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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

BULGARIA

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 7 and 16. It covers basic education organised as a single structure and divided into two cycles: primary level (4 years – *natchalno utchilishte*) and lower secondary (4 years – *progimnazialno utchilishte*). Pupils go from primary to lower secondary automatically. The curriculum is the same for everyone (there are no options to choose from). At the age of 14 (for arts schools and specialised schools) or 15, pupils must choose between general and vocational upper secondary education, whose first year (or first two years) is also compulsory.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of national policies in terms of information, guidance and vocational counselling consist in helping young people and adults in their decision-making and career choices, to ensure satisfying personal growth on the labour market. The fulfilment and establishment of these objectives is based on the 2001 Law on Employment Promotion.

The 1999 Law on Vocational Education and Training also constitutes a statutory basis for activities related to vocational guidance. In accordance with this law, guidance is an integral part of the education and training system. Information and advice on vocational or career choices must be provided to pupils, students and any other person seeking employment. This law foresees the establishment of a Centre for Information and Vocational Counselling.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Ministry of Education and Science defines the principles and strategies of the state policy in the area of vocational guidance, makes the necessary guidance services available to pupils, and coordinates and controls activities of the responsible units.

The offices of the employment agency of the Ministry of Labour are responsible for information and counselling services provided to anyone seeking employment or a change of career.

In 2005, the National Pedagogical Centre within the structure of the Ministry of Education and Science was established with representation offices countrywide (32 Regional Pedagogical Centres overall). These regional offices provide vocational guidance services for pupils.

In October 2008, the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning was endorsed for the period 2008-2013. The responsibilities for its implementation are assigned to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. According to the newly adopted Strategy, a national system for lifelong vocational guidance is to be developed and implemented within the indicated period 2008-2013.

The structures in place provide vocational guidance at regional and local level and operate under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Besides disseminating information and providing consultancy services to adults, these establishments give advice to pupils on their future vocational orientation.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

In line with the recently adopted National Programme for School and Pre-school Education – 2006-2015, short-termed modules on vocational guidance oriented exclusively to primary school students have been developed.

In addition, activities may be organised at individual initiatives of teachers, schools or authors of textbooks.

In 2007, the national curricula on vocational training, devised for different occupations and professions, encompassed guidelines for exploration of topics also relevant to continuing education, professional fulfilment and career development in the pursued occupation or profession.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

There are no official rules for the organisation of traineeships in the framework of the primary and secondary education curriculum. These activities may nevertheless be made available on the basis of the individual initiatives of schools or teachers.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Guidance services at school

In lower secondary and upper general and vocational education (from the 5th to the 12th year), the teacher responsible for the class has one hour per week for vocational guidance education. Part of the time is devoted to discussions with pupils regarding their problems/questions related to their choice of profession and future career.

Within the education system (from I-XII degree) over 800 pedagogical advisors have been employed in schools. Their specific role is to provide advice and guidance, thus supporting students, parents and teachers in matters related to vocational guidance. They employ for this purpose a complexity of approaches and communication means, such as meetings, conversations, questionnaires, information dissemination, advice and consultancy services, trainings, discussions, competitions etc.

The educational counsellors employed by schools provide pupils with information and advice on possible educational and vocational pathways after the 7th and 8th year (end of lower secondary) as well as at the end of upper secondary education, and help pupils to determine their centres of interest and their professional skills based on a specific methodology. These services are offered individually or in groups. Furthermore, pupils and their parents may obtain specialised individual assistance related to personal, social and psychological problems.

Guidance services outside school

The 13 vocational information centres of the Ministry of Education and Science at regional level, whose services were aimed at pupils, parents and teachers as well as at other people, in particular those seeking employment, employees, etc., have been transformed into Regional Pedagogical Centres. Their main functions, however, are kept unchanged. These centres were initially established as a pilot project in the framework of a flagship project entitled 'School for everyone'. Their role is to prevent school drop-out, establish a return to the education system, ensure a professional training offer and teacher training, etc. For example, the centres organise theme-based conferences, group information sessions with professionals, etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science has established a network of the so called Resource Centres for inclusive education of children and pupils with special educational needs. One of the underlying functions of these establishments is to provide vocational guidance and duly inform students and parents of all existing and relevant possibilities.

The Minister of Education and Science approves the annual National Calendar (schedule) for student competitions in different professions. These outside school educational competitions in the professions pursued in the system of vocational education and training, take place at national, regional and local level. Such various outside school activities complement the regular provision, further contribute to the awareness raising and stimulate the students to consider following more closely vocational training possibilities and provisions.

The offices of the employment agency of the Ministry of Labour offer their information and vocational guidance services specifically to those seeking employment or, in certain cities (for example in Sofia), to people with physical handicaps. An information and counselling centre of the regional employment office (in Sofia) provides services related to the search for employment, career planning, work placements, etc. to those seeking employment, employees and students.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

Educational counsellors employed by schools have a degree in psychology, education or sociology (bachelor's or master's level). A growing number of higher education institutions have provided for specific training courses in educational and vocational guidance, intended particularly to prospective career advisors. For example, the University of Rousse and the University of Veliko Turnovo have established such training courses.

In other guidance services

The staff at the employment agency offices are specialists with degrees in economics, social science or technical science (bachelor's or master's level), and are appointed according to the regulations for administrative staff. The description of posts for these staff members defines the skills required (such as knowledge of the professional world and theories of career development, and communication and organisation capacities).

Besides, at national level, the Ministry of Education and Science has undertaken certain steps to ensure the staff development within the school vocational guidance system by organising regular trainings in career consulting aimed at the professionals in vocational guidance, employed at the Regional Pedagogical Centres, as well as at pedagogical advisors and teachers. In 2007, 800 individual professionals have attended these trainings, and the number has increased to 1 000 individuals in 2008. The large-scale in-service trainings were funded from the public budget and allocations were provided by the National Programme for qualification training of the Ministry of Education and Science.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry of Education and Science organises every year forums on vocational guidance, both at national and regional level. They are attended by educational institutions, employers and NGOs. The forums are meant to raise the awareness for the existing possibilities of vocational education, training and employment. One of the regular events held in order to provide information and guidance, is the educational fair organised for candidate students, where employers, universities, NGOs participate and display information materials.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The information and publication centre of the employment agency is responsible for the development, production and publication of information in terms of vocational guidance (centred on the professions included in the national classification, the training programmes, schools, etc.). The information is presented as printed information (brochures, folders, etc.), videos, on the agency website and via other multimedia products. A specialised committee from the agency approves the distributed information. Each year, the agency releases a publication entitled ‘Labour Market’, presenting the national and regional general data on the market as well as analyses and conclusions on dynamics and trends.

The Ministry of Education and Science has set up an Educational Gateway that provides information on:

- the education institutions in Bulgaria;
- the list of professions for which education and training is provided;
- the profiles, specialities and professions, for which education and training is provided;
- the documents setting out the terms and conditions for enrolment in public and municipal schools;
- the national educational requirements for the education and training in professions, syllabi, national curricula, national examination programmes in vocational education and training provided;
- digital study content in the compulsory and vocational school subjects;

Internet references

Links for contact

Ministry of Education and Science: www.mon.bg

Ministry of Culture: www.mct.government.bg

Ministry of Agriculture and food supplies: www.mzgar.government.bg

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: www.mlsp.government.bg

National Agency for Vocational Education and Training

Service structures

Human Resources Development Centre: www.hrdc.bg

National Centre for Information and Documentation:
http://mail.nacd.bg/newdesing/bg/inden.php./ nacid@naci-bg.net;

National Pedagogical Centre: http://www.npc-bg.com/centrove1.htm

Centre for Control and Assessment of the Quality in Education: www.ckoko.bg

Centre for Information Assurance of Education

Sources

1. Thematic overview (CEDEFOP)
2. Country report (CEDEFOP)
3. Guidance policies in the knowledge society. Trends, challenges and responses across Europe. A Cedefop synthesis report. Ronald G. Sultana. Cedefop Panorama series; 85. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.
4. Eurybase; Eurydice.