing training and in the participation of employees, although the national data is not calculated following the same methodology as the CVTS2 conducted in 1999.

In 2003 a lifelong learning survey was conducted by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, as a module of the labour force survey for the second quarter of 2003. The module was included in the survey in line with the recommendation and methodology of Eurostat. According to the survey, the total number of persons aged 15 and over who were participating in at least one form of education (formal, non-formal and informal) was 1 329 500 (Quarter II 2002–Quarter II 2003), 19.9% of the total population of this age group. However, almost half of the trainees (625 800, or 47.1%) are aged 15–24 years, which indicates that most of those reported to be participating in education and training are in the age group 15–24 and are in the formal education system.

According to Eurostat data in 2003, only 1.4% (1.3% in 2002) of the adult population aged 25–64 participated in education and training, while the EU-25 average was 9.0%, and the Lisbon goal for 2010 is 12.5%.

With regard to the formal education system (vocational schools and higher education institutions) as providers of CVT, there are no data available on participation rates. The same applies to other providers such as NGOs, private providers or social partners.

The Employment Agency and labour offices provide CVT courses under active labour market measures for employed and unemployed people. The number of unemployed people who completed training activities organised by labour offices had risen to 17 632 in 2002, as compared to 16 417 in 2001. The largest group of training participants is the 29–39 age group. In 2002 the majority of participants completed qualification-upgrading courses

(10 899), followed by those undertaking retraining courses (4 776) and initial vocational training courses (1 957). In 2003 the number of people completing training courses increased to 29 294.

In 2003 the number of unemployed people who started training courses was 7.2% of all those unemployed, while in 2002 it was 2.9% (38 216 as compared to 19 102).

For the period January–September 2003, a total of 116 501 unemployed persons were participating in various measures and programmes for employment (compared to 108 220 in 2002) and 30 834 participating in training (source: National Employment Action Plan, 2004).

As for training provided for employed people in small enterprises and enterprises undergoing restructuring, the data for 2002 show little interest amongst employers, with only 554 employed people completing training, though this increased to 8 863 in 2003 (source: Employment Agency).

## 1.5 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Three laws provide the main legal framework for CVT and lifelong learning: the Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA 1999, amended in 2002), the Employment Promotion Act (EPA 2002) and the Crafts Act (2001) and the Labour Code.

**The Vocational Education and Training Act** covers initial and continuing vocational training. The main objective of the law is to guarantee quality in vocational education and training which is responsive to labour market needs and in line with developments in the European Union. The 2002 amendment abolished the accreditation requirement for the vocational schools, while the licensing procedure for non-formal institutions (such as private providers and NGOs) remains. A licence to provide vocational training is awarded when the training provided leads to the acquisition of a certificate to practise a profession, and upon completion of the appropriate procedures.

**The Employment Promotion Act and the New Social Policy Strategy** mark a shift from passive (financial) social assistance to active labour market measures for increasing employment and enhancing the qualifications of the labour force. Changes resulting from the adoption of both the new strategy and the new law point to the development of an adult learning strategy. The law introduces new institutional structures and incentives for national and regional employment policy designed with the involvement of social partners. Examples of these institutions are the National Council for the Qualification of the Workforce and the Regional Employment Committees. The Employment Promotion Act has introduced incentives for employers to hire and train unemployed people, to maintain and enhance the qualifications of employees and funding for further training, and to offer new traineeships or apprenticeships to unemployed individuals.

**The Crafts Act** follows closely the German ‘dual system’ and makes provisions for crafts training, which is a type of on-the-job-training leading to apprentice, journeyman and master qualifications. However, procedures for the implementation of crafts training need to be elaborated, and interlinkages with the Vocational Education and Training Act defined.

**The Labour Code** defines the rights of employees to training and further training, and stipulates that CVT can be provided based on a mutual agreement between the employer and the employee. In reality, it is up to the employer whether or not CVT will be provided.

## 1.6 INSTITUTIONS

The number of institutions involved either directly or indirectly in the development of CVT and lifelong learning is quite substantial. There are both bodies with management capacity and consultative structures at all levels, the most relevant of which are described below. It is important to mention from the beginning that Bulgaria has included social partners in all structures dealing with labour market and education issues, most probably as a result of the clear policy guidelines of the EU in this respect. However, the implementation of the laws often lacks clarity in terms of the responsibilities and rights of the different stakeholders

involved. Hence, the actual situation as observed by the team reflects an approach that remains rather centralised, though real efforts have been made to include tripartite bodies at all levels.

### 1.6.1 NATIONAL LEVEL

**The Council of Ministers** is responsible for state policy on education and employment. In that respect the Council approves the annual National Employment Action Plan proposed by the MLSP, thus approving the budget for labour market training.

**The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)** is responsible for the implementation of the national labour market policy, the promotion of employment for unemployed persons, and training for the acquisition of professional qualifications by employees and unemployed persons. It is also responsible for drafting the annual National Employment Action Plan for approval by the Council of Ministers, making allocations for intended labour market training on an annual basis.

In line with the EPA, the MLSP is responsible for determining the needs for vocational training through analysis of labour market trends, and for organising professional counselling. The MLSP, along with the MES, is involved in the development of the list of VET qualifications and occupational standards, and participates in the steering committee and expert commissions of NAVET. MLSP is likely to become the Managing Authority for the Human Resources Operational Programme to be financed under the European Social Fund.

**The National Consultative Council for Vocational Qualification of the Labour Force** was recently established under the MLSP. The functions and responsibilities of the Council are defined according to the EPA. The aim of the Council is to coordinate national policies and strategies for training and the acquisition of vocational qualifications by employees and unemployed persons. It is based on tripartite principles, and includes representatives of ministries and other state institutions, employers' organisations, trade unions and NGOs.

**The National Employment Agency** implements government policy for promotion of employment, protection of the labour market, provision of information and consulting, and vocational and motivational training for unemployed people and employees. With effect from 2003 it has been responsible only for the implementation of active labour market measures through its nine Regional Service Directorates, 120 Labour Office Directorates and one specialised office, 'Student Labour'.

**The Ministry of Education and Science (MES)** is responsible for the general management of the education system, including initial VET and CVT. The MES is responsible for the approval and implementation of curricula, the approval of enrolment plans and the financial management of the system. The MES appoints its representatives to the managing board and the expert commissions of NAVET.

**The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)** is a specialist body of the Council of Ministers, established under the Vocational Education and Training Act for licensing activities in the field of vocational education and training, as well as a coordinating body for the institutions involved in consulting, education and training.

The functions of NAVET include the elaboration of criteria and procedures for licensing for approval by the executive council of NAVET; the elaboration of the list of vocations for VET for approval by the MES; and the development of occupational standards for initial and continuing VET for approval by the MES. NAVET implements licensing of vocational training centres and guidance centres; supports activities in the fields of international recognition of VET documents and counselling; and is responsible for the development and maintenance of registers of licensed vocational centres and centres for guidance and counselling.

**The National Institute of Education** was established in 1996 by the Minister of Education and Science. The institute is the successor of the former institutes for education. It develops activities in the field of research, information support, expertise, training of education staff, librarian support and publishing. Research includes projects on kindergartens, basic and

secondary schools (general and vocational), vocational guidance, and higher and adult education. The National Institute of Education works to promote teacher qualification and educational management through the dissemination of the results of educational innovations, consultancy and provision of training for young scientists. The institute has elaborated a concept of CVT that became the basis for the current CVT strategy development. The NEI currently participates in the development of CVT strategy. The Institute is the regional coordinator for the Balkan Region of the Unesco initiative 'Education for All'.

**The branch ministries** are coresponsible with the MES for the financing and provision of education and training in various sectors. Details on CVT provision require further investigation.

**The Ministry of the Economy** is also responsible for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which has an impact on and requires coordination in the CVT context. Details on CVT provision need further investigation.

## 1.6.2 REGIONAL LEVEL

While the institutional setting at national level is fairly well defined, the regional level requires further elaboration, in terms of both the roles of the organisations involved and the links between the national and local levels. One of the reasons for the lack of clarity might be the change in the definition of a region. For example, the National Development Plan introduced six planning regions, in line with EU guidelines, while the National Employment Agency (EA) operates on the basis of nine Regional Employment Services Directorates.

The nine **Regional Employment Services Directorates** began in 2002 to concentrate on coordinating and assisting the local labour offices, including IT maintenance, supply of information materials and supporting services for career counselling and guidance, although within the structure of the EA, the interface and subordination between national, regional and local offices are still developing and are therefore not completely clear, nor are the roles in the provision of CVT.

**Tripartite Cooperation Councils**, under the regional offices of the EA, monitor the implementation of programmes and measures; exert control for compliance with the requirements for the selection of programmes and measures; and discuss which of the programmes and measures should receive priority funding.

**Permanent and Interim Employment Committees**, under the District Council for Regional Development, determine, organise and control the implementation of government policy on employment and vocational training.

## 1.6.3 LOCAL LEVEL

The local level needs further investigation and development, as apart from labour offices there are no institutions active in CVT.

**The Labour Office Directorates** began in 2002 to focus on tailor-made services for unemployed people and to facilitate their integration into the labour market. This includes job mediation, information, consulting and guidance services to enable individuals to find the most suitable employment programme, and provision of labour market training. It also includes assisting employers to hire workers.

## 1.7 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Investment in human resources is a part of the overall social policy in Bulgaria (lifelong learning is included in the National Economic Development Plan 2000–06), the National Employment Action Plan (2003) and the Joint Assessment Paper. However, there are limited sources of data on the actual financing of CVT, which do not allow a global picture to be presented. Nevertheless, the data available reflect an increase in education and training funding.

According to Eurostat data, public expenditure on education accounted for 4.4% of GDP in 2000 and 3.6% in 2001, but was still lower than in many EU countries (which was 5% on average in 2000, according to Eurostat). National data indicates that for 2002 the public expenditure for education accounted for 3.8% of GDP. As regards the amount of private investment in education, national data indicate that this was 1.0% in 2001, remaining at 1.0% in 2002.

According to Employment Agency data, BGN 7.4 million was spent on labour market training in 2003 out of a total of BGN 138.4 million spent on active labour market measures (source: Human Resources Development Centre, Bulgarian National Observatory, Short Country Report 2003). Compared with the BGN 2.5 million spent on training activities in 2002 (out of BGN 81.2 million), this is an upward trend. While there has been an increase in the overall budget for all active labour market programmes (0.9% of GDP in 2003 compared to 0.3% of GDP in 2002), the amount spent on labour market training remains low.

According to Eurostat CVTS2, enterprises spent BGN 61 million, or 1.0% of their labour costs, on CVT in 1999 (the average is 1.2% in the candidate countries and 2.0% in the EU). The average amount per participant was BGN 401 (€294 PPS), compared to Hungary (€305 PPS) and Poland (€197 PPS).

### **Multi- and bilateral international assistance**

With scarce resources to support CVT and lifelong learning, international assistance plays a major role in providing funds to various institutions and target groups. There is comprehensive data available on EU-financed Phare programmes, but it is difficult to make judgments on the level of financing by bilateral donors, though it is evident from the field visits that Germany, for example, plays an important role in supporting the social and education sectors.

### **Phare programmes**

Under the Phare Programme, the MLSP and the MES are currently implementing several social cohesion projects that include CVT. As the projects comprise several different activities, it is difficult to analyse the actual share of training interventions in the projects. However, based on information from the CEC Delegation in Bulgaria, it is estimated that the amount invested in training or the development of education and training systems under the Phare 2000/03 projects was €34.7 million, cofinanced by €9.37 million by the Bulgarian government. Further analysis will be required.

The Ministry of Economy implements 10 SME-development-related projects, mainly grant schemes, of which seven include a sector-specific training component. It was not possible to identify the actual share invested in CVT, and further analysis will be required.

## **2. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING: WHAT DO THESE CONCEPTS MEAN IN BULGARIA?**

In the EU, CVT means a type of training that updates or enhances the initial vocational knowledge and skills gained in the formal school system, with the aim of supporting an individual in acquiring better or higher qualifications, in order to be more competitive in the labour market, and to progress or change his or her career. The importance of CVT is increasing as rapid changes in economy and workplace within the global market place affect everyone and link them to the concept of lifelong learning, which actually requires a change in people's mindsets. The EU concept of lifelong learning is defined as 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective'. This includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. It also promotes new core skills for all, such as IT, languages or entrepreneurship. The peer review team used these definitions as the basis for their analysis.

The main findings of the peer review team, based on documents and interviews conducted in the two regions will be presented first, followed by an analysis of these findings. Many of the topics raised in this chapter will be further elaborated in subsequent chapters, since many of the issues are interlinked. The team addressed the questions of how the policies reflect the concepts and how the policies implemented are perceived by the partners involved, and how this in turn shapes the understanding of CVT and lifelong learning.

On the policy level the following main characteristics can be outlined (with particular emphasis on the VET Act of 1999 and the Employment Promotion Act of 2002).

- The legal frameworks follow the EU understanding of CVT and lifelong learning, and the implementation of the policies has been acknowledged as a common issue for the ministries responsible for the underlying policy fields (MES and MLSP). However, the Ministry of Economy, which is responsible for creating favourable conditions for the development of the economy, is not seen as being part of the framework of CVT, which creates a problem in developing the demand side within enterprises. The underestimation of the role of the Ministry of Economy, and of line ministries that are responsible for the development of their sectors (including the labour force), creates a problem through the lack of sufficient coordination between policies and initiatives, and therefore distorts the concepts of CVT and lifelong learning.
- Although various stakeholders are involved in the development of CVT and lifelong learning policies through different advisory bodies, this seems rather formal, and therefore does not support the development of a common understanding of the concepts.
- Implementation of the policies is based on diverse EU policy models that emphasise rather different understandings and different methods of linking CVT to broader strategies for lifelong learning. Building on best practices has advantages, but also disadvantages. The danger for Bulgaria lies in the fact that unless the strategy for CVT and lifelong learning is developed, different models might create confusion, and can not necessarily be linked to each other to create a sustainable system.

During the meetings with different social partner organisations, public and private providers, NGOs, and national, regional and local authorities, the team developed an overall impression that CVT was usually understood as a short course of continuing training intended to upgrade a person's qualifications for short-term needs, i.e. based on the current labour market requirements. Though important, the team challenged this prevailing concept and urged the participants in the meetings to look at CVT with a long-term perspective and in the context of lifelong learning. This is important because the dramatic and rapid changes in the economy, and consequently in the labour market, will be accelerated in the period of EU accession. These processes have a huge impact on the employability and adaptability of the people that CVT has to support, and therefore short-, medium- and long-term planning at all levels is

required. The accompanying issues that were discussed in several meetings were the lack of analysis of training needs and the overall motivation of people to continue learning.

The discussions with the participants were dominated by the issue of supply rather than demand. This can be explained by the fact that the demand side is not sufficiently developed, and information is scarce. On the CVT provision side it was obvious that the quality-assessment procedures introduced by NAVET tend to give visibility to high-quality establishments as market leaders in CVT, which in turn will have an impact on the understanding of CVT in the country. Unfortunately, the public vocational schools seemed not to be regarded as major providers of CVT because of the low quality of provision attached to them by the employers, and low visibility (though their potential was emphasised).

The meetings conducted suggested that the link between the national qualification systems, a person's career progression and CVT/lifelong learning is not made explicit, which leads to underestimation of the importance of CVT. Furthermore, the career guidance and counselling system does not appear to be used to its full potential for providing information on CVT courses to its clients and guiding them to further training and higher qualification levels.

In conclusion, the policies and laws developed in Bulgaria provide a framework for the development of CVT and lifelong learning. However, these concepts appear not to be fully appreciated at the levels beneath policy making, which suggests a lack of communication of government policies to the public. This aspect is linked to the need to raise levels of understanding in society of government policies on CVT by, for example, launching an awareness-raising campaign. Another reason for low visibility of CVT policies might be the fact that they have not yet been translated into strategic aims and further into concrete activities (with the exception of labour market measures), and therefore it is difficult for individuals, providers and companies to comprehend the modern concepts of CVT and lifelong learning.

### **3. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING SUPPLY: PROVIDERS, DELIVERY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The CVT field in Bulgaria is diverse, with a range of different providers and organisers of training (i.e. those who commission training) in the public, private and non-governmental sectors. However, there are no comprehensive data available on the actual number of providers, the participation rates or courses provided, as no regular surveys or data collection have been undertaken, with the exception of the EU-initiated Eurostat CVT survey in enterprises and the national follow up in 2002, data provided by the Employment Agency on training, and data from the National Statistical Institute's survey on lifelong learning, included as a ad hoc module in the labour force survey. The description and analysis of the providers is based on the available documentation and feedback from interviews conducted in the two regions. The analysis in this chapter mainly focuses on the main strengths, weaknesses and potentials of the providers as observed by the review team, followed by some recommendations on ways to enhance delivery. Quality-assurance mechanisms introduced by NAVET are a critical topic, and the review team questioned the participants at the meetings to ascertain the effectiveness of these procedures; the analysis of this information is given at the end of the chapter.

The main factors that impact on the quality of CVT provision are the motivation of providers, the responsiveness of the content of the courses to the labour market, i.e. the curricula, the flexibility of training provision to take into account the needs of the target groups, the qualifications of teachers and trainers, a learning environment that will support adult learners, available information about the courses, and last but not least, adequate financial resources to allow achievement and maintenance of the quality of the courses provided.

#### **3.1 CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROVIDERS**

##### **3.1.1 VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

Although data on the numbers of courses provided or participation rates in CVT are not readily available, it is important to view vocational schools as providers with great potential, given the efforts being made to improve both the responsiveness to the labour market and the quality of training. Since the VET system is undergoing reforms, including transformation of school types, optimisation of the number of schools, enhancement of quality, and decentralisation, it is important to examine the reform process in terms of CVT. In the context of the rationalisation of the number of vocational schools and the demographic decline in Bulgaria, provision of CVT will help schools to attract additional funding over and above the resources provided by the state. Based on the documents, the visit to one vocational school and the round-table discussions with school directors in Pleven, the following analysis of the situation can be given.

The main problem identified by the team was the current financial regulation imposed on schools by the Ministry of Finance that requires the transfer of self-generated income from CVT to the state budget, on the grounds that it allows better control of state money. This approach provides no incentives for schools to deliver CVT. The current practice should be replaced with mechanisms that on the one hand motivate vocational schools to provide more and higher-quality CVT courses, and on the other will enable adequate control of the expenditure of self-generated income. Generated income should be managed by schools and should be invested in equipment, teaching materials, in-service training of teachers (to enhance their qualifications so that they can teach adults), and additional remuneration for those who teach adults (which will also help to retain qualified teachers in schools). The usage of the funds can be monitored by the school board or another appropriate body.

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act, curricula must be developed according to the National Educational Standards for acquiring a professional qualification, developed by NAVET. The MES develops curricula and syllabuses for state and municipal schools. Private schools develop their own curricula. Centres for vocational training develop their curricula and present them as part of the licensing procedure for approval by NAVET.

Although substantial efforts have been made in curriculum development in response to changes in the labour market, further support and resources are still required in order to accelerate the reform process. Modular training was introduced as long ago as 1996 under a Phare project ('Improvement of Vocational Education and Training'), and the curricula of centres for vocational training are modularised, but the modular approach could be applied nationwide to make the curricula more flexible, and more suited to the delivery of CVT courses. Thus modularisation of curricula for initial vocational education could facilitate their application in CVT. Including employers in the process of curriculum development will ensure that employers' needs are taken into account and will assist in introducing workplace innovations (such as new skills, new ways of organising work, and new technologies) into the curricula.

Teachers' qualifications and their knowledge about changes in the industry are critical aspects of the delivery of CVT, and are far more important than in the teaching of initial VET. The team learned that over the past few years the number of vocational teachers with higher education has been growing steadily, but the in-service courses provided by universities lack VET or adult-training-related content. Thus, training delivered to adults in vocational schools follows the curricula and methodology designed for young people. Furthermore, the current in-service teacher training system does not seem to motivate teachers to upgrade their skills, since the amount of additional remuneration is insignificant. Furthermore, teachers can only undertake in-service courses during their holidays, and must pay the full cost themselves. This situation does not motivate teachers themselves to participate in CVT and lifelong learning, and there is little hope that they will be able to convey the concept of lifelong learning or the importance of CVT to their students, whether young or adult. As many links between schools and enterprises were broken during the privatisation process, the teachers are often no longer familiar with changes in the workplace, which makes the gap between labour market needs and the school provision, including CVT, even greater. In-company internships for teachers can help to overcome this shortcoming. On the positive side, teachers in vocational schools have a competitive advantage in the CVT market, as their qualifications and experience in teaching is a good foundation for upgrading their skills and the delivery of CVT.

In order to create a supportive learning environment for young people and adults, both infrastructure and VET equipment need to be upgraded. Bulgaria needs to accelerate its developments in the areas of information and communication technology (ICT) access and Internet connections as core requirements in the modern labour market (15.7% of the population had regular access to personal computers in 2002, according to data provided by Vitosha Research, a sociological agency, and less than 10% of the population aged over 18 used the Internet in 2002). Despite the fact that since 2003 there has been a Draft National Educational Strategy for the integration of ICT into school education, elaborated by the MES, this does not include VET.

Since ICT in vocational schools is important not only for providing computer literacy, but also for integrating ICT into the teaching of other subjects and CVT, neglecting the VET system in the planned strategy will create a long-term problem, not only for trainees but also for industry. With the upturn in the Bulgarian economy, there will be a demand for high-technology-related professions, in which computer-controlled machines will play a major role; the vocational schools must be able to provide the necessary training. Additionally, e-learning should be developed as a means of facilitating lifelong learning and widening access to CVT. These developments will require materials, methodologies, and assessment and certification procedures. Well-stocked libraries and resource centres are equally important in attracting adult learners. In the framework of vocational institutions, investment in the infrastructure will have multiple benefits, as the facilities can be used both for young and adult learners.

Last but not least is the role of the school management in the provision of CVT. The role that a school takes in society, over and above what has been prescribed by policies and other documents, depends to a great extent on the leadership and management capacities of the school director and staff. It is also closely connected with the decentralisation process that has recently begun, with no developments yet apparent. The MES should foster the reform process, including decentralisation of vocational institutions. On the one hand, by delegating decision making from the ministry level to the regional, municipality and school level, decentralisation will assist in matching demand and supply at regional and local levels. On the

other hand, the school management must acknowledge the importance of stable partnerships with local enterprises as the vital link to the world of work, and should therefore be encouraged to work on building and maintaining these partnerships. Giving more responsibilities to the school management would require staff development programmes for managerial staff in schools and extension of the school boards' functions, while stimulating the involvement of social partners. Though the team had no data available on the educational background of the schools' managing staff, one can assume that there is a need for improvement in management skills (including planning, marketing and public relations) in order to be able to operate on a commercial basis in a competitive CVT market. The vocational schools should analyse the training needs in the school catchment areas in order to be able to plan CVT courses.

The distribution of vocational schools seems adequate in relation to the regional population figures (with the exception of the North Central region, which is rather generously provided for in terms of the number of schools per inhabitant, while the South Central region has slightly fewer schools). The geographical spread of schools gives the schools a competitive advantage, as trainees can choose CVT courses closer to their own homes.

### 3.1.2 UNIVERSITIES

The peer review team conducted meeting with representatives of the higher education department in the MES and also representatives from universities in Sofia and in the both regions. The CVTS2 survey found that 16% of CVT was being delivered by universities. Nevertheless, information provided during the meetings demonstrates the low level of motivation in the provision of CVT due to the lack of demand as a result of the on-going restructuring of the economy (a reference was made to Bulgarian Telecom, which has requested CVT courses, though only a few enterprises require CVT), and the low salary levels, which do not allow individuals to pay for courses. Services to labour offices are also limited, since they request only short-term courses. On the other hand, several factors were mentioned as obstacles to providing CVT. Low levels of motivation among lecturers as a result of low salaries, combined with qualifications that are not suited for CVT delivery and the high average age of lecturers were mentioned, as were the outdated equipment and facilities. Although the universities provide in-service teacher training (in three higher education institutions in Sofia, Varna and Stara Zagora), it is restricted to pedagogic and general education subjects. Furthermore, retraining for unemployed people who wish to become teachers and training for career counsellors for labour offices is provided. There are also training initiatives under the Socrates, Phare and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, mainly relating to the implementation of new curricula. The MES representative mentioned that many of the 40 colleges that provide non-university types of higher level education (level ISCED 5B) also deliver CVT, but the team received no data regarding this.

As the provision of CVT could help to compensate for the decreases in the numbers of students and in financing, the MES and universities should analyse the CVT market and draw up an action plan for the development and marketing of CVT courses, including distance learning courses. During the reform process the universities should pay more attention to socioeconomic changes in society and gear their activities towards labour market needs in order not to remain in isolation. The potential of non-university colleges should be explored and developed further. Closer cooperation between universities in Bulgaria and other countries, other training providers, including vocational schools, private providers, NGOs and enterprises will increase the relevance of the training provision, and of the universities, to the current and future-oriented CVT needs of the economy and individuals.

The research capacity of universities has not been utilised to analyse and support the development of CVT and lifelong learning in the country. The MES could consider commissioning surveys and research from universities to support policy development in CVT and to monitor the impact and results of its implementation. The team recommends opening more adult learning faculties in the universities to provide methodological support for CVT. Universities that provide teachers' initial and in-service training are encouraged to include the teaching of adults (andragogy) in their curricula.

### 3.1.3 BULGARIAN–GERMAN CENTRES FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The MLSP is responsible for the Bulgarian–German Centres for Vocational Training (established by GOPA, Germany, but now managed by the Bulgarians), which are well-established institutions with recognised quality levels and high visibility. As the model has proved to be efficient and applicable, the MLSP and the MES should consider how best to integrate it into the VET system to ensure sustainability.

### 3.1.4 LABOUR MARKET TRAINING ORGANISED BY THE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY AND LOCAL LABOUR OFFICE DIRECTORATES

The Employment Agency and the Labour Office Directorates implement active labour market policies; the clients of the labour offices are unemployed people, employers and employees, who can benefit from a new scheme that provides financial support for the delivery of CVT. The counselling services cater for school and university students as well as unemployed people and employees. The Labour Office Directorates operate as mediators between the client groups mentioned, and have to be well informed about the current and future trends in the labour market and the needs of employers, and link these to the needs of unemployed people by providing customised services, including the selection of appropriate CVT courses.

Although the number of courses for unemployed people and the number of participants on those courses has increased significantly over the recent years (see data provided in Charter 1), by the end of 2002 the proportion of unemployed people who had completed training courses was only 2.7% of the annual average total of those who were registered unemployed. In order to improve the competitiveness of unemployed people in the labour market, it is suggested that the volume and diversity of labour market training be increased.

As for training for employees in small enterprises and enterprises undergoing restructuring, the data provided in Chapter 1 show an increased interest among employers in training their employees. However, participation figures remain low, a fact that will need further investigation, but evidently it is a combination of several factors. On the one hand the motivation of employers is at a low level, and they have limited financial resources for training and comparatively little financial support from the Labour Office Directorate. On the other hand, there is an availability of highly qualified labour in the labour market. In addition, a number of other factors could be examined. The mechanisms for benefiting from incentives stipulated by the Employment Promotion Law seem too complicated and bureaucratic for employers providing training for their personnel. Furthermore, these schemes might not yet be sufficiently well known among enterprises, and further marketing could be necessary. It is also possible that the periods and timing offered for training might not be suitable from the point of view of enterprises. Moreover, there is a lack of incentives to motivate employee participation in training, since the links between training and career development (including wage promotion) are missing.

CVT for disadvantaged groups and those at risk (young and long-term unemployed individuals, minorities, including Roma people, and those with disabilities) is financed under different initiatives of the EA: the Phare Labour Market Initiative (2001–04); the Jobs and Beautiful Bulgaria Programmes (UNDP); the national ‘Youth ICT Training Programme’ (2002–05); and the Phare 2001 project on ‘Social Inclusion’.

On the demand side of CVT, employers assess rather critically the public employment services, stating that unemployed persons offered by labour offices often do not meet the requirements for the vacancies offered, and that employers are not consulted sufficiently on what training should be provided to unemployed persons. Therefore the opportunities provided by the Tripartite Cooperation Councils, which include local employers, can be used to further enhance cooperation and to identify training needs and measures suitable for enterprises.

During the visit to the North Central region, the review team visited a regional centre for qualification and requalification (under the MLSP). Facilities of this kind appear to operate as ‘brokers offices’ between the public employment services and vocational schools. This centre is self-financing, with a staff of two, and rents premises. It mediates courses provided mainly

by vocational schools to the Labour Office Directorate. The function of such a mediator and the relevance of this model require further investigation.

### 3.1.5 ENTERPRISES

As previously mentioned, the main providers of CVT in Bulgaria are enterprises, in terms of the organisation and delivery of courses to their staff. Of the 28% of companies that provide CVT for their employees, 17% provide CVT in the form of training courses, and 25% of firms provide other forms of CVT, including on-the-job training (65%), seminars and conferences (62%) etc. Some 90 % of training in enterprises allegedly (information by one of the meeting participants) takes place in the workplace. The company representatives visited in the regions by the review team supplied information about the content of the courses, and in general, CVT is provided following the introduction of new technology or equipment, management or core skills. Based on the information provided by the Ministry of Economy, large companies as well as international companies have well-developed training and recruitment programmes. Microsoft, for example, has its own training facilities. On the other hand, CVT plays only a marginal role in SMEs. According to the report on SMEs in Bulgaria in 2001–02, SMEs as a rule do not have a human resource manager, and the preferred forms of training are out-of-company training, conferences and seminars. The report also reveals that training in SMEs is targeted mainly at managerial staff and middle management, while technical staff and workers seldom undergo training. SMEs often lack business plans and human resource development plans, which creates a sustainability problem for these companies. It is recommended that the Ministry of Economy, while programming SME support schemes for improved competitiveness (e.g. under Phare), should include training on the development of human resource development plans, as well as business plans and actual training provision. The Ministry of Economy has considered starting projects that cover a cluster of companies in an identified sector to support networking through joint training activities. Training in entrepreneurial skills is also considered to be of great importance by the ministry, and international programmes for the development of business ideas and for setting up businesses have therefore been developed.

Fiscal incentives provided by the Employment Agency for enterprises to train their employees must be made more visible.

The latest data on CVT, published in May 2004 by the National Statistical Institute (<http://www.nsi.bg/SocialActivities/Education.htm>) show that training provided by enterprises increased in 2002 (see Chapter 1), with most training being provided in processing industries, transport and communication, and public administration.

### 3.1.6 SOCIAL PARTNERS

The nationally representative trade unions and employers have established vocational training centres to provide CVT, mainly for employees, but also for unemployed people. The National Centre for Vocational Training at the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been licensed by NAVET to provide vocational education and training, including forestry, textiles, footwear and leather, hotel and restaurant management, catering services, finance, banking, and insurance. It has additional strength in its regional branches, through which the courses are available to a larger number of participants. The Bulgarian Industrial Association also operates a centre for vocational training that provides a range of highly regarded courses. The advantage of these training providers is that they have links to their own sector, which provides strong motivation and on-line information on training needs, allowing them to respond quickly and flexibly. It is recommended that they network with other providers, including vocational schools, in order to broaden the scope of the courses offered and thereby better meet the varied needs of enterprises. Models and good practice from other countries, including on social dialogue, should also be studied and piloted.

The Podkrepa Confederation of trade unions has established a special unit for syndicate training – a Syndicate Development Confederation Department – its main task being to implement the education policy of the Confederation. It organises and delivers training to its

members. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the range and content of the training offered, since there is no further information available on these issues. Therefore, further study is required of the services offered. The Confederation is encouraged to study international practices that could provide good ideas for further developments.

### 3.1.7 PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDERS, INCLUDING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The network of 3 500 'Chitalishte', the traditional Bulgarian Culture and Education Centres (supported in most cases by limited funding from the Ministry of Culture and municipalities), provides a range of activities, such as language courses, computer clubs, music lessons and theatre schools. Although there are no precise data on how many are functioning, in our estimation more than 2 500 have an active role, especially in smaller towns and villages where this is the only place for people to have access to libraries, an important aspect of the provision of training. This network seems to be little used for CVT, but might have potential for the future. The results of the current UNDP project aimed at strengthening the Chitalishte as community centres could be the basis on which CVT provision is developed. The 'Znanie' network (the Society for the Propagation of Knowledge, which is the largest non-profit-making Bulgarian adult education organisation) supports adult education providers with institutional and staff development. It has centres in large cities and involves teachers, lecturers and various specialists, in the promotion of lifelong learning. It offers training courses on marketing, finance and starting a business, and is involved in EU programmes. The main target groups are people with low qualifications, long-term unemployed individuals and socially excluded groups.

The strength of both these networks lies in their strong motivation and regional outreach. Although the Chitalishte requires some further attention, both networks are well developed, and it is therefore recommended that they be regarded as potential partners in the networks developed for CVT and the promotion of the idea of lifelong learning. During the discussions, ideas for cooperation between Znanie and Chitalishte were proposed, such as Znanie being able to use the facilities of the Chitalishte (i.e. mainly existing buildings), while Znanie could provide methodological support for training.

The private sector was also represented during the peer review visit, by bodies such as the Centre for Adult Education Veda Consult in Gabrovo, a training centre of the NOVOTEL in Plovdiv (which trains waiters, cooks, bar staff and other professions related to tourism), and the Restoration Centre Dantschovata Kushta, a CVT crafts centre in Plovdiv. These institutions were highly motivated and usually well established. However, the sustainability of some of them is a concern, and requires further investigation.

The Bulgarian Human Resources Management and Development Association, the professional organisation for human resource professionals in Bulgaria (established in 2000), aims to support its members in human resource management and development, which also has an impact on CVT provision in companies (though it is mainly large companies which are represented in most sectors, since SMEs in general would not recruit a human resource manager). The association organises conferences, seminars and symposiums, and has participated in the development of the Operational Plan for the Development of Human Resources in Bulgaria. Up to now, it seems that the association has made no real impact on CVT provision in companies (it has been focusing on human resource managers themselves), though it could strengthen its role in identifying training needs for the company employees involved. Further information and analysis is required.

There are some professional associations, such as the Science and Technical Union (a regionally based engineering union with 28 offices), that provide training for those with lower levels of qualifications and skills (e.g. plumbers), as well as engineers' training. This organisation has been licensed in 58 professions and provides training for employees, unemployed people and students. The role of such associations in CVT provision networks requires further elaboration.

The business incubators and regional business centres provide consultancy and some training, mainly in business management issues. As mentioned in the section on SMEs, there

is a great need for training and assistance in the development of business plans and human resource development, which could be an activity supported by these organisations, assuming they have the capacity. As the team did not possess enough information about such organisations, it is recommended that further investigations be undertaken regarding their capacity and potential for CVT provision.

### 3.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE

As explained previously, licensing procedures introduced by NAVET aim to raise the standard of training, and require licensing of those providers who offer training leading to the acquisition of a state-recognised vocational qualification. A licence is awarded to a training centre and information about the centre is made available on the NAVET website. The criteria applied by NAVET for awarding a licence include:

- the training centre's compliance with legal acts (including the VET Act);
- compliance with health and safety standards;
- goals and tasks of the centre;
- evidence for the demand for the courses offered (from the labour offices, employers, municipalities, etc.);
- the centre's management system;
- requirements for trainees;
- quality-assurance mechanisms;
- resources (such as teachers, classrooms, laboratories and other equipment);
- the system for tracking trainees after graduation.

The steps and length of the procedures are agreed with social partners and ministries, and accepted at NAVET's Executive Council. The length of the procedure is determined by the time-consuming steps in the process, the verification and evaluation of the actual conditions for providing quality training as stated in the training centre's application. According to information provided by NAVET, the licensing procedure represents an open and dynamic system, and its components are developing through a process of monitoring and control. The effectiveness of the licensing procedure is monitored by NAVET's annual survey of licensed centres for vocational training. According to NAVET, the prevailing opinion among centres that were licensed under the previous registration method (Regulation 6, Employment Agency) is that the criteria applied in 2003 have made an enormous contribution to the improvement of the organisation and effectiveness of the work of the centres.

However, the training providers interviewed expressed different views: many of the private organisations consider the procedures to be too bureaucratic and expensive; others (mainly those that are larger and more established, such as the Bulgarian–German Centre and the regional Science and Technical Union) saw the process as being quality control.

In addition, the licensing procedure serves as a vehicle for the issuing of nationally recognised certificates as a quality mark by licensed training providers. However, most adult education and training provision in CVT takes place in the non-formal VET sector and leads to qualifications that are not officially recognised.

The review team concluded that, on the one hand, the licensing procedure serves as a quality check, especially in the newly developing CVT market where it is often difficult for the potential buyer or trainee to evaluate the quality of the courses offered. On the other hand, the backlog in the current licensing procedure might exist because the process is too complicated and time-consuming.

Furthermore, despite the good results achieved by NAVET so far, and bearing in mind that the procedure is too new to allow in-depth analysis, concerns were raised by the review team as to whether the process as it is designed will allow analysis and monitoring of the quality of the courses that are actually provided by training centres. In fact, discrepancies have been observed in several cases between the training courses licensed by NAVET and those actually offered (usually short term courses, responding to immediate labour market requirements). Therefore, the team recommends that an external evaluation of the procedures be undertaken. Consideration could also be given to quality control mechanisms based on outcomes (including self-assessment), rather than an input and process-oriented approach, at least for a long-term perspective.

### 3.3 CONCLUSIONS

The team concluded that there are a variety of CVT providers in the market. Some offer flexible evening, part-time and weekend courses, especially in the private sector, but there is a problem with the lack of visibility and information about providers, and with the variable quality and limited range of courses on offer. During feedback from the meetings, several participants highlighted the lack of training needs analysis and prediction of growth sectors, at both national and regional levels. This does not foster the provision of courses that are actually required. It is also important to bear in mind the significant length of time required by the education system to respond to the emerging needs of the rapidly changing labour market (for instance, the development of courses, as well as the training itself, takes time), especially in state-owned institutions.

While there appears to be a high level of motivation in the private sector towards providing CVT (especially in organisations attached to employers' associations or well-established private deliverers), motivation in public sector institutions is at a low level, and needs to be supported by the creation of additional incentives. The resources and ability to earn income or attract funding determines the sustainability of providers; careful analysis will therefore be required to determine which mechanisms should be used and how they should be targeted, particularly in view of the low purchasing power of citizens. Since funds are limited, efforts should be made to develop the capacity of state-owned structures (such as vocational schools and universities) for both initial and CVT provision in close cooperation with employers and other providers, while creating and utilising networks at national, regional and local levels. In parallel, the private sector providers require further assistance in enhancing the quality and quantity of the training they offer and in customising their delivery to specific target groups. The aim should be to develop a balanced market in which competition and cooperation will complement each other.

### 3.4 OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of a strategy for VET in the context of lifelong learning (under the multi-annual Phare Programme 2004–06) must elaborate the role of all partners in CVT and provide a framework for enhancing cooperation between national, regional and local providers and stakeholders. As a prerequisite, an in-depth analysis of CVT providers will be required.

Detailed information (including courses provided, duration of training and certificates issued) and better visibility of all training providers is required by those in need of training. NAVET's regularly updated list of providers includes legally licensed private providers and also vocational schools and colleges under the MES, but not other providers. It is recommended that a joint survey be organised by the MLSP, MES and Ministry of Economy in order to map the situation. A catalogue of training providers and courses could be developed (both paper- and Internet-based), with regional and local breakdowns of information that could be disseminated via such bodies as Labour Office Directorates, vocational schools and universities.

The capacity of existing providers (public, private and NGOs) should be enhanced through the training of trainers, staff-development programmes and the creation of regional and local networks of providers. In order to better meet the needs of trainees, providers should be able

to identify their target groups and customise their courses accordingly. This will foster their sustainability, which is also important for the efficient and effective utilisation of the European Social Fund in the future. Phare 2002 (a grant scheme to promote cooperation between schools, enterprises and training providers) and Phare 2003 (establishment of an adult learning system in Bulgaria) will support this, but coordination was a concern of the review team at this stage.

The MLSP and the MES should undertake an external evaluation of the current licensing process for private training providers, and if it is found to be too complicated and time-consuming, should propose changes in order to guarantee greater diversity. Alternative quality-assurance mechanisms should be considered for future development.

In view of the high unemployment rates, an increase of training activities in active labour market measures should be pursued as a means of achieving long-term employment. The Employment Agency should focus on enhancing the capacity of its staff, especially in Labour Office Directorates, given the increasing volume of active labour market measures. Cooperation with companies and training providers should be fostered to allow a better exchange of information.



## **4. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING DEMAND: MOTIVATION, ACCESS, CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

Demand for CVT is determined by several factors, including the motivation of individuals and employers and access to CVT by different client groups with different needs, including employed people (those with higher and lower qualifications), disadvantaged groups (people with disabilities, and those who are socially excluded) and unemployed people. As is the case in EU Member States as well as candidate countries, the demand side is difficult to describe due to the limited data available. Nevertheless, the review team based its analysis on the feedback received from the different participants within the meetings and the experiences of other European countries with similar developments. Furthermore, the rapid changes in the economy in Bulgaria suggest an increasing demand for CVT, and this must be well articulated in order to ensure that the supply side responds in good time. As the review team attached high importance to career counselling as a means of supporting adult learners through their career choices and of them receiving information on CVT opportunities, analysis of the situation in Bulgaria is given in this chapter.

### **4.1 MOTIVATION**

As mentioned above, only observations and explanations of persons interviewed by the review team and previous experience of the team members in the country can be used as a basis for the following analysis, which will be structured according to the main client groups of CVT.

#### **4.1.1 INDIVIDUALS**

In general, there seems to be genuine interest among individuals (especially better-educated Bulgarians) in learning. High educational attainment levels in the country provide motivation for people to go into CVT (as willingness to participate in CVT is usually proportional to educational attainment).

The Bulgarian Human Resources Management and Development Association highlighted a definite upward trend in the need for CVT, though mainly for people in management positions. At the same time there is usually a problem with motivating those with lower educational qualifications and skills, and elderly workers (no data available). Certification does not appear to be the primary objective for learning; rather, the acquisition of knowledge and skills is the main intention. Nevertheless, recognised certificates add motivation and prestige. Visible links between career progression and CVT could also act as a motivator for people. However, this does not appear to be visible enough in the qualification system, and is something that could be developed by NAVET or another appropriate organisation in order to demonstrate how an individual can gain better qualification levels by undertaking CVT. The recognition of certificates and prior learning as well as continuous assessment could provide additional motivation, but few or no developments have so far been observed. Unemployed people, especially long-term unemployed people, often have problems with motivation for CVT, and Labour Office Directorates therefore use a combination of approaches, including other supportive measures such as social rehabilitation, before actual training is provided. Minority groups (especially Roma people), school dropouts and people with disabilities are relatively well catered for by international donors, but there seems to be little motivation for learning, at least in the first two of the groups mentioned. Public opinion of and focus on CVT and lifelong learning are also important in shaping positive attitudes in individuals for further learning. So far, designated lifelong learning days have been held in Bulgaria for the past three years, though this might not be sufficient to make a break from the prevailing understanding inherited from the past.

#### 4.1.2 EMPLOYERS

Although enterprises are the largest providers of CVT in Bulgaria, the motivation of employers is still low when compared to that of employers in other countries. Many SMEs, and especially micro enterprises (the most prevalent form of enterprises), have difficulty in engaging in CVT, as very often their first concerns are survival against fierce competition and investment in technology; human resources come further down the list. Most employers will provide training only in cases of absolute need, such as the introduction of new technology or machines into the company. The new incentive scheme to support training, as introduced by the Employment Promotion Act in 2002, is expected to make a difference to employers' perception of CVT, and to encourage them to support their employees. However, there is a concern as to how well this opportunity to obtain training allowances has been publicised to enterprises. The levels of motivation among enterprises/employers to provide training could be raised by explaining the competitive advantage of firms which have a better-qualified workforce. There is a need to familiarise employers with the potential benefits of training in terms of competitiveness and business development. However, as the market is not yet very competitive, it will be difficult to convey these concepts to employers.

#### 4.1.3 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The EA and its regional offices are the mediators between individuals and employers during the implementation of government policies. Their role is to provide services that best suit the needs of their clients and thereby enhance the motivation on both sides. The EA organises motivation training for unemployed people, and the impact of this training needs further investigation.

#### 4.2 ACCESS TO CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

It is the policy goal of the Bulgarian government to promote equal opportunities in access to education and training for all groups in society. The implementation of this policy is on-going. The report will hopefully assist in identifying the bottlenecks.

The low participation rates in CVT in Bulgaria suggest restricted access to CVT, though the figures can be used only as a guide to the actual situation. Feedback from the meetings and the documents used provided the team with information for the analysis. The review team identified financial means, availability of appropriate courses to the needs of the client group (including information about them) and flexibility of delivery as the main factors that determine access to CVT. These factors are analysed below.

In general, legislation in Bulgaria stipulates that workers are entitled to 12–25 days of annual leave for training, but as the Labour Code leaves this to an agreement between the employer and the employee, it is hard to assess how well the workers know or exercise their rights. As concluded in Chapter 3, the supply side is in a development phase, which limits access to the required courses, especially in terms of the specific needs of some target groups. Access is also restricted by the number of providers and their proximity to potential trainees, and by the lack of information on courses available. The nationwide networks of vocational schools, Chitalishte, Znanie, Bulgarian–German Vocational Training Centres and others with facilities available could develop partnerships with other providers in order to make courses accessible in practical terms and thereby create greater flexibility. Nevertheless, the team learned from the interviews that many providers offer part-time, evening and weekend courses, which makes the supply quite flexible in terms of organisation. However, further information is required on this issue.

The envisaged development of distance learning should contribute to improved access to CVT, especially in rural areas. It should therefore be viewed as an option for widening access to CVT in the long term.

The way that CVT courses are financed was also viewed as a restriction on access. The costs of CVT courses can be covered by individuals, employers, various projects and, in the

case of unemployed people, but also employees, by labour offices. Mention was often made at the meetings that the low salary levels of employees are a major obstacle to accessing CVT courses. In general, it is most often people in managerial positions who are trained by companies, as previously stated, though they are the people who could afford to pay for CVT themselves, a situation which makes the gap between them and other employees even wider. While the EA and international donors have broadened and improved access for unemployed people and marginalised groups, the need is obviously greater than the resources allocated can cover.

Career guidance and counselling is also a support mechanism for adults in their career progression, either vertical or horizontal, within the qualification system. Career guidance can foster both motivation for and access to CVT. There were formerly two parallel systems in Bulgaria, the MES system, which was abolished in 2000, and the EA system. The EA system comprises guidance centres that have mainly been developed with bilateral German support and have hence been built on the German model. Such services are also provided in every Labour Office Directorate. The information materials contain details on professions and opportunities for updating and retraining. The vocational information supplied in these EA centres is relatively high quality and up-to-date. The counsellors have been trained in information dissemination with the assistance of the German employment service. Training of counsellors for individual and group counselling is now expanding. As German support for the latter has mainly consisted of the provision of methodological guidance and training materials (such as textbooks, translated and adapted by Bulgarian experts), this (post-graduate) training could be sustained if the EA gives commitment and financial assistance to it.

In the summer of 2003, the Centre for Information and Publishing Activities, a directorate of the EA, was closed. This directorate was responsible for, among other things, developing and updating the materials in guidance centres. The vocational guidance unit of the EA, which has five employees, is currently fulfilling the vocational guidance and information-related tasks of the directorate that was closed. The EA provides services not only for unemployed people, but also for employees and students. According to MLSP data, an average of between 35 000 and 50 000 students are assisted annually (source: Human Resources Development Centre, Bulgarian Observatory, Short Country Report 2003). The number of centres is evidently too small to cater for all the target groups. Furthermore, the location of these centres within labour offices makes them less attractive to employed individuals and young people who wish to explore CVT opportunities.

However, as the number of people in need of career counselling and guidance is increasing, it is important to have a national strategy for the development of a system that will cater for different target groups. The strategy must elaborate the different elements of the system, including the development and updating of information and counselling materials and of service standards, the training of guidance practitioners, and the evaluation and clarification of roles and functions of the institutions involved.

#### 4.3 CONCLUSIONS

The demand side for CVT in Bulgaria is characterised by relatively high levels of motivation among some segments of the population, such as people with higher educational qualifications and those in management positions, together with a lack of motivation among individuals such as those belonging to disadvantaged groups and those with lower qualifications. Many employers do not understand or support their employees in their pursuit of CVT; the subsidies for the training of employees are expected to bring about a change in employers' attitudes. Access to formal CVT is often perceived as being mainly targeted towards unemployed people, and in particular to defined disadvantaged groups, primarily because of the funding mechanisms used by the EA and donor organisations. Providers must make themselves more visible and flexible (tailor-made courses) in order to improve motivation for and access to CVT. Future progress will require considerable financial investment and further development of institutions and methodologies, together with the fostering of public and private competition in CVT.

Regional distribution of licensed training providers is uneven. The time required for providers to become licensed by NAVET restricts access to recognised providers. Access to e-learning

as a flexible form of learning and stimulus for CVT should be considered as part of the CVT and lifelong learning strategy. For this to take place, infrastructure will be required. The country should make this a priority, and should allocate resources for its development in the state-financed education system, including general and vocational schools and universities.

#### 4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to increase levels of motivation for CVT and lifelong learning, with a view to establishing a new paradigm, the following recommendations are proposed.

- Awareness campaigns should be organised for the target groups using different media, such as newspaper articles, educational programmes on television, and the dissemination of good practices from the EU.
- On-line comprehensive and up-to-date information on training providers and courses should be provided, and should be included in the information materials for career guidance and counselling.
- Transparent progression pathways to higher qualification levels should be provided as a means of motivating people to engage regularly and systematically in CVT and lifelong learning.
- Attention should be given to the creation of additional incentives (including financial ones) for target groups with low levels of motivation.

In order to widen access to CVT for a larger number of those in need:

- The EA should publicise the existing rights and financial incentives (subsidies) created by law to employers and employees.
- EU support for training should not be limited to disadvantaged groups, but might be extended to all groups (in particular to employees), in order to attract the interest and support of employers (especially SMEs).
- An in-depth study on enterprises providing CVT for employees (based on the Bulgarian lifelong learning survey) should be undertaken and disseminated, and should include the identification of best practice and recommendations for other enterprises.

In terms of guidance and counselling, there is a need to develop a national strategy for vocational guidance and counselling for young people and adults in the context of lifelong learning. The following issues need further attention.

- Employment offices should market the high-quality services available in their guidance centres to the education system and to employees.
- The general public and the education system could make more use of the opportunities offered by the EA.
- Existing guidance material should be enriched with labour market data and information on trends.
- Existing guidance material should be made available on-line, in order to reach a wider clientele, in particular employees and employers.
- In the same way that occupational information is available at EA guidance centres, CVT-specific information should be developed and presented on-line as well as in these (and other) guidance centres.
- The training of counsellors should be reviewed and a sustainable system created.

- Counselling of pupils and students could be carried out cooperatively between schools and employment offices as a part of the curriculum, with employers and employees also included in the process as an introduction to the world of work.
- The MES could consider cooperating with EA guidance centres in creating a joint Internet-based information system to support counselling and guidance, which would include the world of work (i.e. a system that incorporates information on the labour market (such as labour market trends, occupational profiles and standards) and education and training (schools, universities, other training providers and CVT courses available).



## **5. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING SUPPLY AND DEMAND: HOW TO MATCH THEM**

The main conclusion of the peer review team is that CVT in Bulgaria is supply-driven and needs to be matched to the demand side. The current policies for CVT provide diverse elements that may contribute to a more comprehensive approach for lifelong learning. Yet in the present situation these elements remain separate from each other and there is little cooperation between key actors at different policy levels.

There is also a danger that CVT provision is geared to only the current needs of the labour market while the emerging needs are ignored. To overcome these obstacles, while developing the strategy for CVT, it is recommended that the current relevant policy documents, laws and on-going projects in the education, social and economic sectors be reviewed (as these often pilot new approaches that can be included), together with structures and roles, in order to overcome the current fragmentation. It will be important to include the Ministry of Economy and branch ministries in the development process, as well as the MES and the MLSP so that coordination between sectors is secured. Local level agencies and municipalities must also be integrated into the process, as they are closer to the actual level at which training takes place and needs for CVT are formulated. Special attention should be given to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the many institutions involved and coordination mechanisms between them. The processes might be facilitated and made more transparent by appointing one main responsible structure or body as the main coordinator (with legal power), while involving all the other stakeholders in a consultative process.

The team also proposes to involve available research capacity of the universities in the development of the strategy for CVT and lifelong learning.

In view of the changes in the structures of the economy and the labour market, and in order to meet the emerging needs of CVT, data will be required to support policy making and improve visibility and information flow between the demand and supply side. Apart from the labour force survey there are no regular surveys that give information on needs and trends in the labour market. Lack of training needs analysis was also frequently mentioned to the review team as being a decisive factor for the insufficient quality of the CVT provided, both at national level and in the two regions. Most participants associated training needs analysis with national or regional level. While such surveys are required for decision-making and planning purposes for policy makers as well as for training providers, they often lack the detail required to enable training providers to design their courses or the counsellors to advise individual clients on training opportunities. Of paramount importance is the development of a system for regular training needs analysis under the Phare 2003 Programme in order to identify the short- and long-term skill needs for CVT, and in particular, accompanying institution-building measures to enable stakeholders to carry out the surveys, in order to guarantee the sustainability of the project outcomes.

Training needs analysis should follow the forecast of economic growth sectors, which provides information on changes in employment patterns in different sectors. It is also important to carry out training needs analysis on a regional basis in order to support regional and local provision. The selection of appropriate methodology is a crucial issue, as the received data must be detailed enough to enable training providers to respond. Taking into consideration the declining trend of the population in Bulgaria, which is likely to create a shortage of labour in the very near future, together with high unemployment rates and also the future EU membership, in-depth prognosis and analysis is of crucial importance in order to meet the demand for a skilled labour force in Bulgaria; CVT will play a major role in this process. However, the limited data available on participation rates for CVT make it difficult to reach any far-reaching conclusions on the demand side. Regular surveying and data collection on participants would be required in order to support policy decisions.

While developing the strategy for CVT, the demand side should be analysed carefully in terms of the needs of different clients of CVT (including industry and SMEs, individuals, both employed and unemployed, and those from disadvantaged groups such as minority groups and people with disabilities). Appropriate measures should be designed to fulfil the aim of finding a balance between demand and supply. The demand side is also shaped by

individuals' educational background; the development of CVT strategy should therefore be viewed in the overall context of the development of education and training, and more broadly in the context of lifelong learning. In order to support the whole process, a culture of lifelong learning should be fostered, including CVT as an attribute of modern life in a rapidly changing world. Since an individual is the most important player in the system (either he or she wants to learn or not), sufficient incentives and financial schemes must be elaborated in order to motivate individuals to participate in CVT and lifelong learning. In the course of developing the strategy for CVT, adequate attention must be given to the development of supporting structures and services (including career counselling and guidance, information on available courses, and access to funding for those with low income), bearing in mind the needs of the different target groups. The connection between the national qualification system, CVT and the progress of an individual through the qualification system must be clearly developed in order to broaden the understanding of CVT and lifelong learning and link them to initial education and training. The strategy should include an initial analysis of the financial incentives provided by the new employment schemes of the Employment Agency to encourage employers to upgrade the qualifications of their employees (or hire unemployed people, or offer internships) in order to evaluate their effectiveness and propose changes, if necessary. The strategy should also look closely at the results of the Bulgarian lifelong learning survey (which are not yet available), with particular reference to the successful participation of enterprises in CVT. The review team suggests that the support schemes to facilitate access to CVT be extended to all sections of the population, and not only to the marginalised groups.

On the supply side there is a multiplicity of CVT providers (private, public and NGOs), but with little information on the demand side, they deliver CVT on a more or less ad hoc basis. The crucial issue in this context is whether the CVT provisions are perceived by policy makers, and by training providers and their clients, as reactive measures that adjust traditional education, training and learning processes to pre-determined demand or as proactive measures that link innovative education, training and learning activities to the development of the surrounding social environment.

The CVT strategy should analyse the current providers and their capacities, and develop its goals from there. Based on the observations of the peer review team, the courses provided are often limited to basic skills, and the capacity of the providers and the quality of courses are variable. Therefore, in order to support the development of a balanced and complementary CVT market, all providers should be encouraged and special measures designed. Attention should be given to the public sector (vocational schools and universities), as the on-going reforms in initial education and training create a good basis for the development of CVT. Incentives should be created for the public sector. With regard to the private and non-governmental sector, the problem is often their sustainability, and this aspect must be considered in the design of appropriate measures. As observed by the team, there are a number of strong and well-established providers in Bulgaria (such as the Bulgarian–German centres, training institutions of employers' organisations, the Chitalishte and Znanie networks), whose capacity should be developed further in order to diversify the provision and improve its quality. The private and NGO sector has a major role in the provision of particularly short-term courses. The distribution of providers should be analysed by region in order to support an even geographic spread (viewed from the perspective of the optimisation of the education system) and thus make it easier for potential clients to access CVT courses. To support information flow between providers and the demand side, networks of regional providers could be supported. For capacity building (especially in strategic planning, teaching methodologies and marketing), joint training activities for providers could be organised, which would also foster partnership building. As the issue of quality in CVT is high on the agenda in Bulgaria, the team received contradictory feedback on the effectiveness of licensing. The team therefore suggests that the current system be analysed and changes introduced if required.

As has been experienced in the new Member States, the implementation of policies is far more demanding than their design. Very often there is a lack of coordinated leadership, ownership and resources necessary to secure the implementation of the CVT strategy. Therefore the team proposes an analysis of the resources available for achieving the strategic goals of CVT, including employers' contributions, individual contributions, the state budget

(including allocations under various ministries), international donors' assistance and the prospective contribution of the European Social Fund.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS**

Based on the analysis of the peer review team and the general framework of recommendations given in the previous section, the following concrete steps are proposed in order to support the development of a sustainable CVT system in Bulgaria. CVT should be seen in the wider context of lifelong learning and supporting the competitiveness and employability of the people of Bulgaria, and as a major factor in promoting the economic development of the country.

**6.1** It is recommended that the relevant ministries (MLSP, Ministry of Economy, MES and branch/sector ministries) undertake in-depth analysis of the demand and supply sides in order to create a sound basis for policy making and monitoring. This will involve the following steps.

- A system for regularly monitoring economic developments and labour market trends should be developed, by involving the country's research community (after first providing training in methodologies), building on initiatives under the Phare Programme.
- The capacity for medium- to long-term prognosis of growth sectors and forecasting skill needs on a national and regional basis must be developed, through cooperation between the ministries involved (MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, MLSP, MES and branch ministries) and national agencies such as NAVET, and involvement of social partners based on initiatives of Phare 2003 and the UNDP. Well-defined skill requirements will make it easier for providers to plan and respond to current and future labour market needs. The first step in this direction may be to include questions concerning potential future skill requirements in the monthly Business Climate Survey of the National Statistical Institute.
- The demand side should be made visible to providers. Regular surveying of the needs of different client groups (including employers, employees, unemployed people and those from disadvantaged groups) will provide the necessary information. Special attention should be given to the needs of SMEs.
- Regular surveys of CVT providers in the regions should be undertaken, and information on training providers and courses be made available to everyone using a range of information channels, including the Internet, publication and circulation of training catalogues, newspapers and career counselling centres.
- The MLSP, the MES, the Ministry of Economy and other related ministries should conduct regular surveys of participation rates that will contribute to the planning of CVT-related measures.

**6.2** It is recommended that the MLSP and the MES review and build on existing laws and strategic documents while developing the CVT and lifelong learning strategy. The recently established working group for Economic and Social Cohesion programmes could support this development. Involvement of the Ministry of Economy, branch ministries and the key stakeholders at national and local levels will ensure that CVT will be incorporated into the various policy fields. The following steps are recommended.

- The existing structures should be critically reviewed and the roles of all partners clarified. Consideration should be given to the appointment of a national coordinator for CVT, with legal powers to act.
- Coordination between different donor-aided projects should be ensured at the programming and implementation stages in order that CVT is developed in a complementary way (MES, MLSP, Ministry of Economy and branch ministries). The

projects could support the integration of training measures into industrial, educational and regional initiatives that may provide the basis for the creation of new employment opportunities.

- Attention should be paid to all sections of the population in order to foster equal access to CVT, and not only to marginal groups. Labour market measures should include more training elements to broaden the prospects of unemployed people in the labour market.
- An action plan should be developed and resources allocated in order to ensure implementation of the strategy.

**6.3** The MLSP and the MES should launch a campaign to increase public awareness of CVT and lifelong learning. The campaign could target the following issues.

- Levels of motivation of individuals as well as companies and providers should be increased through the promotion of CVT and lifelong learning as the new lifestyle and culture, within the framework of the rapidly developing economy. A range of media and methods could be used to achieve this.
- Government policies on CVT and lifelong learning should be publicised to the general public, accompanied by concrete examples, such as financial incentives provided for enterprises under the new labour market schemes (which might not yet be well known to the target groups).
- The visibility of training providers should be increased through the dissemination of catalogues of providers and supporting networking at joint conferences, seminars and other such events, at national and regional levels.

**6.4** The MES should support the development of CVT in vocational schools and universities in order to improve its quality and responsiveness to the labour market. The following steps are recommended.

- The financing schemes should be altered and converted into incentives, by allowing self-generated income to be invested into the development of initial and continuing education and training.
- A system of initial and in-service training for VET teachers should be created, taking into account the need to develop the specific skills for the teaching of adult learners; the system should be linked to the world of work (by teacher internships in companies for example).
- There is a need to invest in the development of courses for vocational school and university managers, paying special attention to strategic planning, human resource development and marketing.
- The reform process must be accelerated, especially reform of the curriculum, in order to match the supply to the demand side and develop short courses for flexible CVT provision.
- Investment should be made in the improvement of learning facilities in vocational schools and universities, and contributions from employers should also be sought. Special attention should be given to ICT as a media for providing e-learning.

**6.5** There is a need to create favourable conditions for the development of the private sector and NGOs in the provision of CVT.

- Measures that support the development of capacity within and networking between these organisations should be provided, especially at regional level.
- Effective and flexible quality-assurance mechanisms should be put in place. The licensing system of private providers should be adjusted to avoid this becoming a major obstacle in

developing fair competition between public and private providers. For the future, an output-oriented quality system can be considered.

**6.6** Improving access to CVT and raising the skill levels of the workforce should be considered as a major priority. The following could be included in the scope of this challenge.

- Training should be better targeted to disadvantaged groups, accompanied by adequate supportive measures.
- The motivation of individuals should be increased through the promotion of links between career development and training.
- Employers should be encouraged to appreciate the value of CVT through appropriate awareness activities (such as the identification and dissemination of good practice).
- There is a need to develop flexible and more accessible forms of CVT provision (such as e-learning and second chance schools).
- New practices of sharing financial responsibilities between the state, enterprises and individuals should be developed.
- An effective and non-bureaucratic implementation of the recent financial incentives created by the Employment Promotion Law should be achieved.

**6.7** The support structures for CVT need to be developed and promoted to the wider public.

- In order to motivate individuals to enter CVT, NAVET should create a visible link between qualification levels and progression opportunities in the qualification system that can be attained by an individual by undertaking continuing training. It is also recommended that NAVET develop national instruments for the validation of formal and informal learning.
- The MLSP, the MES and NAVET should develop a strategy for a comprehensive career counselling and guidance system for young people and adults that provides a range of information, including on the developments of the economy, the labour market, and educational and training opportunities.
- A resource centre function should be developed to support pedagogic and organisational development in the field of CVT, with the professional community invited to act as a partner in policy shaping and policy monitoring.

**6.8** As formal CVT access and financing is perceived as being targeted mainly at unemployed people, and in particular to defined disadvantaged groups, it is recommended that the existing financing schemes be reviewed, including funding by international projects, and financial support extended to the entire workforce. Practices in EU countries can be studied in order to determine the most appropriate approach for Bulgaria.



## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME FOR THE FIELD VISIT TO BULGARIA

#### Peer review visit to Bulgaria

9–19 November 2003

#### Continuing vocational training in a lifelong learning context

<b>Sofia, Sunday 9 November 2003</b>		
	Arrival in Sofia – City Hotel	
18:00–19:00	Initial meeting of team – Human Resources Development Centre office - Brief presentation of the Monograph findings and basic facts - Highlights and specific points on CVT in Bulgaria - Technical issues	
20:00	Joint dinner – City Hotel	
<b>Sofia, Monday 10 November 2003 – Meetings with national authorities</b>		
09:00–10:30	CEC Delegation	
11:00–12:30	Ministry of Education Round table (Part 1) Theme: CVT from a lifelong learning perspective Participants: Stakeholders and experts in the VET and CVT fields	
14:00–15:30	Ministry of Education Round table (Part 2) Theme: CVT and universities Participants: Higher education policy makers, experts and representatives of universities providing CVT	
16:00–17:30	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy Round table Participants: Stakeholders and experts in the field of CVT and international/EU projects	
<b>Sofia, Tuesday 11 November 2003 – Meetings with national authorities</b>		
09:00–10:30	Employment Agency Participants: CVT experts	
11:00–12:30	<i>Team 1</i> National Agency for Vocational Education and Training	<i>Team 2</i> National Statistical Institute
14:30–16:30	Round table: The role of social partners in CVT – CEC Delegation Participants: - Bulgarian Industrial Association - Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Podkrepa Labour Confederation - Vazrajidane Employers' Union - Centre for vocational training under the Institute for Industrial Relations and Management - Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises - Confederation of Independent Syndicates - Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association – Bulgaria	
16:30	Departure to Pleven – Hotel Balkan	

<b>Pleven, Wednesday 12 November 2003 – Field visits</b>		
10:00–11:30	<i>Team 1</i> Bulgarian–German Centre for Vocational Education and Training (GOPA)	<i>Team 2</i> Regional Centre for Qualification and Requalification (MLSP structure)
13:30–14:30	Maneva PLC – employer, sewing industry	Regional Employment Agency
15:00–16:30	Vocational gymnasia of wine processing Storgoziya	
<b>Pleven, Thursday 13 November 2003</b>		
10:00–12:00	Round table: NGOs, schools, Chitalishte, municipality Participants: - Znanie Centre for Adult Education - Municipality – experts in education and training - Podkrepa Labour Confederation - Bulgarian Industrial Association – regional office	
14:00	Departure to Gabrovo – Hotel Gabrovo	
<b>Gabrovo, Friday 14 November 2003 – Field visits</b>		
09:00–10:30	<i>Team 1</i> Technical University – CVT department	<i>Team 2</i> Labour office
11:00–12:30	STS Invest Holding – employer	Veda Consult Centre for Adult Education – CVT provider
14:00–16:00	Round table – Municipality Meeting Hall Participants: - Chamber of Commerce and Industry – regional office - Municipality - Regional administration - Business incubator - Regional business centre – Phare access	
19:00	Joint dinner	
<b>Gabrovo, Saturday 15 November 2003</b>		
10:00–12:00	Team meeting – Hotel Gabrovo	
12:30	Departure to Plovdiv – Hotel Bulgaria	
19:00	Joint dinner	
<b>Plovdiv, Sunday 16 November 2003</b>		
10:00	Team meeting – Hotel Bulgaria	
<b>Plovdiv, Monday 17 November 2003</b>		
09:30–11:00	<i>Team 1</i> Novotel Plovdiv Vocational Training Centre – professional qualifications for tourist services – employer and CVT provider	<i>Team 2</i> Dantschovata Kushta Restoration Centre – CVT crafts centre
11:30–13:00	University of Food Technologies – CVT department	Science and Technical Union Regional Association
14:30–16:00	Interschool Centre for Polytechnic Studies	Regional Employment Agency

<b>Plovdiv, Tuesday 18 November 2003</b>	
09:00–11:00	Round table – Bulgaria Hotel Participants: - Maria Kuri Association – CVT for people with disabilities (Leonardo da Vinci project) - Plovdiv Municipality - Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Vazrajdane Chitalishte – UNDP project
11:30	Stolipinovo Village – second chance school
12:00–13:30	Departure to Sofia – City Hotel
16:00	Team meeting – Human Resources Development Centre office and City Hotel
20:00	Official dinner
<b>Sofia, Wednesday 19 November 2003</b>	
14:00–15:30	Debriefing meeting – CEC Delegation Participants: ETF, peer rapporteur, Human Resources Development Centre – National Observatory
	Departure of participants

## ANNEX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE REGIONS VISITED

### NORTH CENTRAL REGION

The North Central region plays an important role, connecting Bulgaria to other European countries via the River Danube. The border with Romania offers opportunities for trade relations and cross-border cooperation. There is great potential for increasing the export profile of the economy. Around 92% of enterprises are micro companies (up to 10 employees), 6% are small (11 to 50 employees), 1% are medium-sized, and less than 1% are large companies (more than 250 employees).

The region is the fourth largest in Bulgaria in terms of population, with 1 180 235 people in 2002 (15% of the total population), and also in terms of area (16% of the country's territory). The demographic trends in the North Central region, as in the whole country, are unfavourable (the population decreased by 5.7% in the period 1997–2002). The age structure of the population in the North Central region is more unfavourable than the average for the country. In 2002 the working age population was 58.1% of the total population, less than the average value in the country (60.1%).

The average unemployment rate for the North Central region in December 2002 was slightly higher than the average for the country as a whole (16.9%). The reasons for the high unemployment rates have been the lay-off of large numbers of people in the privatisation process and the closing down of unprofitable enterprises. Some reforms in the administration, education and health systems have also resulted in a reduction of personnel.

In 2003 in the North Central region, there are 13 private licensed centres (including some single-person businesses), five licensed universities and 88 vocational schools (there is no information available on the provision of CVT in the schools).

### SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

The South Central region, with Plovdiv as its main centre, has a favourable geographical position for economical development. The region has at its disposal various natural resources necessary for growth in the industrial, agricultural and tourist sectors. The developed infrastructure (telecommunications, electrical industry and transport system) and the availability of competent technical and scientific specialists facilitate the establishment of SMEs and the development of the business sector. There is still unused potential to be developed in terms of cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries – Greece and Turkey – in the field of trade and tourism. Some 92.7% of enterprises in the region are micro enterprises, 5.5% are small, 0.9% are medium-sized, and only 0.3% are large companies.

According to National Statistical Institute data from 31 December 2002, the region is the second largest in Bulgaria in terms of its population, with 1 956 913 people (24.9% of the total population) and the largest in terms of area (24.8% of the country's territory). The demographic trends are also unfavourable in this region. The population decreased by 6.3% in the period 1997–2002, and this trend has continued due to negative growth in the population and the emigration process. The age structure of the population in the South Central region is favourable, and comparable with the average for the country as a whole (in 2002 the working age population was 60.0%, almost identical to the average value for the country, 60.1%).

The average unemployment rate for the South Central region in 2001 and 2002 was below the average for the country as a whole. The unemployment rate for the region in Quarter III 2003 was 9.7%, (LFS, National Statistical Institute 3/2003).

In 2002 the number of people registered unemployed in the South Central region decreased by 4.5% as compared to 2001. The main reasons were the lower intensity of the privatisation process and the increased employment level in the private sector.

In 2003 in the South Central region there are 31 private licensed centres (some of them single-person businesses), nine licensed universities and 109 vocational schools (there is no information available on the provision of CVT).

**ANNEX 3: LIST OF INSTITUTIONS AND PEOPLE INTERVIEWED AND CONSULTED**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Person interviewed</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Tel. Fax</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
<b>SOFIA</b>					
Ministry of Education	Ms Valentina Deikova	VET directorate Director	2, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 92 17 436	v.deikova@minedu.government.bg
Ministry of Education	Ms Penka Ganova	VET directorate CVT expert	2, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 92 17 428	p.ganova@minedu.government.bg
Ministry of Education	Mr Roumen Pranchov	Higher education directorate Director	2, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 92 17 543	r.pranchov@minedu.government.bg
Ministry of Education	Ms Irina Radevska	Higher education directorate Expert	2, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 92 17 641	i.radevska@minedu.government.bg
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Ms Elka Dimitrova	Labour market directorate Policy director	2, Triaditca Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 91 408	edimitrova@mlsp.government.bg
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Ms Lilyana Dobroslavska	Labour market directorate Policy expert	2, Triaditca Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 91 408	training@mlsp.government.bg
Employment Agency	Ms Maya Georgieva	Employment services directorate Head of CVT unit	3, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 67 802	MayaG@nsz.bia-bg.com
Employment Agency	Ms Svetla Stoinova	Regional employment office	104, Sofronii Vrachanski Str. 1233 Sofia	+359 2 93 10 411 +359 2 93 10 410	rszsofia@einet.bg
Employment Agency	Ms Diana Madjarova	Information and analysis directorate	3, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 67 802	
Employment Agency	Ms Maria Stoyanova	Programmes and VET organisation directorate Expert	3, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 67 802	
Employment Agency	Ms Vera Markova	Professional qualification Expert	3, Dodukov Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 67 802	
National Agency for Vocational Education and Training	Ms Milena Mihailova	Director	125, Tsarigradsko Shose Blvd, Bl. 5, fl. 5 1113 Sofia	+359 2 87 50 223	
National Agency for Vocational Education and Training	Ms Maria Antova	Deputy director	125 Tsarigradsko Shose Blvd, Bl. 5, fl. 5 1113 Sofia	+359 2 722 184	
National Statistical Institute	Mr Stoyan Baev	Head of social statistics unit	2, P.Volov Str. 1038 Sofia		sbaev@nsi.bg
National Statistical Institute	Ms Reni Dimitrova	Expert on CVTS2 project	2, P.Volov Str. 1038 Sofia		
National Statistical Institute	Ms Diana Toteva		2, P.Volov Str. 1038 Sofia		
Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski	Ms Aleksandra Nozharova-Chasheva	Expert in VET, teacher trainer	15, Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd 1000 Sofia	+359 2 85 70 047	anojarova@mail.bg

Technical University	Mr Evgeni Sokolov	Head of department of post-graduate study	8, Kliment Ohridski Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 623 073	office_tu@tu-sofia.bg http://www.tu-sofia.bg/
Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises	Ms Cornelia Ilieva	Senior expert	2, Triaditza Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 16 600 +359 2 98 61 899	c.ilieva@asme.bg
Podkrepa Labour Confederation	Mr Sasho Petkov	Principal	2, Angel Kunchev Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 72 667	
Confederation of Independent Syndicates	Ms Julia Simeonova	Education and qualification department	1, Macedoni Sq. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 91 70 472	ysimeonova@knsb-bg.org
Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association – Bulgaria	Mr Johann Theessen	Project manager	147, Knjaz Boris Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 98 36 543	theessen@iizdvv-bg.org
Bulgarian Human Resources Management and Development Association	Ms T. Boyadjieva	Executive director	27, Parchevich Str. 1000 Sofia	+359 2 9 8 16 047	bhrmda@bhrmda.orbitel.bg
<b>PLEVEN</b>					
Bulgarian–German Centre for Vocational Education and Training/GOPA	Mr Nikolai Kunchev	Deputy director	16, Al. Stamboliiski Str. 5800 Pleven	+359 64 801 476	gopa.pl@infotel.bg
Maneva PLC	Ms Tania Maneva	General manager	1, Grivishko Shoes Str. 5800 Pleven	+ 359 64 801 396	tomik@dir.bg
Vocational School for Wine Processing	Ms Biserka Ilieva	Director	Storgozia Quarter 5800 Pleven	+359 64 850 658	
Regional Centre for Qualification and Requalification	Ms Donka Marinova	Director	23, Dimitar Konstantinov Str. 5800 Pleven	+359 64 800 773	
Regional Employment Agency	Mr Svilen Yankov	Director	1, Aleksander Stamboliiski Blvd 5800 Pleven	+359 64 801 762	bt-pleven@el-soft.com
Znanie Centre for Adult Education	Ms Yulia Simeonova	Chairman	1, Aleksander Stamboliiski Blvd, fl.5, room 519 5800 Pleven	+359 64 801 142	
Podkrepa Labour Confederation	Mr Tzvetan Dangurov	Chairman	176, Vasil Levski Str. 5800 Pleven	+359 64 801 489	SRS_Pleven@podkrepa.org
Bulgarian Industrial Association (regional office)	Mr Veselin Yotkov	Chairman	138, Doiran Str. 5800 Pleven	+359 64 28 489 +359 64 32 542	ia_pleven@yahoo.com

<b>GABROVO</b>					
Technical University	Mr Ivan Kolev	Head of department of post-graduate study	4, Hadgi Dimitar Str. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 801 433	
Labour Office	Mr Tsvetan Popov	Director	3, Tsanko Diustabanov Str. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 39 036	bt-gabrovo@mbox.stemo.bg
Labour Office	Mr Peter Kolev	Information centre	3, Tsanko Diustabanov Str. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 39 036	bt-gabrovo@mbox.stemo.bg
Labour Office	Ms Lena Georgieva	Labour market services	3, Tsanko Diustabanov Str. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 39 036	bt-gabrovo@mbox.stemo.bg
STS Invest Holding	Mr Stefan Stefanov	Director	14 Stacionna Str. POB 601 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 21 071	
Veda Consult Centre for Adult Education	Ms Galina Bankovska	Director	POB 185 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 26 552	office@veda.bg
Regional Business Centre	Mr Todor Petrov	Expert		+359 66 29 503	teo_p40@dir.bg
Chamber of Commerce and Industry (regional office)	Ms Galina Mihneva		1, Vazrajidane Sq. POB 866 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 28 839 +359 66 33 142	gbcci@mbox.eda.bg www.chamber-gabrovo.com
Regional Administration	Mr Midhad Talibashev	Regional development unit Expert on demographic policy	5, Vuzrajidane Sq. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 800 200	mithat@gb.government.bg
Regional Administration	Mr Georgi Atanasov	Ministry of Regional Development	5, Vuzrajidane Sq. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 800 200	rep_mrrb@gb.government.bg
Business Incubator	Ms Yuliya Dobreva	Expert	9, Bryanska Str., fl. 2 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 34 105 +359 66 27 305	www.hitech-incubator.com
Public Donation Foundation	Ms Ralitsa Genkova	Executive director	18, Radetcka Str. 5300 Gabrovo	+359 66 34 076 +359 66 34 076	fundx.digsys.bg
<b>PLOVDIV</b>					
Novotel Plovdiv VET Centre	Mr Emanuil Manev	Director	2, ZlATIO Boiadgiev Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 934 980	cpo@novotelpdv.bg
Novotel Plovdiv VET Centre	Ms Elena Raicheva	Programme director	2, ZlATIO Boiadgiev Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 934 980	cpo@novotelpdv.bg
Ministry of Education Regional Inspectorate	Ms Arnaudkina	Novotel Plovdiv VET Centre Methodological support			
Danchovata Kushta Restoration Centre	Ms Teodora Stoikova	Director	2A, Arch. Xr.Peev Str. 4025 Plovdiv	+359 32 631 903, +359 32 632 684, fax: +359 32 632 684	http://bg.dantschovs-haus.org
Science and Technical Union Regional Association	Mr Spas Kurtev	Director	1, Gladston Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 260 887	kurtev@hst.bg http://www.hst.bg/bulgarian/info.htm

Interschool Centre for Polytechnic Studies	Ms Vulkanova	CVT expert	11, Aleko Konstantinov Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 641 689	
Interschool Centre for Polytechnic studies	Mr Nendov	IVT expert	11, Aleko Konstantinov Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 641 689	
Regional Employment Agency	Ms Diana Daskalova	Expert	3, Chernishevski Str. 4003 Plovdiv	+359 32 601 020	aispl@netvisio.net
University of Food Technologies	Mr Nikolay Nenkov	Head of department for CVT	26 Maritza Blvd 4002 Plovdiv	+359 32 440 007	
Maria Kuri Association	Ms Maria Goranova	Manager	9a, Magura Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 628 890	
Roma Association	Mr Anton Karagjozov	Chairman	12, Malina Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 622 322	romafon@techno-link.com
Naiden Gerov General School	Mr Vasil Vurgulev	Coordinator of Second Chance School project	27, Kemera Str. 4006 Plovdiv	+359 32 632 016	
Municipality	Ms Dora Shopova	Secondary Education Expert	1, Stefan Stambolov Sq. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 634 240 +359 32 634 060	
Vazrajidane Chitalishte	Mr Dimitur Atanasov	President	1, Stoyan Chalakov Str. 4000 Plovdiv	+359 32 623 924	

## ACRONYMS

CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CVT	Continuing vocational training
CVTS	Continuing vocational training survey
EA	Employment Agency
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Communities
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information and communication technology
IT	Information technology
LFS	Labour force survey
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
NAVET	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPS	Purchasing power standard
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VET	Vocational education and training

