



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

**SCHOOL AND PRE-SCHOOL
EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT
NATIONAL PROGRAMME
(2006–2015)**



SCHOOL AND
PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION
DEVELOPMENT
NATIONAL PROGRAMME
(2006 - 2015)

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Over the last few years, education has established itself as one of the issues with the highest social significance. It has developed into a new national priority in the minds of most Bulgarians. The need for predefining the objectives of Bulgarian education, in particular Bulgarian school and pre-school education, with regard to the new requirements of the global economy and the challenges of the highly competitive labour market within the European Union, is becoming a prevalent opinion. It is a common concept that only an educated nation can be rich and prosperous. This is especially true for a not large country lacking in substantial deposits of strategic raw materials like Bulgaria.

The programme offered is based on the understanding that, the principal value of the educational system is the child (the pupil). Any idea for the development of the Bulgarian school and pre-school education shall be rationalized in the light of this value. The interests of the rest of the participants in this process – teachers, headmasters, mayors and municipal administration, the Minister and the administration of the Ministry of Education and Science, the publishers of textbooks and school appliances – shall be subordinated to this major objective – the granting of equal access to a high quality education for our children.

The aim of the programme is to formulate the national objectives for the development of school and pre-school education, as well as to outline the main steps that shall be taken to implement them. In so far as school education is the main part of the public educational system and for obvi-

ous reasons it is facing more and more significant challenges, the programme focuses namely on school education in the sense of a system of stages and grades within the framework of which the educative process at school (I – XII grade included) is performed, while in the same time it gives an account of the relationship and significance of the pre-school upbringing and preparation.

The current programme is not aimed at rendering ready-made solutions to all possible problems that school and pre-school education in Bulgaria are confronted with. It attempts to define and bring out to the forefront the most sensitive for the society problems, whose solution is of vital importance for the Bulgarian school education in its transformation into modern, accessible and high quality education. On account of the identified problems, the programme elaborates on specific measures and sets time frames for their implementation and for the securing of corresponding resources and legislative regulation.

II. FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

The analysis of the present situation of the Bulgarian school education brings to the forefront several fundamental issues.

1. Orientation of the system to memorization and reproduction rather than to provoking thinking, independence and skill formation

This has been a serious problem for all educational systems for the last few decades, in so far as in this dynamically developing world, the considerable volume of ready-made knowledge is not of a great value and is not enough for the successful social realization. It does not give the opportunity for independence, creative thinking and decision making in practical situations.

In contrast to other educational systems which have registered successful attempts at changing the logic of teacher-pupil relationship, the Bulgarian school education continues to be organized on the principle that the teacher is the knowledge giver and the one who exercises authority, while the pupil is the receiver and the subordinate party. This single-sidedness in the relationship teacher-pupil is an obstacle for the development of the initiative and resourcefulness of the pupils. In the modern world of informational saturation, the school is not the only, and in many cases not the basic source of information for the children. This predetermines the new role of the teacher – his transformation from the science monopolist of the past to a mediator in the information chaos and systematized knowledge of these days.

2. Lack of a national system for external evaluation and not sufficiently effective system for internal rating of the quality of education

With regard to the current system for rating the knowledge and skills of the pupils, two important conclusions can be made. On the one hand, within the framework of the internal evaluation system, traditional and not quite effective evaluation rating methods are used. The requirement for the pupil to reproduce what the teacher said or what was written in the

textbook, the search for the effect of the surprise when examining, as well as the likelihood that subjective factors may influence the assessment process, do not stimulate the pupil to give his best.

Besides, the lack of a national system for external evaluation does not allow gauging the achievements of pupils from the same grade of different schools (conclusions about the quality of tuition at school as well as about the work of the particular teacher) and juxtaposing the results of pupils from different grades (conclusions about the trends in the development of the quality of education on a national scale).

3. A large number of children not covered by the educational system and dropouts

In Bulgaria, the percentage of children who are in the compulsory education age and are either not covered by the educational system or consequently dropping out of school is alarmingly high. The biggest relative share is that of the children in the high risk groups, particularly of the Roma population. A consequence of this is the creation of huge disproportions in the level of education, resulting in relatively compact groups of people being left in the periphery of social life, which is an additional drawback for their integration. This problem has wider social dimensions and cannot be resolved by educational measures only.

4. Low social status and insufficient prestige of the teacher

The social economic changes during the 90ies of the previous century brought about a considerable downgrading of the general economic and social status of the teachers. A large number of the reasons are outside the realm of the educational system – elements of disintegration of the society, general depreciation of values and regulatory systems, absence of a direct relationship between the erudition and success in life. The teachers not only do not get the adequate payment for their labour, but there is also no system for their career development, qualification and lifelong learning.

The low social status and in particular the low economic status of the teacher to a great extent reflects on the lack of confidence and motivation

for manifestation. It often leads to inadequate efforts to grasp and provoke the attention of the pupils, which additionally reduces the teachers' confidence. In the same time, the invasion of the Internet as a source of information and the new information and communication technologies are changing the traditional model of teacher-pupil relationship.

As a result of this, the insufficient prestige of the teacher puts to trial the process of education and upbringing at school.

5. Unoptimized network of schools and presence of a large number of undersized and merged classes

The school network can be characterized as insufficiently optimized in several directions. The total number of schools does not reflect the objective demographic process – the considerable reduction in the number of the children in the pre-school age over the last years. The artificial maintenance of a relatively large number of schools leads to ineffective expensing which additionally impedes the process of investing in the improvement of the quality of education.

On the other hand, in many parts of the country the types of the schools do not reflect the requirements of the labour market in the region – they educate specialists in professions and profiles that do not present opportunities for social realization. The structure and the composition of the pedagogic staff can be characterized as insufficiently optimized. The teacher/pupils ratio in Bulgaria is higher than the average for the European Union. The large number of teachers in the system as a whole is in the same time matched by a lack of specialists in foreign language teaching and computer literacy.

In many schools of the country, including regional centers and even the capital, there are undersized and merged classes. The considerably lower number of pupils in a class, compared to the requisite minimum as well as the simultaneous tuition of pupils of different age groups does not allow for the implementation of a normal educative process, does not correspond to the interests of the children and is in contrast with the priorities for guaranteeing equal access to commensurate quality of education.

6. Supercentralization of the management of the system

The management of the system of school education is falling behind the contemporary reality and dynamics of social life. The system is highly centralized and the decisions are made on a level far off from those who are going to implement them and those directly concerned. In practice, there are not any possibilities for the citizens to control and participate in the management decisions. People often perceive the educational system as something developing independently, regardless of their requirements and desires. The centralized approach does not allow for the implementation of the regional educational policy, which gives an account of the demographic, social, economic and other characteristics of each region and of the specific municipality. This model of management does not allow for the system to develop with the energy of the society, corrected by the social concepts for what is correct, equal and moral.

7. The financing scheme does not stimulate development

The current scheme for the financing of school education is still relatively centralized and does not encourage initiative and development. Granting financial means under the historic principle of covering only the requisite minimum of expenses does not allow for a flexible management and individual approach to the needs and potentialities of each school. Mechanisms for the stimulation of effective management have not been stipulated.

On the one hand, the state reluctantly separates itself from state schools and on the other hand the municipalities having once got the financial authority with regard to the municipal schools are not ready to keep the process of financial decentralization going, by submitting delegated budgets to them.

8. Problems with the legislative basis

The school education system is regulated by an excessively large number of acts. They have different legal characteristics and are of different

standing in the hierarchy of the legal acts – laws, statutes, regulations, instructions, individual administrative acts. This diversity of regulations impedes the process of law enforcement.

The practice of regulating of basic and lasting social relations on a secondary legislation level is still existent. There are discrepancies among legislative acts of equal standing in the regulatory hierarchy, as well as among those of different standing. It has been a long lasting tradition in the system to use regulatory acts of vague legal character (letters, instructions and so on) to settle relationships requiring judicial regulation.

Another disadvantage of the regulation is that regardless of the large number of regulatory acts, many relations in the system cannot develop without the issuance of an individual administrative order.

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHANGES

1. The balance between the traditional merits of the Bulgarian education and the necessity for improvement

The evaluation of the Bulgarian school education by the society is highly polarized. In the opinion of a part of the Bulgarian citizens it is very good and all attempts at changes will only deteriorate its quality. It is asserted that the restoration of the organization and the practices from the late 80ies will be enough. Others consider that it is infinitely outdated and should be thoroughly reformed, i.e. replaced by a new system following a foreign model.

Undoubtedly, the Bulgarian school education has its own traditional merits which shall be preserved. Any educational system is conservative to a certain degree, but this doesn't mean that it is going to remain unchanged and closed to new ideas. The dynamic, highly technological and globalizing world sets new challenges to which education must respond. By preserving the good traditions it must develop as a flexible and adaptive system.

2. Transparency of management, predictability of development and stability of decision within the system of school education

Education is one of these spheres of social life, to which any Bulgarian family is particularly sensitive. That is why the search for a dialogue, a broad public consensus for the forthcoming changes is not only desirable but also necessary. This will create a sense of commitment in the minds of the Bulgarian citizens and hence trust in the system.

The changes in the field of school education shall not only be publicly discussed, but there shall also be enough time from the moment of decision-making to their implementation. In this way, the participants in the educational process shall be able to prepare themselves for the effects of this decision. The observance of this principle shall enable each Bulgarian family to make their worldly plans. This shall be another prerequisite for the building of trust in the system.

The managerial decisions in field of education shall be stable over time. The rules shall be clear, non-controversial, and relatively stable over a comparatively long period of time.

The very approval of the School and Pre-school Education Development Programme (2006-20015) shall be a manifestation of these particular principles.

IV. MAIN OBJECTIVES

In the acts approved by the European Union as well as by the United Nations with regard to education, two main objectives of the educational policy can be defined – equal access to education and high-quality education. They can be deduced as main objectives for the Bulgarian school education too, and in an indirect way, at preparatory stage – as objectives of pre-school upbringing and preparation.

The two main objectives of the educational policy should not be treated separately from each other, let alone be opposed – each one of them can be understood in its completeness only when related to the other objective. Equal access means access to high-quality education, and high-quality education reveals its full potential only when it is accessible for each Bulgarian child.

1. Equal access to education

The equal access to education means ensuring access for all children to commensurate by its qualitative education. Equal access does not mean a school in each village. The state has the obligation to ensure the opportunity for the children to go to schools equipped with contemporary technical facilities and qualified teachers, where they can get the education corresponding to the requirements of contemporary life.

It is necessary to take special care for those children, deprived of equal start in life (children who do not speak Bulgarian very well, children with special educational needs, children from families of lower social status etc.) with regard to their adequate participation in the educational process. Equal access to education does not mean equal care for all children, but differentiation of the care in accordance with their different needs.

2. High-quality education

High-quality education presupposes a continuous build up of knowledge and skills with regard to the maximum development of each child's

potential and an opportunity for adequate social realization. On the one hand, education shall allow for the development of the talents of each child. It shall encourage the manifestation and maximum development of the capacities of the child in the educational process (building up of knowledge and formation of skills) as well as in the process of upbringing (development of the personality). On the other hand, the system of school education shall create the conditions for the adequate social realization in its professional and personal aspects. The children shall be able to realize to a maximum degree their worldly plans, by abiding to the established rules and by not offending the right of others to realize their worldly plans.

V. ORIENTATION OF SCHOOL EDUCATION TOWARDS PROVOKING THINKING, INDEPENDENCE AND FORMATION OF PRACTICAL SKILLS AND TOWARDS FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONALITY

A. Measures to be implemented in the teaching process

1. Changes in the educational contents, curricula and syllabi

The educational contents, curricula and syllabi need updating with regard to creating the prerequisites for encouraging independent thinking and formation of practical skills in the pupils.

The educational contents shall more precisely and adequately to the contemporary conditions, outline the knowledge and skills that need to be acquired within the framework of school education.

It is necessary to increase the foreign language and computer teaching in the curricula. The Information Technologies teaching shall begin in the low secondary education. At this stage, it is necessary to implement modules for early professional guidance and orientation. The changes in the curricula shall not lead to additional workload in school time. The curriculum shall balance the school time by synchronizing it with the educational contents in each of the general subjects.

The school curricula and syllabi shall comply with the new educational structure.

It is necessary to update the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training and to elaborate on the state educational requirements for acquisition of qualification in each of these professions.

The specific changes in the educational contents, curricula and syllabi shall not be only a result of an administrative decision. In order for the changes to be well grounded, acceptable by the society and corresponding to the socio-economic actualities, it is necessary to hold a social discus-

sion with the active participation of teachers, parents, non-governmental organizations, employers. Of special importance shall be national conventions of teachers of different subjects, where the requirements and the direction of the changes in the educational contents, curricula and syllabi will be discussed.

2. Measures with regard to textbooks and school appliances

The issue about the quality of textbooks is important for any educational system. It is of a particular importance to school education. The textbook is the fundamental means through which the pupil with the mediation of the teacher receives classified knowledge on a certain subject.

The changes concerning textbooks and school appliances shall be looked for in several directions:

Elaborating on new requirements to the contents of the textbooks

The textbooks shall be more fully consistent with the educational contents, curricula and the age specifics of the pupils. They shall be free of superfluous academism, shall be accessible by the pupil and shall allow the easy differentiation between what is important and what is not. The textbooks on a subject for each grade shall have an approved common structure – the total number, the sequence and the formulation of the specific themes in the different textbooks on the same subject shall be the same. This is an important condition which additionally ensures the possibility for a horizontal transition.

Improving the system for evaluation and approval of textbooks

One of the issues to be resolved with regard to the system for grading and approval of textbooks is what the number of the approved textbooks on a certain subject for each grade shall be. There are different opinions on this matter – to preserve the current system for the approval of up to three textbooks, to increase to a fixed number the approved textbooks, to approve all the textbooks meeting the state educational requirements. It

would not be such an important issue if all the textbooks on a certain subject for each grade had uniform structure and if there were mechanisms for the citizens to exercise control over the choice of textbooks within the school.

The evaluation of the textbooks with regard to their conformity with the state educational requirements shall be performed on a large scale participation of teachers in the respective cultural and educational field.

Free of charge textbooks and school appliances

The providing of free of charge textbooks and school appliances for pupils in first to fourth grade shall be continued. This brings to the fore-front the need for the elaboration of additional requirements to the contents and the graphic formation of the free of charge textbooks with regard to using them for more than one year.

3. Information and communication technologies at school

One of the greatest challenges of the modern life is the tempestuous entering of the new information and communication technologies (ICT) in all spheres of social life. The school shall not stay out of the way of this process and turn into an alternative to contemporary world. The necessary large scale measures shall be implemented to ensure the more effective penetration of ICT in Bulgarian school. The first steps have already been made in this regard with the National Strategy for the Implementation of Information and Communication Technologies at School, approved by a decision of the XXXIX th National Assembly. In order to transform the school into a modern institution, additional efforts and resources shall be necessary in several directions:

Providing high speed Internet in every school

By the end of 2007 every Bulgarian school shall be provided with free of charge high speed Internet. The implementation of this objective is in close relation with the securing of directed investments for the modern-

ization of the basic communicational infrastructure in settlements with outdated analogue telephony.

Elaboration of a national education portal

The aim of the education portal is to aid in a modern way the teaching process at school. It shall present large-scale opportunities to all participants in the educational process – pupils, teachers, headmasters and parents – with capacity for simultaneous access by 1 000 000 users. The various types of users shall be able to discover electronic teaching courses, tests (for the purposes of external as well as the internal evaluation), electronic school documentation, and a large volume of information. They shall be able to communicate on different topics, they shall have access to the electronic pages of all schools in the country as well as to the registers kept by the Ministry of Education and Science, and they shall be able to use various Internet search engines. The teachers shall be able to communicate with their pupils and their parents, and they on the other hand shall be able to have a permanent feedback from the school.

The portal shall be constantly developed and enriched in content as well as from a functional point of view, including by the participation of individual users. The portal shall be active by the beginning of the 2006/2007 school year with an outlook to be in the foundation of a unified national electronic knowledge network.

Elaboration of electronic teaching courses

The electronic teaching courses shall not replace the traditional paper textbooks, but through the greater opportunities they present (interactivity, reference making opportunities, multiple variations of tests and so on), they shall assist the pupils in the process of acquiring the school material more adequately and thoroughly. By the beginning of 2006/2007 school year, electronic courses on all high school compulsory subjects shall be available and ready to use on the national education portal. Such courses shall also be developed, at different stages, for the subjects taught in the junior and elementary schools.

Providing of multimedia in every school

By the end of 2006, each Bulgarian school shall be provided with at least one multimedia system. This shall give additional opportunities for educational activities using contemporary methods.

B. Measures in the educational process

The educational process in the system of school education is not and cannot only be a teaching process. After the family, the teachers and the school environment are those who exercise the strongest influence in the formation of the pupil's personality. That is why alongside with the measures to increase the quality of teaching, some steps shall be taken to enhance the educative role of the Bulgarian school. They shall contribute to the formation of a sense of belonging of the pupils to the school, to their settlement and to Bulgaria. This in turn shall contribute to enhancement of the prestige of school as an institution.

1. The role of kindergartens in upbringing and education

The process of upbringing of a child begins from the kindergarten. This is the place, where for the first time the child is immersed into a newly organized social, often multicultural environment, forms its communication habits, exhibits a tendency to accept other people's behavioural models and develops his future concepts for good and bad. Besides, the pre-school upbringing and preparation, especially during the compulsory preparatory year before going to school, is very important with regard to the formation of a positive attitude towards school and a motivation to learn, especially in children raised in an environment where education is not highly rated.

The process of upbringing in the kindergarten shall find its adequate continuation in basic school. In this regard it is necessary to enhance the activity in several directions: ritualization of school life, the transformation of school into pupils' territory, development of extra-curricular and out of school activities.

2. Ritualization of school life

The ritualization of school life presupposes the formation of a system of principles, rituals and in prospect traditions which shall enhance in the pupil's mind, the sense of belonging to his school and thus increase his motivation to participate actively in the various forms of school and out of school life. The ritualization of school life is to a great extent a matter of internal organization at school level. However, it is necessary to determine some common rules, which shall have the same effect in each school. They can include:

- Creation and recognition of school symbols (flag, anthem, emblem and by request from parents and pupils – a uniform or elements of a uniform).
- Formation of traditions for celebrating national, local and school holidays – rising of the national flag, playing the national anthem, meeting the school flag etc.
- The announcement of a special holiday – Bulgarian pupil's day which shall also be the day of Pupil Self-Government.
- Recognition of a system for rewarding of teachers and pupils within the framework of school and municipality.

3. Transformation of school into pupils' territory

The pupils shall have the opportunity to express their opinion on basic issues related to the management and development of school. They shall be able to actively in various forms of Pupil Self-Government. In this way the school shall be able to educate citizens who are not indifferent to what is happening around and who can stand by their position in society. For this purpose, Days of Pupil Self-Government shall be organized in each school as well as permanently active pupil councils.

4. Development of extracurricular and out of school activity

The extracurricular and out of school activity shall play an important role in the all-round development of pupils. The natural engagement of the children's imagination, abilities and interests shall definitely promote their physical, intellectual and personality development.

The good traditions in the extracurricular and out of school activity were abandoned during the 90ies of the previous century and without the purposeful assistance of the state and the municipalities, their restoration shall take a long time. The development of extracurricular and out of school activity shall be manifested in several directions:

- All year round engagement of children, including the holiday periods;
- Financing on a project basis with the possibility of inclusion of non-governmental organizations;
- Independence in the choice of activities in the management of the funds by the schools;
- Developing a system of inter-school, regional, national, and international contests, competitions and Olympiads;
- Elaborating of the rules for organizing and conducting of the pupil recreation and tourism;
- Promoting and developing pupil sport.

VI. FORMATION OF AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM FOR INTERNAL EVALUATION BY USING TESTS ON A WIDE SCALE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR STANDARDIZED EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The formation of a modern, effective and objective system of quality control and evaluation is one of the foremost conditions for the development of school education. The high quality education cannot be provided for without the existence of reliable mechanisms for measuring the results achieved in the educational process. The control over the quality is important in several aspects:

- *It is important for the society* – It informs the society about the state of the educational system and can put forward new requirements to it.
- *It is important for the country* – by matching the achievements of pupils of one grade in different schools, as well as by matching the results of different grades we can define not only the current state of school education, but we can also grasp the trends in its development, in this way control shall enable us to correct the educational policy conducted.
- *It is important for the teachers* – the results achieved by the pupils shall be an important criterion for determining their remuneration.
- It is important for the pupils and their parents – through it pupils and parents shall have a real idea of the level of preparation and the conditions for equal treatment shall be established.

From the beginning of 2006/2007 school year the process of large scale implementation of tests as a leading method of routine control shall be started in the teaching process, as well as on completion of each educational stage. The greatest advantage of the test examination in all of its variations is the opportunity to objectively grade the knowledge and potential of each pupil. The tests are a contemporary method of grading, widely used in developed countries, which has not gained the necessary popularity at home.

The system of quality control and evaluation shall be transformed in two directions:

Development of a system for internal evaluation

This presupposes a large scale application of tests in the process of assessing the pupils' knowledge and skills throughout the school year as well as a method of assessment the entry and exit levels – assessment of the knowledge and skills in the beginning and in the end of the school year.

Formation of a system for internal evaluation

The system shall include compulsory evaluation of the knowledge and skills of the pupils on completion of each educational stage (grades IV, VII, X, XII) by means of national standardized examinations. The examinations after grades VII and XII shall be used not only to determine the achievements at the corresponding level of the general educational minimum, but also as entry to high school and in prospect to higher education.

The large scale application of tests as an assessment method involves the creation of a question bank on different subjects and its consequent enrichment, as well as the preparation and distribution of books and appliances with test materials.

The capacities of the national education portal shall be used as well. It shall contain sample tests which can be useful not only in the process of internal grading, but also in the preparation for external grading too. Multiple variations of these tests shall also be available in the electronic teaching courses. The portal shall also consist of matrices which shall assist teachers in the making of their own tests and in updating and enriching them. The best tests, prepared by teachers shall be approved by the Ministry of Education and Science and shall be used as sample examination materials for the external evaluation. With regard to the technical provisioning of test application in the teaching process, each Bulgarian school shall be supplied with copy equipment for the duplication of enough test materials.

The detailed examination of the issues related to the large scale implementation of tests (form, timetable for experimenting and implementing, by years and by subjects), shall be the subject matter of a special activity plan, elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The implementation of national standardized external evaluation at each stage for all pupils and the likelihood for these results to be used as entry to high school and respectively higher education is directly related to the implementation of the new educational structure.

Until the national standardized external evaluation has been implemented at each stage and for all pupils, the entry examinations for the various school types after grade VII shall be in test form. For the first time they shall be held in 2006/2007 school year.

The state matriculation examinations shall also be held in test form. With regard to granting the pupils the opportunity to get used to the test form of examination, until their implementation, experimental mock examinations with random samples of pupils graduating grade XII shall be organized. The number of pupils taking such exams shall be increasing each year.

VII. REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF PUPILS IN COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE NOT COVERED BY THE SYSTEM AND DROPPING OUT

1. Analysis of the current situation

Relatively high annual number of pupils dropping out of school has been over the last years there in comparison with the average annual numbers within the European Union. In addition to that, it is worrisome that a considerable number of children drop out in early age and there are such who are not at all covered by the system. According to data from the regional inspectorates of education, for the 2004/2005 school year 19 193 pupils out of 963 051 enrolled at the beginning have dropped out of school. The general conclusion is very worrisome – over a quarter of the pupils in compulsory school age do not graduate high school.

The reasons for dropping out of school can be grouped as follows:

- *Economical* – low family income, unemployed parents, a drop in the standard of living, commercialization of education etc.;
- *Social* – indifference of parents, lack of family control, negative influence of the environment, poor living conditions, influence of various criminal factors etc.;
- *Cultural and psychological* – related to the traditions, customs and values of the various ethnocultural groups etc.;
- *Personal* – lack of motivation to learn, negative attitude to school, difficulties in communicating with teachers and schoolmates, personal characteristics etc.;
- *Organizational and administrative reasons* – inconsistent policy in handling these pupils, lack of adequate control system;

The highest is the percentage of children dropping out of school for family reasons (34.7%). A large number of them leave school at the low secondary education stage. The high percentage of drop-outs due to family reasons can be explained with the position of school in their families' system of values, the low economic status, expressed in unemployment, poverty and lack of funding for education, the exploitation of the children as labourers providing the upkeep of the family etc. The number of those drop-outs due to insufficient learning motivation is disturbing – over 5000 pupils. The reasons can be found in the difficulties encountered in the process of acquiring the content of teaching due to poor command of Bulgarian language, the complicated academic style of the textbooks, the traditional passive model of teaching and the lack of interactive approach in teaching which does not stimulate pupil activity and does not motivate his interest to learn.

The policy of restricting the number of the pupils not covered and of those dropping out, shall include a wide spectrum of measures aimed at neutralizing the effect of the various negative factors leading to children dropping out of school. With regard to the effective application of the measures, we have already begun the elaboration of a system for data collection, evaluation, control and analysis of the children in compulsory school age and their movement in grades, levels and stages, which shall be implemented in 2007/2008. Alongside with the measures for keeping the children in compulsory school age, a system of measures for the re-integration of those who have already dropped out of school shall be elaborated – the adaptation of school syllabi, alternative forms of education, the launching of pilot schools "Second Chance". A mechanism has been envisaged, to inform the parents every day about the children's absences and delays and in prospect by using the ICT and the capacities of the national educational portal.

The measures for the reduction of the number of the pupils not covered and dropping out of school can be separated in three main groups: change of the educational structure, social activities, and measures directed to children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian and children with special educational needs.

2. Change in the educational structure

The implementation of a new educational structure is of great importance for the granting of equal access to education. Its aim is to overcome the fundamental drawbacks of the current educational system – the existing inequality among pupils of different school types due to the acquiring of different general education minimum: lack of transition in the system; lack of guarantees for the fulfilment of the Constitutional requirement for compulsory education up to the age of 16, in compliance with Article 53 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the absence of exit from the system on completion of this age; insufficient conditions for the development of the potential of each child upon rendering an account of his interests, requirements and capacities.

The new structure shall cover:

Graduation of basic education after VII grade.

At the end of this stage the pupils shall be awarded a Certificate for Basic Education Completed, which shall enable them to continue their education in the next stages in specialized high schools, vocational education schools and general education schools. On completion of basic school, the level of mastering of the general education minimum shall be examined by means of a national standardized external evaluation, which apart from being a measure of the knowledge of the pupils, shall serve for weighing their capacity with regard to entering various types of schools.

The curtailment of the level by one year and the completion of basic education in seven years instead of eight shall not bring about redistribution of the content of teaching and increasing of the workload for the pupils. It presumes a change in the state educational requirements on the specific subjects with regard to bringing to the forefront the knowledge, skills and competences which shall be acquired in the course of a seven year school education. The transfer of grade VIII into the high school level shall not affect the general logic, philosophy and structure of the curricula for grades V-VII, since grade VII is in many ways a border area – in grade VII the foundations of the course of study in natural sciences

(Physics, Chemistry, Biology) are laid and in high school the knowledge is expanded and detailed; in grade VII the cycle of systematic mastering of the accepted language norm is completed and in literature the cycle of classical education is completed and some basic concepts of the literary theory are introduced; in grade VII the foundations of the systematic course of education in mathematics are laid.

On completion of grades V, VI or VII the pupils who have difficulties in learning the content of teaching and/or are threatened by dropping out, shall be given the opportunity to be trained by professions in vocational classes for acquisition of a first degree professional qualification.

Division of secondary education level in two stages:

– **First High School Stage** (grades VIII–X) – the pupils shall graduate compulsory education. The idea of the compulsory education is not only to acquire a uniform general knowledge minimum, but also to acquire broader competencies as personal and professional results. This presumes changes allowing more complete coverage of the pupils at school, higher erudition, better realization and socialization. On completion of grade X, the level of mastering of the general knowledge minimum shall be examined by means of a national external evaluation and the pupils shall be awarded a First Stage High School Certificate. Depending on the grades achieved in the course of the first three year high school stage, and the results of the national examination, as well as depending on their wish, they shall be able to continue education at the next educational stage in the same or another school or to leave the school system and seek realization on the labour market. Within the framework of first high school stage, the pupils shall be able to acquire first and second degree of professional qualification and shall be awarded the corresponding certificates. For the pupils leaving the general education school system after grade X, short term modules have been elaborated to prepare them for finding a job.

– **Second High School Stage** (grades XI–XII) – the pupils shall build up and specialize their knowledge and skills and shall be able to prepare themselves for their education in higher schools. The stage shall be com-

pleted by taking state matriculation examinations for the acquisition of high school education. The pupils shall be awarded a Second Stage High School Certificate (for those choose not to take the state matriculation examinations) or a High School Diploma, which shall give them entitlement to continue education in higher school. Within the framework of the second high school stage, the pupils shall be entitled to acquire second or third degree of professional qualification.

Grade VIII – the year of intensive foreign language and computer education and/or of vocational preparation for all pupils.

The pupils shall have equal general education preparation within the framework of grade VIII education, i.e. they shall study the same general education subjects within the same number of lessons in all schools. The difference shall only be in the correlation of foreign language learning, computer training and vocational training depending on the type of the school.

The intensity of foreign language learning shall vary in the different types of schools: in specialized high schools it shall be 17 lessons a week, in the vocational high schools – 15 lessons a week and in the rest of the schools – 6 lesson a week. The difference in the number of lessons (from 15 to 17 and from 6 to 17) in vocational schools shall be used for vocational training; in general education schools – for more intensive teaching of Information Technologies and for module tuition within the subject Technologies (like management, entrepreneurship etc.); in specialized schools (Arts, Choreography, Sports) – for tuition in the corresponding profile.

The new educational structure shall have several advantages:

- Equal treatment of graduates at the output of the basic education – all pupils graduating basic education, shall be awarded a certificate and shall proceed to the next stage of education at the same time; all pupils can graduate basic education without changing school;

- Guaranteeing their constitutional right for compulsory education until 16 years of age and ensuring the opportunity to exit the system;
- Acquiring the same general education minimum for all types of schools until grade X;
- Horizontal and vertical transition of the system;
- Opportunity for quick adaptation of the professional education to the dynamics of the labour market.
- Preservation of the traditional for the Bulgarian education classes with intensive tuition in foreign language yielding high results.
- Guaranteeing the opportunity for pupils with different capacities and requirements to find their place in the educational system.
- Increasing the pupils' motivation to stay longer in the system of school education.

The implementation of a new educational structure does not mean eight year educational contents to be learned in seven years, yet some changes in the curricula and syllabi in grades V to XII shall be necessary. Special efforts shall be exerted for the updating of vocational education and of professional guidance including by submitting thorough information about the educational and training opportunities in the national education portal as well as by creating a network of career centers. The implementation of a new educational structure is related to the development of the system for grading and control of the quality of education.

The implementation of a new educational structure shall be accompanied by additional measures for creation of the necessary educational environment for the children who are going to commute to school a year earlier, including school buses, half-board forms, nutrition at school etc. Measures aimed at protecting the pedagogic staff are also envisaged.

The new educational structure shall be implemented for the pupils who shall be in grade V during the 2006/2007 school year. In this way, by the end of the 2008/2009 school year, all children graduating junior education after grade VII shall take a standardized national examination. At the end of 2011/2012 school year for the first time First Stage High School Certificates shall be issued and at the end of 2013/2014 school year, the first graduates taught exclusively within the framework of the new educational structure, shall take their state matriculation examinations

The changes in the educational structure require legislation which shall define the place and character of compulsory education within the system of school education.

3. Social activities

A great number of the reasons leading to dropping out of pupils in compulsory school age can be overcome by active social measures. Of special significance are:

Free of charge access to the educational contents

Throughout the implementation period of the programme, the practice of granting of free of charge textbooks and school appliances for the pupils in the primary education stage (I – IV grade) shall continue. Free of charge textbooks and school appliances shall be granted by stages to children with special educational needs. The free of charge access to the educational content shall also be ensured by the electronic teaching courses, elaborated and accessible on the national educational portal.

Continuation of the activities for implementation of the National Programme for Extensive Coverage of the Pupils in Compulsory School Age, approved by the XXXIX National Assembly

One of the measures in this programme is the provision of free of charge snacks for the pupils in the primary education stage (I – IV) grade which combined with other social measures can yield good results with

regard to children in danger of dropping out. This measure shall continue and be developed for senior age pupils by ensuring them the opportunity for nourishment at school.

Ensuring of free transportation and half-boarding-school type of education

Ensuring transportation to school, combined with the development of a half-boarding-school type of education shall be of dual importance for the educational system. On the one hand this measure shall undisputable facilitate the children's access to education. On the other hand it accompanies the measures for the optimization of the schools' network and the development of the central school system. The Ministry of Education and Science shall continue buying and providing buses and minibuses to the communities for the transportation of pupils to the central schools in 2006. The objective is in 2007/2008 school year each central school to have at least one school bus (minibus).

Strict coordination of social welfare benefits with school attendance

This coordination exists at the moment too, but the elaboration of its mechanisms for control shall increase its effect and shall contribute to the more extensive coverage of children in compulsory school age.

4. Socialization of the children whose native language is not Bulgarian. Integration of other children with special educational needs

The need for the state to take special care for the socialization of children whose native language is not Bulgarian is becoming more evident. The activities related to learning Bulgarian language shall be especially energetic in the compulsory period prior to enrolment in grade I and shall continue until they reach a level of mastering the language comparable with that of the rest of the children. The additional tuition of these children in Bulgarian language shall be out under specialized methods by taking into consideration their specific needs and difficulties. Apart from the

various forms of additional pedagogic assistance, of great importance for these children shall be their immersion into an integrating environment excluding any division on language, ethno-cultural or other basis. It is extremely important to take expedient steps with regard to broadening the coverage of such children by kindergartens and their upbringing in an environment where they shall be able to communicate in Bulgarian every day. This necessitates the usage of differentiated approaches allowing for the preservation and further consolidation of the kindergartens, especially in areas where they are the only centre for learning Bulgarian language. To this end it is necessary for the parents to be better informed about the benefits of attending kindergartens.

The integration of children with special educational needs requires a series of steps with regard to creating a supportive environment for their education, including the formation of an accessible physical environment and an opportunity for education under individual programmes, granting of special textbooks, school appliances and technical equipment for the pupils in the elementary, training the pedagogic staff to work with such children. Furthermore, the vicious practice of directing and accommodating in such schools of children whose education does not require such an environment. This practice impedes the education, upbringing and development of the children with special educational needs, as well as those who have been directed there for other social reasons. To this end, it is necessary to exercise constant control over the activity of the diagnostic commissions for complex pedagogical assessment to the regional inspectorates of education, who direct children to these types of schools. Such control shall be exercised over headmasters of the educational institutions who admit for education pupils who have not been directed by the diagnostic commissions.

The measures listed so far shall be applied simultaneously with measures for the enhancement of the motivation and interest of the children to school, purposeful work with the children in danger of dropping out, including providing psychological support.

VIII. RAISING THE PRESTIGE AND SOCIAL STATUS OF TEACHERS

The teacher, as the main participant in the process of school education and upbringing is indisputably a key factor for the development of the educational system. The self-esteem and social prestige of the teacher are directly related to his willingness to work and improve as well as to the quality of his work. With regard to increasing the social status and prestige of Bulgarian teachers, the state shall exert additional directed efforts. Enough funds and investments shall be allocated for their qualification, a model for career advancement shall be created and a new system of differentiated remuneration for work, stimulating improvement and motivation for high quality performance of duties, shall be implemented. A lasting tendency for increasing the remuneration of teachers recognizing the great social importance of their work shall be established.

1. Qualification of teachers

The qualification of the teachers (initial and consequent) is extremely important. If the lack of modern knowledge and ability to work with new technologies regarding the other professions results in loss of competitiveness and sometimes self-esteem in the teachers' case the consequences can be far graver. The issue is not only the loss of prestige before the pupils, but also there is the risk for the pupils to develop a sense of cognitive superiority over the teacher – something which no educational system can afford to tolerate.

It is necessary to elaborate a programme for the development of professional competencies of pedagogical staff in several directions:

- Periodic up-to-dating of knowledge
- Adopting new teaching methods
- Training in ICT.

The dynamics of contemporary life leads to rapid changes in the development of science. This imposes the conducting of periodic tuition of specialists in subjects related to learning the novelties in the development of knowledge. The integrated approach in learning the various sciences imposes additional specific requirements. An important component of the qualification activities shall be the training of teachers to use new teaching methods, including interactive ones, aimed at greater attractiveness of the educational process and promoting pupils' interest. The stress shall be on increasing the practical aspect of tuition and contemporary conduct of teaching activities in the classroom so that the pupil shall be an active participant in the process. In direct relation to mastering and applying new teaching methods is the teachers' training in ICT.

For the effective realization of the qualification activities, a system shall be worked out which shall monitor, analyze and assess the development and realization of teachers including by further development of the National Register of the Teachers with information about the qualification courses passed. Thus the needs of qualification shall be periodically investigated and analyzed and the forecasting and planning model of the qualification activities shall be perfected. Important factors for the realization of this policy shall be the ensuring of equal access of all teachers to the various forms of qualification including by the creation of an information system about the qualification activities, and the elaboration of a model for assessment of the effectiveness of the qualification services offered by the various institutions and a model for control over the quality of tuition for the improvement of teachers' qualification.

Improvement of teachers' qualification is of great importance with regard to implementing a system for assessing the quality of the teachers' work, which alternatively shall lay the foundations of the new differentiated model of payment for their work.

2. Introduction of a system for career development

The introduction of a system for career development and its binding to the system of payment for the work shall create the conditions for compe-

tition among teachers, shall motivate them to participate in the process of tuition and education at school more actively.

From the point of view of the contemporary system for career development, two trends can be isolated:

In horizontal aspect:

The opportunity for development shall be provided by differentiating the formulation "Teacher" as a concept. Five new formulations shall be introduced – "Junior Teacher", "Teacher", "Senior Teacher" and "Methodist". The horizontal career development shall depend on the experience gained, going through various forms of compulsory education and assessment of the results.

In vertical aspect

The changes are related mostly to the change in the requirement for occupying administrative posts in the system of national education – Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster, Expert, Head of Regional Inspectorate of Education, administration of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The presence of a teaching background, the real participation in the process of teaching and educating, shall create the experience and knowledge necessary in the management process and guarantee the better understanding of the problems and the effects the application of certain managerial decisions.

3. Implementation of a system for differentiated payment for the work bound to the results of the pupils

This system shall lead to increasing the quality of education as a result of the higher motivation of teachers to continuously develop their knowledge and qualification and to exert more efforts in the process of teaching and educating.

The differentiated approach in the payment presupposes the elaboration of a system of objective indicators and criteria for the assessment of

the quality of work. The most important criterion shall be the results of the internal grading at each stage, as well as the entry and exit examination results. Other indicators can be:

- Whether the results of the pupils from the current grading are comparable to the results of the external grading;
- Work with pupils who have won awards at various national and international competitions, contests and Olympiads;
- Work with children with special educational needs;
- Methodical assistance of new teachers;
- Participation in extracurricular and out of school forms;
- Application of new teaching methods, foreign language tuition and being skilful at ICT;
- The opinion of pupils and parents about the work of the teacher;
- The best fit of pupils in a class;
- The general evaluation of the quality of education within the school.

The exact number, the relative weight of the indicators differentiating the payment shall be determined after a large scale discussion with teachers, social partners and parents.

The aim is that the individual salary of each teacher shall become a function of his career development and the results achieved in the process of teaching and educating of the pupils. The nation-wide implementation of the system of delegated budgets shall allow flexibility in determining the teacher' remunerations and opportunities for better payment combined with more effective management of the funding.

4. Awarding system for teachers

The objective of the awarding system is to excel the specific contribution of certain teachers in the process of teaching and educating. The awards shall be material in form, but more important shall be their moral significance. The public manner of announcing the award winners as well as the creation of an air of solemnity shall be a step forward in increasing the prestige of the Bulgarian teacher.

IX. OPTIMIZATION OF THE NETWORK OF SCHOOLS

The equal access to education is inseparably connected with the policy for optimization of the network of schools. The maintenance of a large number of low quality education schools is not in the best interest of the children. Equal access to education for each child does not mean equal distance from school, but providing an opportunity for each child to get an education of comparable quality. This is impossible without concerted actions aimed at optimizing and restructuring of the network of schools. They shall lead to higher discipline in the management system, disposal of additional financial resources and investing them in a way that shall contribute to the development of school education and improvement of its quality.

The policy of optimization of the network of schools shall be implemented on two levels. On school level it shall be directed to solving the problem with the large number of undersized and merged classes. On regional level it aims at creating the conditions for the development of the system of central schools and the binding of the school network with the requirements of the labour market and the socio-economic characteristics of the corresponding region. This policy shall be accompanied by changes in the methods of determining the number of the personnel and the leading indicator shall be the teacher/pupils ratio.

1. Measures regarding the undersized and merged classes

There are different methods for determining the number of pupils in the classes depending on the type of the school, its size and the characteristics of the geographical situation of the town or village. The general requirement is for a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 26 pupils in class. For 2005/2006 school year the number of undersized classes (fewer than 18 or even fewer than 10 pupils) is 5809 for the whole country. Undersized classes exist not only in small and medium size towns and villages but also in regional centers, including Sofia as well. In the same time the number of the merged classes for 2005/2006 school year is 1940 and a merged class exists even in the capital municipality.

The existence of undersized and particularly of small merged classes in the beginning of the XXI century is not in the best interest of the children and does not respond to the contemporary requirements for high quality education. Besides, their maintenance involves considerable capital expenditures which could be used for inventory improvement in the center school, for the organization of nutrition at school and of full board education, for promoting extracurricular activities for increasing the remuneration of the teaching staff etc. The policy with regard to undersized and merged classes shall stimulate the gradual disappearance of these classes and to this end the economic approach shall be the leading one. By means of basic financial mechanisms like the implementation of a unified standard and delegated budgets in all schools, the necessary conditions and interest for effective management of the financial resources by taking in consideration the demographic or geographic characteristics of the corresponding region, shall be created. The maintenance of a maximally optimized teaching staff and number of classes shall be the additionally financially stimulated.

The aim is for the process to take a gradual course, not to be stressful to the pupils and teachers involved, and alongside with this some measures to compensate the negative effects of the optimization of the network shall be implemented. These measures shall take several courses of development:

- The construction of the necessary infrastructure and ensuring transportation to the central schools;
- Creating opportunities for a full board organization of education and extracurricular activities for the pupils in central schools;
- Protection of the pedagogic staff including by a full day form of education and by their inclusion into various forms of extracurricular and out of school activities.

2. The network of schools shall be bound by the requirements of the labour market and the socio-economic characteristics of the region

The network of schools in the country shall comply with the objective demographic processes of the development of the various regions, shall reflect the socio-economic profile and the state of the labour market and in the same time shall be compatible with the overall vision of regional development.

With regard to achieving these goals, it is necessary to grant the necessary power of the local authority to determine not only the number of the general education and specialized schools, but also the number of the vocational schools on the territory of the respective municipality. They are directly responsible for the overall development of the region; they know the current situation of the manufacturing industry and the requirements for training specialists in certain professions.

X. DECENTRALIZATION OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SYSTEM

The decentralization of the management of the system of school education assumes, on the one hand, adherence to the principles of subsidiarity: decisions are made at a level which is the closest to those who are going to implement them and who are going to be directly affected by them. The state shall reserve its decision-making authority only in cases where it is impossible or unjustifiable for a decision to be made at a different level. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the relationship between central state authorities and local authorities do not rest on the principle of subordination. These authorities derive their legitimacy independently from each other and therefore, their relationship also features mutual balance, cooperation and control.

The state shall reserve the option of establishing the general standards for the quality of education and of controlling that such standards are adhered to on the entire territory of the country. In the present situation the functions of the Ministry of Education and Science shall shift from administrative and competent functions toward control and regulatory functions. Regional Inspectorates of Education shall be freed of all administrative and management authorities and shall develop into units for methodological activities and control.

The process shall continue both in the financial decentralization field and in the authority decentralization field. Meanwhile, the decentralization process cannot stop at municipal level but shall continue in the direction of the particular school adhering to the principle that granting authorities also involves increased responsibilities. In order for the decentralization of the system to be successfully implemented certain preconditions are necessary to guarantee that public interests in the management of education are safeguarded. Above all, a reliable control and reporting system shall be established. It is also required to introduce really active forms of involvement of parents and teachers in school management. It is also very important that headmasters are additionally qualified to improve their management competences.

1. Directions of decentralization

Decentralization of school education management shall be implemented in the following main directions:

Recruitment and dismissal of directors

An active role in the process of recruitment and dismissal of school directors shall be played by local communities: representatives of parents, school teachers and local authorities. This new procedure shall impede the possibility of "dropping" directors from above and shall ensure better opportunities for the local community to control the activities of headmasters.

From the beginning of the 2006/2007 school year annual pilot projects shall be launched in ten municipalities in compliance with the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria and the decisions for recruitment and dismissal of headmasters will be made by representatives of parents and teachers in the particular school, representatives of the municipality and the regional education inspectorates. The Minister of Education and Science and the heads of regional education inspectorates shall assume a moral commitment to render the required legal status of such decisions. Upon completion of these projects an analysis of project results shall be carried out and necessary legislation changes shall be suggested in order to implement the new system of recruitment and dismissal of headmasters. It is possible for this system to be introduced in all municipalities starting from the beginning of the school year 2008/2009 г. provided that all schools have been granted the authority to operate under delegated budgets and the National Institute for Training of Headmasters is in operation.

Opening and closing schools

Local authorities shall be granted wider authorities in relation to municipal schools and the procedures for opening and closing such schools while maintaining the possibilities for the Ministry of Education

and Science to exercise control for adherence to legal regulations. Combining this authority with certain financial incentives shall raise the interest of local authorities to maintain and invest in schools which have sufficient number of children and use an optimum number of qualified teaching staff, i.e. maintain an optimized school infrastructure.

Determining the number and types of vocational and specialized schools

Local authorities shall be granted in several steps the authority to determine the number and types of vocational and specialized schools. In so far as these are often schools of regional significance, this authority shall be exercised in agreement with the relevant regional level authorities. Thus, the vocational schools network shall be established in relation to the specific social and economic characteristics of individual regions. Only a certain number of vocational and specialized schools of particular national significance shall continue to hold their state-owned status. Granting local authorities the power to open and close vocational and specialized schools presumes that such schools shall have to be financed by municipal budgets.

2. Conditions for decentralization of the management of the system

There are two main conditions required for the implementation of the process of decentralization:

Financial decentralization

Financial decentralization is a process of transferring to schools the authorities related to the establishment and implementation of budgets (delegated budgets). Schools shall have wider operating authorities with regard to the establishment of the budget and spending of funds, thus being capable of implementing their individual policy. Schools that manage their budgets observing all legal regulations and in a way that is economically efficient shall be granted additional financing in order to be able to provide higher remunerations to their teachers. It is envisaged to

provide training and information materials with examples of good practice in the management of delegated budgets.

Civil control

It is necessary to establish flexible mechanisms in the society to control the school management. Such mechanisms shall be sought in various directions.

First of all, the statute and role of school trustees shall be reconsidered towards widening their authorities (participation in the preparation of the delegated budget of the school, expressing opinion on the report for the implementation of the delegated budget and also on the programme for development of the school, participation of representatives of the board of trustees in the procedure for recruitment and dismissal of headmaster of the school and the recruitment of teaching staff). The aim for each school is not just to have a school trustees, but for these trustees to have active and efficient authority in the financial and management activities of the school.

Another possible form of exercising control over management activities is to establish school councils involving representatives of parents, teachers and municipal representatives that would eventually develop into collective school management authorities.

Local authorities shall be granted additional authority which is currently exclusively within the scope of competencies of the central authorities and namely of the Minister of Education and Science. One such example is the possibility to announce a certain number of days as non-attendance days given particular circumstances. This shall result in the elimination of unnecessary centralized administering of issues that shall better be solved and considered at local level.

3. Changes in the headmaster's statute

Being the authority responsible for the direct management of the school the headmaster shall be capable of following a policy aimed at

improving the image of the school and gaining recognition for an institution capable of providing modern high-quality education. In order to achieve this it is necessary to introduce changes in the headmaster's statute that shall provide guarantees that he is in possession of the required management skills and knowledge, on the one hand, and that he shall provide for mechanisms of control over his activities, on the other hand. In this respect it is envisaged:

Introduction of a term of mandate for the post of the headmasters without limitations on the number of terms held

Introducing a term of mandate shall foster the necessary motivation for better and more responsible performance of the headmaster's duties. It shall also provide an opportunity for exercising better control over the headmasters' activities and they will have to re-confirm at regular intervals the efficiency of their programme for the development of the school, to report on their achievements and to re-confirm the trust of parents, teachers and pupils.

Establishment of a National Institute for Training of Headmasters

The main objective of the Institute shall be to train headmasters in order to improve their organizational, managerial and financial competences. The Institute shall provide two types of training: initial training for new recruits to the post of headmaster: upon completion of this training a national examination shall be taken for acquiring the qualifications of a headmaster; regular training for active headmasters in view of up-to-dating their knowledge and improving their qualifications. Training shall involve various training courses aimed at transforming headmasters into professionally trained school managers. It is envisaged that the Institute shall be established and fully operational in the beginning of 2007.

Developing model forms of attesting the performance of headmasters

It is necessary to develop a system of criteria and indicators for periodical assessment of the performance and professional characteristics of

headmasters. A compulsory attestation shall play a motivating and disciplining role for headmasters and even more so when combined with the introduction of the term of mandate for this position.

XI. IMPLEMENTATION OF A FINANCING SYSTEM STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT

In a market economy society the financing mechanisms are important means of regulating and directing of the social processes. They are also of great importance for the management of the educational system. In so far as the financing system is important as a mean of achieving results in the development of other components of the educational policy, the changes shall not be an end in themselves.

Upon implementing the financial policy, the balance between two major financing approaches shall be found. On the one hand the state shall perform its function to guarantee the citizen's right of education by providing at least the minimum of the resources necessary to meet the requirements of all schools. On the other hand, the principle of the economic effectiveness shall be applied and this involves the better funding of areas with optimized network of schools, where the necessary material, organizational and methodical prerequisites for the conducting of a high quality teaching and educational process are present (development investments).

It is a challenge to structure the financing model in such a way as to create stimuli for continuous improvement in the fields of equal access and high quality of education. In this regard the financing model shall meet the following requirements:

- Horizontal equality in financing the educational service as a reflection of equal access to education. "Horizontal equality" shall not necessarily mean identical (equal) financing for all, but involve taking into account and compensating for the natural inequality in the access.
- Simplicity and clarity of the financial model;
- Correspondence with the objectives of the educational policy;

- Priority of internal stimuli for effectiveness over the administrative approach;
- Competition among the subgroups in the system;
- Sustainability of the model and the financial rules;
- Subsidiarity of the financial decisions.

Besides that, a clear understanding of the character of the resources invested in the educational system is necessary. These are resources for the development of the society and their gradual increase as a percentage of GDP over the next years is necessary and justifiable. For the implementation of an effective policy for the development of education it is not only enough to have the necessary managerial will and clear vision, but also considerable financial resources, a part of which shall be provided by economies and restructuring of expenses.

Some mechanisms related to the changes in the financing system, have been envisaged in other parts of the programme. The fundamental measures which shall have a clear impact on the financing of education are:

Implementation of a system for delegated budgets in all schools

The overall implementation of the concept for delegated budgets involves:

– **Completed vision for decentralization of the system**

It includes clear separation of responsibilities within the three levels of management – central, local and school. On the one hand the completed concept for delegated budgets requires transferring the standards to school level. On the other hand, there are natural inequalities among different schools within a community, which only local authorities can report and compensate. It calls for finding the optimal ratio between the part of the standards that shall be transferred to school level and the part that shall be distributed by the municipalities. A maximum percentage of the

funds shall reach school level and a minimum percentage shall be kept for the compensation of these inequalities by the municipalities. Besides, the municipalities shall have the authority within certain limits, to direct some of the additional instruments for encouraging the access – social grants, transportation, nutrition at school and boarding houses.

– Gradual transition of a large number of state schools to financing from the municipal budgets

Apart from being an important manifestation of the decentralization of the school education system, the implementation of this measure shall give these schools an opportunity to preserve the undrawn funds and to transfer them to the next budget year (the so called right of transitional residuals).

– Change in the regulation model of labour

The school headmasters shall be granted within certain limits, the chance to choose between more teachers on lower salaries or fewer teachers on higher salaries. This shall create an opportunity for the school to use more flexibly the two of the components determining the number of the teachers – the ability to fill the number of pupils in class (respectively the number of classes) and the workload for the teachers. The freedom of the headmasters to determine the number of the personnel shall not be absolute. It is restricted by a host of other requirements – curriculum, the maximum number of pupils in class above which the quality of education gets worse, maximum lessons in a week, minimum salary etc.

– Increasing the authority of school trustees by giving them the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the delegated budget of the school to control its implementation as well as the formation of school councils which shall also have financial capacities.

The implementation of the system of delegated budgets in all schools shall be completed by the end of 2008. Until then some preparatory activities shall be performed among which special importance shall have the training of headmasters and the formation of mechanisms for the control over the management of the delegated budget by the citizens.

Implementation of financial stimuli for more effective management and higher quality of the educational process

The schools that do not meet certain qualitative and quantitative characteristics (absence of undersized classes, optimal number of pupils in class, optimized structure and composition of staff using new methods of teaching on a large scale, development of extracurricular and out of school activities etc.) shall be additionally funded.

Apart from the effective management of funds, the schools shall be additionally stimulated on achieving higher quality of education. The implementation of this element presupposes the elaboration and functioning of a system for external quality evaluation.

Implementation of a unified standard for the financing of child/pupil education

The unified standard involves merging the staff expenses with and the expenses related to the upkeep and education of a pupil/child. It could be implemented as early as in 2007. In so far as the unified standard does not mean equal standard, its implementation shall be preceded by the elaboration of a differentiating mechanism with regard to achieving the objectives of the educational policy and compensating for the natural inequalities in the access to education. The elaboration of such a mechanism involves: identifying of the objective factors (geographic, structural, and demographic), leading to inequalities in the access and quality of education (rural, mountainous, thinly populated or scattered municipalities); the outlining of the relation of these factors to the necessity for higher (or lower) financing of expenses; bringing these defining criteria to the forefront.

Approval of programmed financing of the system

The financing of the system based on national programmes shall create opportunities for more effective realization of priorities and objectives which would not be realized to the desired extent and/or quality within the institutional financing.

*Implementation of a system for differentiated payment of teachers
Extending the principle "Money Follows Pupils" over private schools
as well*

The expected development of private education in our country especially after the accession of our country into the European Union shall raise to the foreground the issue of the financial policy of the state to private schools, mainly with regard to extending the principle "Money Follows Pupils" over these schools as well. The solution of this issue lies in achieving certain results with regard to the other two problems – the improvement of the material basis in state and municipal schools and the unification of the criteria and mechanisms for control over the quality of education in all schools. For this reason, the principle "Money Follows Pupils" can be implemented in its completeness not earlier than 2009.

XII. IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

A considerable part of school education problems originate from the legislative framework. That is why the issue of legal enforcement of the school education system is not a formal one, but involves the creation of the framework on the basis of which the relations in the school educational system shall develop in a foreseeable and uncontradictory way. The Ministry of Education and Science has already begun analysis of the legal framework, which shall indicate the existing defects and inconsistencies and on this ground shall prepare proposals for its development.

The improvement of the legal framework puts forward several main issues:

Management of the system not by people, but by rules

The school education system continues to be managed by people rather than by rules. The reversal of this situation involves the uniform and joint settlement on legal level of all relations which can be developed without issuance of an individual administrative act and where this is not possible – by secondary legislation. Besides that, the cases of rendering discretionary authority on resolving of certain issues shall sharply be reduced.

Raising the level of the legislative framework

All fundamental and lasting social relations shall be settled on legal level with regard to guaranteeing greater stability in time and publicity in their approval.

Abstaining from issuing acts of obscure legal nature (letters, instructions etc.)

It is necessary to strictly abstain from the unconstitutional practice of issuing letters, instructions and other acts of obscure legal nature.

Changes in the existing legal acts and issuance of new legal acts

The individual measures envisaged in the programme involve the implementation of a large number of changes and amendments to the legal acts. The most important of them are:

- National Education Act;
- Law on the degree of education, general educational minimum and school curriculum;
- Vocational Education and Training Act;
- Rules of procedure for the implementation of the National Education Act;
- Rules of procedure for the structure and activity of the regional educational inspectorates;
- Ordinance № 2 of 18.05.2000 on the educational contents;
- Ordinance № 6 of 28.05.2001 on the distribution of the teaching time for the purpose of reaching the educational minimums by classes, stages and levels of education;
- Ordinance on the textbooks and school appliances;
- Ordinance № 5 of 15.05.2003 on assessing and approval of textbooks and school appliances;
- Ordinance № 2 of 24.04.1997 on the organization and implementation of children's and pupils' recreation and tourism;
- Ordinance № 3 of 15.04.2003 on the evaluation system;
- Ordinance № 1 of 11.04.2003 on the examination programmes for the state matriculation examinations;

- Ordinance № 3 of 17.05.2004 on the organization and conducting of state matriculation examinations;
- Ordinance № 11 of 28.03.2005 on admission of pupils in state and municipal schools;
- Ordinance № 2 of 18.04.2003 on admission of pupils in the high schools in Arts;
- Ordinance № 3 of 26.03.2004 on admission of pupils basic and low secondary level education in arts schools;
- Ordinance № 4 of 8.04.2002 on admission of pupils in sports schools;
- Ordinance № 6 of 19.08.2002 on tuition of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases;
- Ordinance № 7 of 29.12.2000 on defining the number of pupils and children in the classes and groups at schools, kindergartens and servicing units;
- Ordinance № 5 of 14.05.2002 on the standards for compulsory teaching workload and the standards for size of the staff employed within the national educational system.
- Ordinance on the state educational requirement for the annual upkeep of children and pupils in state and municipal schools, kindergartens and servicing units;
- Ordinance № 5 of 29.12.1996 for the conditions for the improvement of qualification of the pedagogic staff employed within the national educational system and the procedure for acquiring professional qualification degrees;
- Ordinance № 7 of 25.06.2001 for opening, transforming, changing and closing of private schools and kindergartens.

The implementation of the measures shall necessitate the approval of new legislative acts – an ordinance for the extracurricular and out of school activity, an ordinance for the procedure and criteria for evaluation of the work of the pedagogic staff, a new ordinance for the procedure and ways to determine the individual salaries of the staff in secondary schools, an ordinance for the procedure and ways to award teachers, a regulation for the structure and activities of the National Institute for Training Headmasters, a regulation for the capacity and qualification of headmasters, a regulation for the criteria and procedure for the rating of headmasters.

The large number of essential changes shall give ground for the necessity to elaborate and implement a new, general law which shall completely settle all fundamental relationships developing within the system of national education. The approval of such a general law shall eliminate the probability for the simultaneous operation of a parallel and in the same time contradictory settlement of the same social relations and shall create the conditions for uniform and legitimate law enforcement.

By 1st October of each year, the Minister of Education and Science shall submit before the National Assembly a report for the implementation of the National Programme for the Development of School and pre-school education (2006-2015) for the corresponding school year and for the measures that shall be implemented during the next one.

