

Country Report BULGARIA

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1. Organisation: How is the work and training of trainers organised?

In Bulgaria, the training of trainers as part of the general education system is provided by the National Centre for Pedagogical Support (NCPS). NCPS is affiliated to the Ministry of Education and Science, which has the responsibility to provide methodological and practical support to teachers and pedagogical advisors.

Starting from 2005, NCPS organised training for more than 50,000 teachers all over the country through its 28 regional offices (NUTS II). Training programme implementation is funded by the Ministry of Education and Science as concerns VET schools teachers, and from Municipalities with respect to teachers from General and Comprehensive schools.

As concerns the training of trainers, no particular regulation or legislation exist for trainers, who do not have a teacher qualification. In most enterprises training functions are delegated to HRD managers or to workers with a proven experience, who then act as advisors or on-the-job-trainers.

The forms of work-based training may vary significantly depending on the specific conditions and work environments. Large enterprises usually have their own systems for work-related training, standardised for all branches. This training system is implemented by specialised departments for human resources development, where the Human Resources Manager is a key player. In small and medium-sized companies, two basic models of training delivery are usually applied:

- Training organised by the employer him/herself, with the active participation of the heads of departments or experienced staff members as trainers; this form of organisation may be very effective when training new workers for a particular job or upon expansion of certain operations or technologies. In some cases this type of training is reduced to “on-the-job instruction” and is similar to informal (self-directed) training.
- Training organised by a training institution. In this case the training institution assumes the role of an ‘in-company training department’ and organises the training in close interaction with the company managers.

Teacher qualifications can be acquired at a Higher Educational Institution after successfully having passed theoretical courses, practical exercises and examinations in pedagogy, physiology and methodology of training in particular subject. There are 3 levels of study relevant to HE system, namely – bachelor, master, and doctorate programmes for initial teachers training. In addition, there are specialised Universities that provide continuing teachers training for the up-grading of qualification level. There are five qualification levels, of which the ‘1’ qualification is the highest.

The Education system gives additional opportunities for acquiring teacher qualifications after a completed bachelor degree notwithstanding of the subject area. There are post-graduated studies departments at Universities who provide training for teacher qualifications. Trainees can obtain teachers qualification for teaching subjects relevant to their bachelor speciality.

Concerning trainers in enterprises there are no particular requirements for becoming a trainer. In most cases these functions are implemented by HR managers, or HR Departments as well as by skilled workers who have the demonstrated work experience and act as mentors, or advisors to the rest of employees.

Overall, the work and training of trainers is determinate by the HR policy and in general development strategies that some enterprises apply. There are no particular frameworks or requirements to be followed.

In the last few years, work-related training has entered a new stage as smaller companies as well as the public sector are realising the growing importance of training, first to facilitate the process of familiarising new employees with their work tasks and job rotation; and second to meet changes in the requirements of employee performance resulting from changes in technologies in the companies, ICT innovations or new production lines in particular.

2. Economy: How is the work and training of trainers financed?

According to a continuing training survey conducted in 2005 under the 'Phare' programme and based on 2004 data, out of 53.060 enterprises, firms and organisations only 14.199 enterprises or 26.8 per cent organised some kind of training for their employees. This percentage varies considerably according to the size of the company and the number of staff: The highest percentage – 70 per cent – was reached by enterprises with more than 250 employees, while the micro enterprised showed the lowest percentage of 18.5 per cent. At the same time this type of training included only few courses focusing on instructions, job rotation and self-study. Only 14.2 per cent of the employees in the interviewed enterprises took part in training.

Depending on the concrete circumstances, the financing of training of trainers can be taken over by the employer or be financed by external resources such as the still on-going Phare project or National Programmes after successful project application to the respective financing authority.

In 'Operational Programmes Human Resource Development and Competitiveness (2007-2013)', which are the instruments for the implementation of the European Social Fund in Bulgaria there are several priorities and measures for supporting the training of trainers. However, the first call for projects under the ESF Programmes was done at the end of 2007 so that the evaluation process is still on-going. Until now no practical examples are available.

In terms of investments in the training of trainers, no statistical data is available. The only data available is related to the overall percentage of expenses for education and training, which in 2006 was 4.9 per cent of Bulgaria's GDP.

Overall, the work and training of trainers – and work-related training in particular – are identified as opportunities to achieve better business results in the company since the mastering of tasks and better skills of employees lead to increased productivity and decreased work incidents. There is strong political support for raising awareness of the importance of training and training of trainers. Such a support is given in Strategical and Programme Documents which are under implementation such as the National Plan for Economic Development (2007-2013), National Strategy for Employment Promotion (2005-2010), National CVT Strategy (2005-2010), National Strategy for Development of SMEs (2007-2013), OP Human Resource Development (2007-2013), OP Competitiveness (2007-2013), OP Administrative Capacity (2007-2013).

3. Selection and Allocation

No statistical data are available on how many people or employees are assuming training tasks in companies in Bulgaria. As concerns the prerequisites to becoming a trainer, teachers and trainers in the formal system are required to have a teacher qualification. The formal requirements are regulated by the Public Education Act and with Ordinance for its implementation. In compliance with those requirements teachers and trainers need to have at least a bachelor degree. However, this does not apply to trainers at enterprises. Thus, trainers in enterprises typically are practitioners with significant work experience and professional and personal competences. In addition, they need to have a minimum education level typically equivalent to completion of Upper Secondary Education (Gymnasia).

Depending on the concrete parameters and standards of the enterprise, the trainers might be recruited with a particular job description for staff training programmes design and the delivering of training. This is the case for some big public companies such as the National Agency for Incomes, or some private companies like the Bulgarian telecommunication Company. Those companies operate their own specialised training departments. In SMEs, on-the-job training is usually provided by experienced workers and/or HR managers. Another practical option is sub-contracting a specialised training institution or a team of trainers on a civil contract basis for providing training relevant to the needs of the employer. Such trainings are part of non-formal continuing training of employees and usually continue for several days.

In companies with existing HR and Training Departments trainers typically are specialists in the following areas: HR management, ICT and physiology. Depending on the branch and area of work, trainers might have a specialisation in a particular vocational or technical area. However, there is no statistical or survey data available.

4. Qualification: How are trainers qualified?

Training programmes for trainers that are implemented in the formal educational system (Educational Institutions and Universities) are designed by the Universities or educational institutions in compliance with the requirements specified in the Public Education Act, and respectively successfully passed through programme accreditation done by the National Agency for Accreditation and Evaluation. In addition to Universities and other educational institutions, the Bulgarian Chamber of Crafts, Bulgarian Industrial Association and Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry have their own VET centres that provide training to representatives from different branches and sectors – upon request, or as part of the VET centres' programme.

After three semesters study in a bachelor programme that includes both theoretical and practical modules, students can obtain a teacher qualification. Second level is a master degree where programmes continue from 2-4 semesters depending on the bachelor programme completed (which is the entrance requirement for a master degree). Doctoral programmes continue 3 years. In addition, there are post-graduate study programmes that are short-term with the accent on the practical modules. Continuation usually is 2 semesters.

The formal education system for acquiring a teacher or trainer qualification requires theoretical courses in didactics, physiology, methodology of training, vocational subject-specific courses relevant to the area of study. This is followed by theoretical examinationa

and practical exercises, which cover at least 36 lessons in school and a final practical examination. The learning programmes are useful mainly in terms of practice-based learning as part of practical modules in the programmes.

Work experience is also taken into consideration for acquisition of additional qualification, for example: after 4 years of work experience teachers can apply to study in a Department for further teacher qualification for the lowest further qualification level 5. After successfully passing the training programme and examinations, teachers acquire the qualification level 5 and after that can apply for higher qualification level. The trainers of trainers in most cases are University lecturers with a proven experience in the respective field and a solid research and practical professional background.

Training programmes at enterprises are designed by each individual company and strongly targeted to the specific needs or elaborated as task assignments to the sub-contractor for the delivering of training (in case of an external training provider, institution, team of trainers or individual trainer).

Formal certificates have are very important for the formal system – Educational Institutions, Universities, Schools, Training Centres, VET training Centres. Those institutions are obliged to recruit trainers that have certificates and a formal qualification. In enterprises, formal qualifications and certificates have a medium or in some cases (SMEs) low level of importance. In enterprises, key competences and work performance that practitioners have demonstrated are most important.

5. Integration: How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises and society?

The work of trainers is respected and recognised in enterprises and in the Bulgarian society as a high professional profile which requires knowledge and expertise. Notwithstanding the respective attitude towards trainers, in terms of financial aspects the training profession and position is not well paid.

In terms of statistics on the employment status and unemployment rates of trainers no data is available.

6. Innovation

In most cases quality, relevance and efficiency of trainers' training is assessed by the trainees through feedback questionnaires. In addition, managers also evaluate the quality of training in terms of fulfilment of preliminary expectations and needs of the company. There is no introduced system for monitoring and evaluation of the training in companies to be applied at a more systemic level or on a regular and regulative basis.

Research: There is a national report on "Teachers and Trainers" which has been prepared with financial support from the European Training Foundation in 2000. No research at a more regular basis has been conducted since this project-based survey. There is not particular research institution with the functions of observation and analysis of training of trainers' process.

A strength of the training of trainers might be the relatively high level of educational, professional and work experience requirements for trainers of trainers. A weakness is the lack of: modern flexible legislation that support career development as a trainer of trainers; the non-formal and informal ways of competence development are not recognised and validated. Also, there is no financial incentive for employers who recruit trainers such as tax reductions for trainers. Overall, modern methodological and financial support is lacking.

Examples of 'good practice'

The Training Department at the National Agency for Incomes provides regular training to all employees, which included training in ICT, team working skills, time management, communication skills and other skills specific to the scope of activities and training programmes.

Bulgaria: Summary of expert interview

1. Introduction

- What is your role/function/relationship to the work and training of trainers?

As member of the Academic staff of Sofia University as lecturer in methodology of training, Methodology Department at Faculty of Slavic Studies, I am a trainer.

2. Identify major issues / key challenges in a national perspective

- Can you identify 3 major issues or big challenges that in-company trainers in your country face at the moment?

Lack of specialists in training of adults that use adult training methodology; most universities provide training in general pedagogy and methodology and do not apply specified methods for adults training.

Lack of demand concerning the training of staff, trainers in particular in the sector of SMEs

In general, the training of trainers and the regular up-dating of knowledge and competences is not regulated and stimulated in an appropriate way and to an appropriate extent.

- Discuss those issues or some of them where this is of interest to the study

The first needed change, in my opinion, is related to legislation amendments in terms of stimulating employers in investments in the training of staff.

Another important further development that is needed is related to Higher education providers which shall offer more opportunities for specialists in adult training. Such programmes might be designed through active cooperation with enterprises while their needs are taken into account. Programmes could be prepared as bachelor, master or post graduate studies.

3. Discuss in a national perspective common issues that may be of relevance across Europe

- Staff shortages of trainers and remedies

In most cases, the training of staff, especially in soft competences, is provided by external trainers or companies that have such a profile. Concerning the transferring of experience from older to younger workers, this is an informal process – no legal requirements, frameworks or stimuli exist. The process depends on employers and managers' approach and vision for work organisation.

- Professionalisation of in-company trainers

Legislation related to trainers needs further improvement. This is concluded in the analysis done in the Operational Programme Human Resource Development and is one of the priorities defined by the National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training. Here teachers' training and the training of trainers are prioritized. In practical terms the training of trainers has not been applied on a regular basis. Motivation is mainly personal for skills up-grading and, respectively, for career development. In such cases trainers pay

themselves for continuing training or follow informal learning approaches, self-directed learning and autonomous learning.

Big companies and public organisations organise training for trainers or HR staff.

- Recognition of trainer at different levels

Trainers have a good social status in enterprises and in society. In general, there is respect for this professional activity.

At the policy level there is need for better understanding of the importance of the training profession thus some possible motivation could be generated through legislation stimulus – both to employers and education institutions that provide initial and continuing training.

4. Good practice examples

- Do you know of any initiatives or approaches that you would identify as a 'good practice example', maybe in relation how a company or a specific sectors tries to account for the changing role and training needs of trainers?

In the National Agency for Incomes there is a Training Department where trainers have full time agreements for providing regular training targeted to required competences. These trainings are part of HR strategy implemented in the Institution.

5. Future trends

- How do you see the evolving role of trainers in enterprises?
- Discuss maybe those issues or some of them where this is of interest to the study

The most important future step is related to legislation changes for example, tax concessions for employers that invest in training and appoint trainers, or give additional stimulus either financial, or carrier bettering for mentors and advisors at work place.