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SUMMARY REPORT

**The Role of Transnational, Private,
and For-Profit Provision in Meeting Global Demand for Tertiary
Education: Mapping, Regulation and Impact**

**CASE STUDY
BULGARIA**

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Case Study: Bulgaria

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Section 1. Country Overview

1. Geography

- 1.1. Bulgaria is located in South Eastern Europe between Europe and Asia and covers an area of 119, 910 square kilometres. The country shares borders with Romania, Turkey, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and has a coastline on the Black Sea.
- 1.2. Bulgaria's current population is around 8m, with 1,170,842 living in the capital city, Sofia, and around 70% of the population living in urban areas (World Bank, 2002). The population is slowly declining due to a decreasing birth rate and economic migration, and it has decreased by around one million since 1989, with a -5.1% negative population growth rate reported in 2001. Bulgaria also has an ageing population structure, with people of pension age (56 for women and 61 for men) representing over a quarter of the population (www.government.bg). In 2000, the average life expectancy was 68 for men and 75 for women (World Bank 2002).
- 1.3. The main language is Bulgarian, and the dominant religion is Christianity (85%), followed by Islam (12%) and other smaller sects (See Table 1). The ethnic composition has been estimated at 84% Bulgarian, 9.4% ethnic Turks, 4.7% Roma and 1.1% other groups (See Table 2).
- 1.4. Literacy levels are high at around 99%, and in 1998 the primary school enrolment level was 93% (World Bank 2002).

2. Political Structure

- 2.1. Bulgaria has spent long periods of its history under the control of powerful neighbouring empires, including the Byzantine Empire in the 11th Century and the Ottoman Empire from 1396 to the late 19th Century. The influence of the latter began to wane from the 18th Century onwards and, after a series of revolts and wars, the Bulgarian State was re-established in 1878, and the Bulgarian people finally achieved full independence in 1908. In 1944, Bulgarian communists overthrew the monarchy and the pro-German government, and Bulgaria was declared a republic. Bulgaria was under communist monopoly rule from 1946 until 1990. Perestroika, the fall of the Berlin Wall and public disquiet led to changes in the Communist party in 1989, and in 1990 it renamed itself the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). The BSP transition government under Popov was then elected in the first free elections in more than 40 years. This government prepared the country for the Great National Assembly, which was to make significant changes in the Bulgarian Constitution. The first democratic government, under the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) party was elected in 1991, after gaining a majority of seats in a new regular General Assembly.
- 2.2. Today, Bulgaria is a multi-party democracy, governed by a single chamber of 240 representatives (elected every 4 years), with a directly elected president (elected every 5 years). The state is divided into 28 administrative regions (Oblasts), which have a measure of autonomy in certain areas, although the government remains highly centralised (EOHCS). The Oblasts are further subdivided into 262 municipalities.
- 2.3. In the early 1990s, political power frequently changed hands between the BSP and UDF as a result of numerous economic and political crises that included regular mass strikes. Between 1997 and 2001, a measure of political stability was achieved under the UDF majority government of Prime Minister Ivan Kostov. However, Kostov was defeated in elections in 2001 by Bulgaria's former King, Simeon II (deposed in 1946), whose National Movement for Simeon II (NDS) now leads a coalition that includes representatives of ethnic Turks (BBC 2003).

- 2.4. Following its transition to democracy, Bulgaria has pursued a policy of integration into Western political alliances, and the country was formally invited to join NATO in November 2002. It is also seeking to join the EU at the earliest opportunity and, although it wasn't included on the list of countries to join in 2004, there is hope that it could join in 2007. However, there are concerns in the EU about persisting social and political problems in Bulgaria, which include corruption, a weak judiciary system, and discrimination against the Gypsy or Roma population (BBC 2003).

3. Economics

- 3.1. Since 1989, Bulgaria has moved slowly from a command to a market-oriented economy, although this has been hindered by socio-economic and political instability that almost led to economic collapse in the mid-1990s. In 1996, there was negative GDP growth and triple digit inflation, and the IMF cancelled loans due to inadequate levels of privatisation and structural reforms. Poverty increased, wages were low, and unemployment was high (around 14% in 1997), especially amongst younger people. By 1996-1997 Bulgaria was one of the poorest countries in central Europe, with worsening mortality and poverty rates, especially amongst ethnic groups (Totomanova 2001). These negative trends continue to dominate the current economic situation: the unemployment rate at December 2002 was 17%, and only 40% of the economically active are currently employed (NSI, 2003).
- 3.2. During Ottoman rule, Bulgaria was predominantly an agricultural country of small rural landowners. However, in the 1940s the Communist Party began to collectivise agriculture and launch a major industrialisation, which led to Bulgaria becoming one of the most prosperous countries in Eastern Europe and a leading producer of engineering products. By the end of the 1980s this prosperity had waned, and people's living standards were still low (real household incomes declined by 76% between 1989 and 1997 (Totomanova 2001). There was widening income inequality, and Bulgaria became dependent on large foreign loans. It has also been suggested that around 18-30% of Bulgaria's GDP at that time came from the informal barter economy (EOHCS).
- 3.3. During 1990-97, the Bulgarian economy was unstable and ill defined, displaying the characteristics of social transition in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, while in most of the countries of the region this painful process had ended by the middle of the decade, in Bulgaria it continues, due to the slow and unsteady progress of key political and economic reforms. In 1998, the new UDF government sought to stabilise the economy through a structural reform programme. This included restructuring Bulgaria's foreign debts, and pursuing policies of privatisation, decentralisation, and social welfare, and supported by loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). After the economic collapse in 1996, the stabilisation programme led to a 4-year period of low inflation (2-3% per year). The state budget deficit, which amounted to 10.5% of GDP in 1996, had dropped to 2.9% by 1997 and, during the period 1998-2001, there was no budget deficit.
- 3.4. By 2000, the proportions represented by the different economic sectors of GDP lent a typically European profile to the Bulgarian economy: 56.1% of GDP came from the services' sector, 23.3% from industry and 10.6% from agriculture. Simeon II has sought to continue with progress towards market reforms in order to meet economic targets for entry into the European Union (EU) in 2007. The private sector employs the majority of the labour force (63% in 2002). The direct foreign investment for the companies outside the finance sector¹ was 2.5 billion US\$ as at 31st December 2001.

¹ . This kind of investment is an indicator of economic activity that measures the total amount of investments from industry, trade and services but excluding insurance and brokers' capital. Only investments that clearly contribute to the economic growth are considered since, in transition countries, the banking sector is often undergoing reforms, so this is a more accurate measure of economic activity. Insurance companies' capitals often have unclear financial sources and are connected with the 'grey' economy

- 3.5. However, the economic situation in Bulgaria has worsened slightly in the last 12 months. The growth rate for the last 9 months of 2002 was 4.4% (NSI). Bulgaria's overseas debt at the end of March 2003 was 58.5% of total GDP, representing an increase of 0.9% compared with the same period in 2002. The trade deficit for February 2003 was 1.8% of GDP, compared with 1.2% in February 2002 (NSI).
- 3.6. Bulgaria's main exports are currently chemicals and plastics, food and drink, tobacco and machine building equipment. Historically, trade ties were mostly with the former Soviet Union, and Bulgaria imports much of its energy (EOHCS). Bulgaria is a net exporter of medical and other skilled workers, and this has led to suggestions of a brain drain, particularly to the US and Europe.
- 3.7. The rapid development of the PC and Internet market in Bulgaria highlights a need to encourage the use of ICTs in education, particularly in higher education. With a rate of 37 PCs per 1000 citizens, Bulgaria is far behind the average of 71 per 1000 citizens in the candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe (See Section 6). The recent liberalisation of the Internet market in Bulgaria has resulted in a significant expansion of Internet service providers. With over 170 Internet providers, Bulgaria ranks only second behind Poland amongst the 8 pre-accession countries of the Central and Eastern Europe. Educational policy makers in Bulgaria believe that educating young people in the use of Internet improves the quality of services, reduces the costs, and creates conditions for the greater employability of graduates (Georgieva et al., 2002).

Section 2. Education System

1. Context

- 1.1. Following liberation from Ottoman rule in 1878 Bulgaria developed a modern European educational system, which lasted until the advent of communism after World War II. Under communist rule, the education system was restructured on ideological lines, with limited teacher autonomy, based on strictly centralised and hierarchical structures.
- 1.2. However, since the decline of communism, the Bulgarian higher education system has developed rapidly, in contrast to other levels in the education sector. Considerable changes took place in Bulgarian higher education in the 1990's, both in terms of increasing access and in the structure of the system. The proportion of the 19-23-year-old age cohort enrolled in higher education increased from 7% to 27%, and the percentage of school graduates entering higher education reached 60%, compared to only 22-25% prior to 1989 (Georgieva, P. et al., 2002, p. 28). Most changes took place as a result of the December 1995 Higher Education Act, later amended in both June 1999 and in May 2002. Currently, a national debate is taking place on Government proposals for a series of amendments to the Act, which were due to pass through the National Assembly by June 2003. These changes deal mainly with the Bologna process and the need for the Bulgarian higher education system to improve its legal basis to achieve the objectives of the Bologna declaration.
- 1.3. The first major change after 1989 was the granting of academic autonomy to higher education institutions in 1990, after over four decades of state control and compliance with the ideology and needs of a centrally planned economy. In the early 1990s, HE institutions abolished ideological subjects and elements of course content that were ideologically biased, and began to expand their programmes and enrolments through setting up new specialities (spetsialnosti) in new faculties and affiliated units around the country. These new specialities were mainly in law, economics and management – areas where the labour market was experiencing skills shortages. However, established specialities such as engineering and sciences attempted to adapt themselves to the new context. In addition, institutions were given the ability to charge tuition fees to help fund increases in their student numbers, and private universities began to be established.
- 1.4. Between 1990 and 1995, the HE sector began to expand rapidly with the number of university students rising by 33% from 188,479 in 1990/91 to 250,336 in 1995/96 (Georgieva, P. et al., 2002, p. 108). Paid education, combined with a legal vacuum regarding regulation of admissions and academic standards (quality assurance and accreditation) led to suspicions of corruption and 'diploma sales' to paying students (Slantcheva 2000). However, the 1995 Higher Education Act provided a new legal structure for many of the activities of Bulgarian higher education institutions. This legislation recognised the private sector and new disciplinary areas. It also tried to address quality concerns emanating from historical university self-regulation, by introducing greater accountability as the state took control of quality assurance, course structures, and university finance.
- 1.5. By 1999, it was clear that the 1995 Act needed amendment in order to strengthen the legal context for higher education. There was a perceived need to control the (still) expanding enrolment level, and to reorganise institutional financing, course structure, and content. This need was also influenced by a need for changes in society and the economy, and a desire for increased harmonisation and integration with the rest of Europe. The amendment abolished fully self-financed places in higher education, increased competition in admissions, and set guidelines to bring standards in line with the rest of Europe (e.g. in line with the Lisbon, Bologna and Sorbonne declarations). As a result, the number of students enrolled in universities dropped from 270,077 in 1998-9 to 247,006 in 2000-2001 (Georgieva, P. et al., 2002).
- 1.6. In 2000, the World Bank funded a 3-phase US\$82m Education Modernisation Project aimed at comprehensive reform of the Bulgarian education system. Its goals included improving

educational standards, upgrading the amount and quality of information about students and university administration, restructuring university and student finance, introducing the new 'Matura' admissions system, and supporting other quality improvement measures (Totomanova 2001). At the end of 2002 it appeared, however, that the project was not proceeding well since only 5% of the planned funded activities had been undertaken. According to a monitoring report, this was due to poor management and the lack of determination to fulfil the project aims and objectives on the part of the Ministry of Education and Science (Monitoring and evaluation of the activities under the World Bank Project on Modernization of Bulgarian Education. Interim Report, October, 2002. Association for Social Investigations and Applied Research Practices).

2. Levels in the Education System

- 2.1. Education in Bulgaria is compulsory from the ages of 7 to 18. All studies are conducted in Bulgarian although there are exceptions at some university level institutions. At school level, the general curriculum provides opportunities for ethnic minority children to study their mother tongue. In specialised language schools and in the 'profiled gymnasiums', instruction takes place in English, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Armenian, Hebrew, Russian, and other languages. At university level, instruction takes place in English at the American University in Bulgaria, and in German, French and English in some programmes in Technical Universities (DfES 2002).

Basic education

- 2.2. Basic education in Bulgaria runs from the age of 6 or 7 through to 14 (forms 1 to 8) in two main stages. It is up to parents to decide whether the child should go to school at the age of 6 or 7. The first stage takes place in Natchalno utchilischte in the four years from the age of 6-7 to 9-10 and leads to a Form IV Leaving Certificate on completion. The Second stage takes place in Progimnazialno utchilichte and runs from the age of 9-10 to 14, leading to a Basic Education Completion Certificate on completion.

Secondary education

- 2.3. The Upper Secondary level lasts for either 4 or 5 years following receipt of a Basic Education Completion Certificate. The providers are either general secondary schools (Gimnazii), technical and vocational-technical schools (Professionalni gimnazii and/or teknikumi/ Professionalni utchilichta), or profile-oriented schools (Profilirani Gimnazii). The profile-oriented secondary schools appeared after 1989 in response to market demand for a more flexible education that would combine a general and liberal education model with specialised training in a particular job field. Therefore, existing secondary comprehensive schools began a massive transformation into profile-oriented schools of Economics and Management, of English and other European languages. However, as they were obliged to follow the state recognised general curriculum, they did not prove to be as effective as the Technical vocational schools and the Professional Gymnasiums, which continued to provide the universities with the majority of their graduates.
- 2.4. All secondary institutions offer the Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie (Diploma of Completed Secondary Education) at the end of the upper Secondary Level, although the vocational schools also offer a Certificate of Professional Qualification.

Higher/Tertiary education

- 2.5. The first modern university in Bulgaria was established in 1888. Under the communist system, all higher education institutions were strictly controlled by the state, which provided all funding and specified the curriculum. The Soviet based university system was designed for narrowly specialised five-year training in technical and engineering subjects, with employment allocated according to the needs of the planned economy. Research institutes were also separated from the training function. The structure was linear with limited horizontal (between courses, disciplines, institutions) or vertical flexibility (no option to study a different subject at

postgraduate level, differing admissions criteria between institutions, and lack of credit transfer) (Slantcheva 2000).

2.6. Because of the legal changes in the 1990's, higher education in Bulgaria now takes place in universities and equivalent higher education institutions, academies and colleges. All institutions have academic autonomy and can be private or publicly funded. Many of the HEIs in Bulgaria are branch campuses of larger institutions.

- **Universitet (University)** – provides teaching and training to degree level in at least 3 out of the 4 main fields, the humanities, natural, social and technical sciences. They also conduct their own research.
- **Spetsializirano Visshe Uchilishte (Specialist Higher School/Technical University)** – former academies and research institutes). These institutions are similar to traditional universities, but only offer training and research in a narrow range of vocational and technical fields, e.g. science, arts, or sports.
- **Academija (Academy)** are research and scientific institutes under the control of the Bulgarian Academy of Science (approximately 65 institutes) and the National Centre for Agrarian Sciences (approximately 58 institutes). These provide doctoral education only and are subject to accreditation on an individual case basis.
- **Kolej (College)** –these institutions offer short-term vocational training for three years leading to the 'Specialist in....' qualification. They are often linked to universities and share their facilities, but can also be independent. Sometimes these institutions also offer vocational school education. These institutions do not offer standard degree courses.

2.7. Today there are 230,513 students in higher education in Bulgaria enrolled in 42 universities and equivalent higher education institutions, in 9 independent colleges and 40 colleges based at the universities. Of these, there are 14 private tertiary education institutions, including 8 universities and equivalent HE institutions, and 6 independent private colleges (NSI, 2002-2003 data).

University Level

Public universities

2.8. Public sector universities comprise traditional universities that were established prior to 1989, and Technical Institutes that transformed into technical universities in the 1990s. The public sector relies on state funding for much of its income. Between 1995 and 2002, it was also subject to central control over course structure and content but, following the amendments to the Higher Education Act in May 2002, state regulation now covers only the qualification degree structure (HE Act, Article 9, (3), 5.). Degree requirements concern the period of study and the overall number of contact hours for the degree, as well as the type of exit from the degree programme (e.g., state examination, the defence of theses, or both).

Private universities

2.9. The first private university in Bulgaria was established in 1924, the Free University for Political and Economic Studies, although this was closed down by the communist regime in the 1940s. After 1989, the 1991 Law on Academic Autonomy enabled the establishment of non-state institutions, which were then recognised and allowed to enrol students by the 1995 Higher Education Act, although they were not evaluated or accredited. The legislation covering private universities recognised their different structure (e.g. they had departments vs. faculties), requirements for establishment and modes of operation.

2.10. The private sector grew quickly, but not to the same level as in other communist states, due to the size and status of the state-funded sector. Between 1991 and 1995, the Bulgarian government recognised 5 private universities as independent legal entities although one of

these, the Slavic University in Sofia, was closed down because of administrative irregularities in 1999. In 2002/3, privately educated students represented 13.4% of the total student body in Bulgaria (NSI, 2003).

- 2.11. The private sector has a more flexible structure than the public sector. It was quick to introduce a Western style degree structure, standardised admission procedures, non-traditional courses, flexible study modes (e.g. Distance Learning), and credit transfer between programmes. The small American University in Bulgaria also offers an American style education.
- 2.12. Much of the innovation of the private sector was made possible by its financial autonomy from the state, although this freedom also requires private institutions to raise funds from tuition fees (higher than the public sector), and from foreign donors (Open Society Fund, The British Know How Fund, The British Council, TEMPUS, PHARE, DAAD, Stability Pact for SEE, etc.). Therefore, the sector is heavily reliant on student demand, and can only afford to offer courses that students are willing to pay high fees to study. Although private institutions do not receive state funding, the Ministry of Education and Science defines the quota of first year-enrolled students.
- 2.13. Around half of all students in private institutions are full-time, and the most popular fields are humanities, foreign languages, social sciences, economics, and law (at Masters level). Private colleges attract students mainly in the fields of management, marketing, and administration. The relative percentage of students in private tertiary education has been characterised by constant growth (from 8.2% in the mid-90s to 13.4% in the 2002-2003 academic year) (Georgieva et al., 2002, p. 109, NSI 2003).

Non-university technical/professional studies

- 2.14. Bulgaria has had around half a century of experience in vocational education, formerly in 'semi-higher' (polu-visshe) institutes, which were transformed into colleges in the 1995 Higher Education Act. This change represented a policy of trying to raise the status of colleges, which only educate a small number of students since many students prefer to follow the university route. Colleges of higher education provide professional education (ISCED-97 level 5B). Colleges (both private and public, independent or part of the institution) do not provide bachelor degree programmes. They only offer "Specialist in..." qualifications – ISCED 5B, which is a professional qualification, and they issue higher education diplomas. In the Higher Education Act this is named as "first level/degree of higher education" and this terminology sometimes is misinterpreted as a 'first degree – Bachelor level'.
- 2.15. After 1995, colleges began to offer 3-year training for a 'Specialist in...' qualification in a particular field. Many colleges were incorporated into public universities (40 in 2002-2003), with the aim that they would offer vocational programmes not offered by other university units and produce highly skilled professionals for rapid entry into the labour market. In 2002-2003 there were also nine independent colleges (including 7 private) in Bulgaria. These colleges specialise in market oriented courses such as business administration, tourism and communications.
- 2.16. However, the number of college students nearly halved in the 1990s (from 32,000 in 1990-91 to 16,369 in 2000-2001) and college students currently represent a decreasing proportion of all students in the tertiary sector (14,801 students, only 3.2% of all HE students in 2002-2003). While this trend is entirely representative of the public colleges, there is an opposite trend in private colleges, although absolute numbers are still low. The student numbers in private colleges have increased over the last 10-years: from 171 in 1992-3 to a peak of 3,047 in 2001-2002, although numbers have dropped for the current academic year (Georgieva et al., 2002, p. 109).
- 2.17. As a result of a need to increase income in the economic crisis, many public sector college 'areas' began to compete in university fields because of the longer-term state funding available, and because of the relatively limited demand for vocational education. In addition, university teachers tend to use college teaching as a source of additional income, and many college

students continue on to the university level, whilst working work part-time (Popov 2001). There is currently no system of credit transfer between college and university level, which serves to extend such students' training from 3 years to 5-6 years.

- 2.18. Other post-secondary education takes place in institutions that provide vocational education (ISCED-97 Level 4). Following the expansion of the private sector of education, some of these institutions call themselves 'colleges', however they do not provide higher level education.

Lifelong Higher Education

- 2.19. Totomanova (2001) reports that there is currently no national strategy for adult education in Bulgaria. The higher education legislation in the 1990s encouraged the development of short-term paid adult education, and in 2000, Bulgaria joined the Lifelong Learning Memorandum of the EU. However, universities are less interested in offering these courses as the state subsidy and fees are lower than for other degree level courses. The situation may change as the university enrolment rate declines because of the slowing birth rate. Institutions will then need to offer more flexible courses to attract students (Totomanova 2001).

Distance Education

- 2.20. The majority of public and private institutions have established distance education centres and 23 institutions currently offer distance education, the majority of these in the university sector. Until 2002, distance education could only be considered as part of a conventional degree programme and could not lead to a degree if it was designed to be delivered solely by the distance mode due to the restrictions imposed by the USR. Since this obstacle has now been eliminated, many institutions are seeking to accredit their distance education programmes, due to growing student demand.
- 2.21. Public institutions that are financially stable and who have high accreditation ratings are expressing growing interest in expanding their provision via the distance mode and are looking for additional resources to strengthen their capacity for distance education. The number of students keen to study by the distance mode is increasing due to the trend for students to work full- or part-time during their studies. This trend is confirmed by a large number of applications in recent years for project funding at the Open Society Fund in Sofia and in the Competitive fund for the support of teaching quality and management at the Ministry of Education and Science.
- 2.22. Currently, distance learning in Bulgaria is delivered partly face-to-face, partly on-line. The exact course structure depends on the learning resources of the specific Distance Education programme. Presently, it is obligatory for such programmes to provide printed (hard copy) of their learning materials (e.g., textbooks, source books, etc.) in order to get institutionally approved and accredited by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. One form of distance learning in Bulgaria consists of learning via intensive lecture periods (c. 2 weeks) followed by a period of self-study and examinations 2-3 months after the lectures. This form of distance education is called "zadochno obuchenie".
- 2.23. The Government intends to adopt a general framework for the quality of distance education programmes in the near future, particularly at the degree level. The Ministry of Education and Science has recently developed a proposal on the legal status of distance learning and the NEAA intends to take a closer look into the resource base of the distance education provision during the process of evaluation and accreditation.
- 2.24. The universities are currently discussing a draft framework for the quality assurance of ODL, and the idea is that there will be a national framework for the quality assurance of distance and open learning arrangements in the HEIs. For instance, there will be a clear set of requirements that need to be satisfied in order to get accreditation for programmes provided on-line only

(e.g., an independent server, permanent on-line learner support by a qualified tutor, etc.). (MES, Draft Proposal for the organisation of Distance Education Programmes in HEIs, March 2003).

Teacher education

2.25. In the Bulgarian higher education system, a teaching qualification can be obtained by students who have graduated as a Bachelor or Master in Pre-primary and Primary Education at university, or equivalent programmes (for the teaching in Kindergartens and in Basic schools) and in any university degree programme that offers training in a subject listed in the secondary school curriculum (for the teaching in upper secondary schools). The latter also requires a parallel course on initial teacher training, which includes 180 contact hours in education disciplines plus 150 hours pre-professional classroom practice. It is also possible to obtain teaching qualifications for teaching in pre-school institutions through college education (after the "Specialist in..." qualification). Some technical universities offer combined programmes for a teaching qualification for engineers who can teach engineering subjects in Vocational schools and post-secondary technical colleges. Students in these universities can obtain their teaching qualification during their engineering studies. (Ordinance 162 of the Council of Ministers on the Uniform State requirements for awarding the teaching qualification. State Gazette No. 34/25 April 1997.)

3. Qualifications in the education system

- 3.1. Prior to 1995, there was no Bachelors equivalent level in Bulgaria. After secondary education, most students took one-phase Masters equivalent 5-year courses, and then either entered employment or continued on to a Doctorate. Students' other alternative was to take a Diploma of Completed Semi-Higher Education in Semi-Higher Institutes.
- 3.2. The 1995 Higher Education Act introduced a new degree structure to public sector higher education, in an attempt to synchronise the system with other educational systems worldwide, to help improve the flexibility of the system, and to improve its socio-economic relevance. A Bachelors-Masters-Doctors structure replaced the traditional one-phase system in universities, and the new Colleges were granted the right to offer a vocational 3-year 'Specialist in....' degree at non-university level. The 1999 Amendment to the Higher Education Act incorporated the Specialist degree into the degree system. The amendment also enabled universities to offer interdisciplinary short-term Masters programmes, in an attempt to allow students more choice in specialisation.
- 3.3. Broadly, there are three levels of university level studies (degree level onwards). These are: Bakalavr (Bachelor) level, Magistr (Master) level, and Doktor (Doctor) level studies.
- 3.4. Bachelor's level study lasts for a minimum of four years and leads to a Bakalavr degree in a range of fields, usually requiring a pass in either state examinations or a diploma thesis. In some fields, studies lead directly to Masters level and take 5 years. A Bachelors degree also provides access to Doctoral level studies.
- 3.5. Masters level should last for 1 year after a Bakalavr and usually requires completion of a diploma thesis and passing an examination. The Diplom za Visse Obrazovanie, awarded before 1995, is also equivalent to the Master's.
- 3.6. Doctoral level is obtained following individual research and the completion of a thesis, and leads to the title of Doctor. The Kandidat na Naukite (Candidate of the Sciences) qualification, awarded before 1995, is also equivalent to the Doctor's. Higher Schools can award doctorates only in their accredited fields, as can scientific research organisations such as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the Academy of Agriculture.

Key qualifications in the Bulgarian Higher Education System

Qualification	Type	Requirement	From	Study time
Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie	Secondary	Basic Education Certificate	All types of secondary schools	4-5 years
Specialist in (relevant subject) Diploma of Higher Education	Post-secondary higher education (non-university)	Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie; an aptitude test (for some programmes)	College	3 years
Bakalavar (Bachelor)	University	Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie+ written entrance exam in one or two subjects*; College diploma of higher education (if in the same subject field)	University or equivalent institution	4 years
Magistar (Master) following the Bachelor	University	Bachelor degree in the same or similar subject field	University or equivalent institution	1 year
Magistar (Master) - long-phase	University	Secondary education diploma; 1 or 2 written entrance exams	University or equivalent institution	5 years
Doktor of Science (Doctor)	University	Bachelor or Master	Academy, University or equivalent institution	3 years

- 3.7. Prior to 2002, a State Register of Specialties (SRS) specified the recognised degree disciplines and the number of courses that could be offered in each of these. Specialties can be broadly described as study programmes leading to a professional/academic qualification. In addition, Uniform State Requirements (USR) detail fixed mandatory standards for the content (50-70%), admission, the mode of delivery, study hours and examinations for each type of speciality.
- 3.8. However, the SRS and USR played a restrictive role in the process of programme diversification as the number of specialties was reduced from nearly 500 in the early 1990s to 202 by the end of the decade. It had become obvious that the SRS and USR were effective mechanisms for preserving and maintaining the status quo in the higher education system. The SRS legalised the inherited ineffective educational model of highly specialised single route study programmes, instead of providing a legal basis for a broadly profiled and more flexible curriculum strategy. The USR were in fact curriculum plans for each of the 202 specialties instead of broadly defined curriculum frameworks to guide institutions in their reform and modernisation efforts. Both SRS and the USR were severely criticised by the academic community, especially the younger generation and the private sector representatives, for their hindering effect on the implementation of the new two-phase degree structure and particularly of the Bachelor degree programmes. (Dimitrov, D. (Ed.) (2001) Higher education 2001. Ministry of Education and Science (Volume 2)).
- 3.9. Following the amendments to the Higher Education Act in May, the SRS are now being replaced by a National Classification of the fields of study with narrower subject areas. The specialties are not specified in the Classification and it is up to each individual institution to decide the course titles and types they wish to offer to their students. They only have to identify the subject area in which a specific course is about to take place.

* From the 2003-2004 academic year it will be possible for secondary school-leavers to sit for Matura examinations, which are recognized by 35% of universities, as an alternative to the university entrance exams. From 2004 onward, sitting for the Matura will be obligatory for students who wish to receive the Secondary School Diploma and the Ministry of Education and Science expects that it will replace the university entrance exams.

- 3.10. The registration of specialties is now a constantly evolving process, regulated by the accreditation of programmes and registered in a new State Registry of the Accredited institutions and programmes. The State Registry is supported and updated by the Ministry. All HEIs are now legally obliged to apply for accreditation of their courses of study (specialities) by 2 July 2004. The Ministry of Education and Science is required to keep a record of all accredited institutions and their programmes/courses of study in a State Registry of Accredited Institutions and Programmes. Currently the specialties are registered after accreditation only (www.minedu.government.bg). By the end of 2002, the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency had evaluated nearly 190 specialties and accredited about 73% of these. In 2003 (until July 1st) over 110 more programmes had applied for evaluation and accreditation. Among these there are over 50 brand new programmes, offered by universities and colleges.
- 3.11. This change in the SRS was followed in July 2002 by the abolition of the USR and their replacement with "State Requirements for the award of the degrees of Bachelor, Master, and "Specialist in..." (Ordinance 162 of the Council of Ministers on the State Requirements for the degrees of Bachelor, Master and "Specialist in...", State Gazette No. 76, dated 6 August 2002.) Over 190 USR were abolished, with a few exceptions concerned with the Regulated Professions (e.g., in Medicine, Nursery, Teacher qualification, Architecture, etc.). These changes are intended to incorporate the two-phase European system of degrees described in the Bologna Declaration, and to encourage both institutions and their students to follow shorter study routes at pre-university and first degree levels.

4. Finance for Tertiary Education

University finance

- 4.1. It is characteristic in transitional societies such as Bulgaria, undergoing transition from totalitarian to market-oriented structures, for the role of the state as a major source of funding for higher education to decrease, and be balanced by the increased importance of other sources of income. The financial effects of this transition are: (i) the diversification of funding sources, and (ii) the introduction of new and more effective financial mechanisms accounting for teaching costs based on student numbers, fields of study, and the results of quality assessment and accreditation.
- 4.2. During the transition period, the proportion of the state subsidy allocated to the HE sector decreased in terms of GDP (from 6.06% in 1992 to 3.65% in 1999). The state subsidy for research decreased from 2.5% of GDP to 0.45% in the period between 1990 and 1998. It is only since 1998-1999 that this negative trend has been reversed and for two consecutive years (2000, 2001) the public expenditure on higher education as a proportion of GDP increased by 0.10 to 0.15 percentage points per year (Georgieva et al., 2002). State funding is perceived to be inadequate to meet the real cost (normative) per student, and Totomanova (2001) reports problems with the quality of resources in terms of equipment, buildings, library materials, and the ICT infrastructure.
- 4.3. The 1999 amendment to the Higher Education Act and increased involvement from the World Bank led to significant changes in higher education finance. The amendment introduced tuition fees for all students in the public sector in an attempt to control this income stream. To ensure affordability, fees were limited to 30% of the cost per student, and the Council of Ministers monitored this figure according to the average cost per student and the budget for each year. By 1999, fee-paying students accounted for over half of all enrolments, and around 30% of total university income.
- 4.4. In the late 1990's, there were also moves to develop a normative costing per student procedure in line with a World Bank project, although these plans were changed into a funding formula method for students enrolled in 2000/2001. There are debates as to how effective this

method has been in terms of meeting the real costs. The World Bank project also intends to adjust the results from evaluation and accreditation to the formula funding. Although the new approach is based on the number of students enrolled and the added subject coefficient, the Government continues to determine the annual number of first year students to be enrolled in each subject field (for the public sector institutions) or in each institution (for the private sector). From the institutional perspective, a mixed approach is currently applied with the new method being in use for students enrolled from the 1st semester until 6th semester, and for the students onward, the old historical method is still valid.

- 4.5. Currently, the government partially controls funding for public higher education through a system of annual subsidy, although a new formula-funding pattern is in the process of being adopted and this incremental funding pattern is expected to end from 2004-5 onward, according to Government plans. Under the incremental pattern, the amount of the yearly subsidy is determined by previous year's allocations, adjusted according to current inflation rates. Funds are allocated to each institution according to agreed-upon budgets in the following key areas:
 - Staffing
 - Student costs (including scholarships or stipends)
 - Capital investments
 - Research
- 4.6. The typical distribution of funds between these lines is the following: 56% for staffing, 24% for student costs, 10% for capital investments, and 10% for research. Compared to the situation in the early 1990s, the proportion allocated to staff salaries at the end of the decade was much lower (it was 82% in 1991). Currently, the cost per student is approved by the Council of Ministers between March and April each year and is published in the State Gazette not later than June 15. It is based on a number of criteria including; subject field differentiated costs per student; state vs. self-funded undergraduate and postgraduate students; and the number of accredited programmes vs. non-accredited.
- 4.7. In addition to the state subsidy, most higher education institutions have alternative sources of income such as; tuition fees; fees for tutoring for university entrance exams, adult education courses, research and consultancy services; profits earned by small manufacturing enterprises, etc. (Georgieva, et al. 2002). Since 2002, public universities have also been able to charge the full costs of tuition fees from a proportion of post-graduate students (in programmes accredited as "Good" and "Very Good" only). This new financial source opens up opportunities for those institutions that provide good quality teaching and research to invest in innovative courses, or to develop new areas of provision, or research.
- 4.8. The funding process is highly dependent on the economic and political climate. Totomanova (2001) reports that university budgets are often based on lobbying and political pressure. This lack of self-control limits institutional autonomy and the ability to make strategic decisions, invest in innovative courses, or develop new areas of provision or research. Indeed, during the economic crisis, and the associated increase in student enrolment, institutions did not receive any money for research, and the majority of state funding was apportioned to salaries and operational costs.
- 4.9. The private sector is able to set its own fee levels, although because the fees are relatively low in the public sector, private institutions tend to charge reasonable fees to remain competitive. Private institutions are not subsidised in any way by the government.

Student finance

- 4.10. In 2000, average fee levels, in both the private and public sector were around 240DM (US\$133) per year compared with an average cost per student of 700DM (US\$290) (Totomanova, 2001). In 2002, fee levels varied from 270DM (US\$150) in Economics and Education programmes to

3000DM (US\$1670) in medicine and agriculture. In the most expensive programmes such as Medicine, Engineering, Fine Arts, etc., the state subsidy provides for up to 90% of the student tuition costs in order to make them affordable for local students (Council of Ministers Ordinance on the amounts of Tuition Fees, 2002). In order to guarantee equal access to the higher education system for underprivileged groups, the current legislation stipulates that tuition fees are waived for the following categories of citizens:

- Disabled persons;
- Orphans;
- Students at military higher education institutions, whose periods of study count as military service. (Georgieva et al., 2002)

- 4.11. Historically, Bulgaria has had a complex system of support for excellent and economically disadvantaged students which included a system of fixed stipends (scholarships), free accommodation, and other types of support. Many students were well provided for under the communist system and student support typically accounted for around 10-15% of university budgets (Totomanova 2001). However, the economic crisis reduced the amount of money available for student support and this was compounded by the rise in student numbers. Therefore, in 2000, institutions were given the right to allocate stipends using their own criteria, and many have reduced the stipend level to ensure more students can receive support (Totomanova 2001).
- 4.12. Although the traditional means of supporting students financially in Bulgaria is by means of a student grant system, the number of students who currently benefit from this system has declined to 6-8% of all students. Part-time students are not entitled to grants, and the private higher education institutions do not receive any state subsidies for the financial support of their students. The individual grant (stipend) is not transferable among institutions and a student who moves from one institution to another has to reapply. The eligibility criteria for application for a grant are "the grade point average for the last semester" and "the monthly income per member of the student's family over the last six months".
- 4.13. In private higher education institutions, there are two types of grants: for academic excellence and for basic living needs. Scholarships come from internal and external sources. The external sources are various educational programmes and organisations that co-operate with a given university. Students also receive support in the form of social benefits. They can live in low-cost halls of residence or receive a monthly allowance for lodging if the institution cannot provide a place in the residence hall. Students in Bulgaria are also entitled to a discount when using public transport and they receive free medical services and health insurance (Georgieva et al., 2002).
- 4.14. Student loans have yet to become popular in Bulgaria, although the World Bank has supported schemes since the late 1990s. Although some students find fees difficult to pay, they are still relatively low compared to the real cost of tuition, and the existing loan schemes have high interest rates. Private institutions are reportedly interested in setting up their own loans schemes (Totomanova 2001).

5. Government education policy

- 5.1. A high-quality higher education system is seen as crucial to Bulgaria's plans for greater integration with the rest of Europe. However, since 1989 and the liberalisation of the higher education system, Bulgaria has been subject to the same trends as many of its neighbouring countries. These trends include: expansion of HE, sensitivity to changing social and labour markets, and demands for increased quality control and financial accountability in a climate of constantly decreasing public resources. The current policy concerns related to higher education in Bulgaria are: the need to take control of the expansion of access in the system; the need to improve academic standards; a desire to improve the economic relevance of the system; and a desire to reform institutional structures and management.

- 5.2. However, the lack of capacity amongst government officials for a modern type of governance and leadership has often led them to revert to a system of direct control and restrictions similar to the totalitarian era. The changes to the HE system also challenged the principles of academic autonomy and freedom and its legal expression in the Academic Autonomy Act (1990-1995).
- 5.3. In addition, in the early post-communist era, academic governing bodies also lacked experience of institutional self-governance and management. Newly appointed academic management teams were often incapable of developing and introducing effective quality assurance mechanisms to secure academic standards in the vast majority of new programmes that flourished in that period. Consequently, the government abolished the Autonomy Act and introduced a new, more restrictive Higher Education Act in 1995. The government intervention in 1995 was particularly explicit in terms of (i) the staffing policies of universities, (ii) introduction of new study programmes and overall curriculum policies of HEIs, and (iii) financial policies (Georgieva, et al. 2002).

Controlling access

- 5.4. In the early 1990s, the government emphasised increasing access to higher education, and encouraged the establishment of new institutions and additional units and faculties within existing institutions. They also allowed institutions to recruit additional students who didn't gain access through traditional public funding by charging such students fees for tuition.
- 5.5. However by 1995, the government had noted an explosion in enrolments and there were allegations of corruption in paid-for education including: arbitrary fees levels; the enrolment of low ability students; and inadequate teaching standards, accommodation, and resources. To address these problems, the government set up an accreditation agency under the 1995 Higher Education Act, established the Uniform State Requirements and the State Register of Specialties, and began to regulate and standardise fees under the 1999 amendment to the Higher Education Act.
- 5.6. Despite the legislation, the economic crisis and rising unemployment led to increasing enrolment until it began to decline in 1999/2000. Currently, the government is seeking to reduce enrolments to a manageable level, to prevent the possible oversupply of certain professions in the labour market. In the last quarter of 2001, the number of unemployed university graduates was 16.8% less than in the same period of 2000 (UNDP, 2002).
- 5.7. Demographic changes will mean that the number of students will halve by around 2010, so there are plans to decrease the number of lecturers by 15% per annum to anticipate this change, although this is likely to impact on the current quality level for the present cohort who are experiencing increasing staff/student ratios. This decline in enrolments is mirrored in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
- 5.8. The government is also seeking to diversify access to the system in order to make it more flexible to the needs of students. Ideas are to develop a wider range of access routes so as to ensure fairer access to students with different needs and backgrounds. Due to declining levels of student support and the economic crisis, the number of students working part- and full-time during their studies more than doubled between 1991 and 1997. The Government is also keen to increase provision of on-line distance learning but the ICT infrastructure is so far underdeveloped (Totomanova 2001).
- 5.9. Although participation levels are high, Totomanova reports (2001) that there is also a need to improve access for the rural population minority groups such as the Roma population, and disabled students.

Ensuring quality

- 5.10. Under the communist regime, the higher education system had a reputation for providing high quality education. The universities were well funded, with expertise in providing specialist training, albeit in a narrowly defined range of courses. However, the rapid expansion of the system and the economic crisis put pressure on the institutions' ability to continue to deliver quality education.
- 5.11. Between 1990/1 and 2000/01, there was only a small increase in academic staff levels (3%) to meet the 46% increase in student numbers' during the same period. This meant that many of the new institutions and units lacked the required teaching staff to meet the high demand. As a result, in many institutions and units, the staff/student ratio demonstrated considerable variations and disturbing disproportions (in some Law and Economics faculties, the staff/student ratio reached a peak of 45:1 and over) (Georgieva et al. 2002).
- 5.12. The effect of this situation on quality is also shown by the distorted age profile of the teaching staff. The proportion of the university teachers under 30 is only 9% and in 2000/01, most teaching staff were aged 50 and higher. The most highly qualified academics are over 65 and represent 37.5% of habilitated staff (permanent Professors or Associate Professors). In some institutions, the proportion of staff over 65 has reached 75% (Georgieva et al., 2002).
- 5.13. The government is concerned with improving quality standards within institutions in its attempt to harmonise with higher education systems in the EU to help facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications. The establishment of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency represents an attempt to improve quality assurance. Between 1996 and 1997, CHERI in the UK provided advice to the NEAA in setting up its procedures for evaluation and accreditation of HEIs through a self-evaluation process, peer review, and site visits, funded by the EU Phare programme. Following the 1999 amendments to the Higher Education Act, institutional audit was firmly instituted and it precedes programme assessment and accreditation. To date, the evaluation and accreditation system in Bulgaria has been more concerned with compliance with the legal provisions and state requirements than with the quality of student learning. However, there is also a desire in the higher education sector to improve student services (e.g. guidance, counselling, careers, support) and to collect more data about students for monitoring purposes (e.g. drop out rates, qualifications, student profiles).
- 5.14. The changing international context in which quality assurance systems are now operating is presenting new challenges to the Bulgarian evaluation and accreditation agency (Georgieva et al., 2002). In late 2002, the Accreditation Council reviewed its policy in light of the international context and the objectives of the Bologna Declaration, and in March 2003 presented its proposal for change in the Agency method to the Government and the National Assembly. The changes in the evaluation and accreditation method are expected to take place by the end of 2003 alongside the proposed parliamentary Amendments to the HE Act. The latest situation (as at August 2003) is that the Amendments to the HE Act have been approved by the Council of Ministers and have 'entered' the Parliament.

Improving economic relevance

- 5.15. In the early 1990's, experts at the EU and the Council of Europe commented that the Bulgarian higher education system was excessively specialised in both course content and institution type. This meant that students were receiving specialist training for jobs that may not exist in a rapidly changing and unpredictable economy. Employers in the emerging service sector began to employ non-graduates, as they sought to reduce costs and to recruit employees with practical rather than specialist skills.
- 5.16. The Bulgarian government is concerned that there is no direct link between the higher education system and the emerging market economy. The expansion in higher education in the 1990's was largely in popular courses such as law and economics, where students were willing

to pay fees, and by 1998, 25% of all students were studying economics (Totomanova 1998, 2001). However, it is unlikely that the local labour market would be able to employ all of these economics graduates leading to many graduates working outside their field or not at all.

- 5.17. Legislation in the 1990s sought to relax the rigid qualifications and course structures. The move towards a Bachelors degree was an attempt to channel the majority of students into a less specialist 4-year degree that would then prepare them for the labour market or further study. This degree was also intended to include training in practical transferable skills such as writing, communication, computer skills, and languages (Totomanova 2001). However, the narrow disciplinary programmes described in the SRS and the USR, the specialist description of the degrees in the 1999 amendment, and institutional and student resistance to the Bachelors level has hindered the development of a more general education. Slantcheva (2002) reports that the private American University in Bulgaria and the New Bulgarian University are the only institutions that currently offer a liberal arts education.
- 5.18. The Government also encouraged the development of short-term Masters courses independent of the Bachelors degree (to discourage early specialisation, and paid postgraduate education, although these courses have been adopted by the public sector only in the last few years). The government's intention that the college system would provide more vocational education has also not materialised, again because colleges have sought to provide more financially lucrative degree courses. The expected changes to the Higher Education Act in the middle of 2003 will give more freedom to colleges to offer new courses of study, which may have an impact on such provision.
- 5.19. To date, the universities have not been conducting research that could help the economy, and in the mid-1990's, the spending on research in universities was less than 1% of their budget. In order to improve this situation, the previous government introduced changes in the Higher Education Act (1999) that provide for 10% of the institutions' budgets to be used for state sponsored research.

Institutional structures and management

- 5.20. The Bulgarian government has also sought to reform the organisation and structures of the public higher education system to help the system meet some of the challenges described above. The government's initial strategy was to improve the legal regulation of the system and to gain greater control over university finances. The intention was to encourage institutions to reform their admissions systems, restructure course content, and allow greater flexibility for students. However, a number of factors have hindered reform, including: funding constraints due to the economic crisis; the explosion in enrolments; opposition from the larger public universities and the Rectors Council; and the contradictory legal structure.
- 5.21. The government is seeking to improve what Slantcheva terms 'vertical flexibility' in the public sector. This means rationalising the structure of applications, admissions, examinations, and graduation requirements. Two-thirds of all Bachelors students go on to Masters level, at least partly because there is limited ability to change course, institution, or faculty after Bachelors level. Also, Government attempts to raise the status of the Bachelor's degree have occurred only recently and it will take time for the impact of such changes to influence enrolments. Currently, there is a lack of clarity about the status of each degree level in academic and professional terms, and such confusion is mirrored in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
- 5.22. The government is seeking to develop a standardised admissions process through a Matura or compulsory secondary final examination and thus eliminate the burden of entrance examinations at the universities. Currently, it is not possible for an applicant to take only one exam in a number of universities offering similar programmes, because each institution organises its own entrance examination and does not validate the results assessed by another institution. This contrasts with the situation in other European countries where qualifications such as an Abitur or Baccalaureate are the principal means of entry to degree courses. The

promise that the entrance examinations are based on the standards of achievement in the high school core curriculum, announced in all universities' catalogues, is thus never fulfilled. Despite the widespread public resistance to standardisation, the present government has firmly followed the reform path and successfully passed changes to the legal basis of the Secondary education curriculum in the National Assembly. These changes introduce Matura in two steps: from 2002/2003 secondary school leavers may choose either to sit for a Matura or to leave with the older form of Diploma; from 2003/2004 onward the Matura is compulsory for all secondary school graduates (Georgieva et al., 2002).

- 5.23. Another area that the government would like to reform is the credit system. There is currently no credit transfer system encompassing all higher education institutions, although there is such a system in the private sector. Slantcheva terms this a lack of 'horizontal flexibility' in the system, where there are few links between institutions and even between faculties in the same institution, limiting student mobility (Slantcheva 2000). As a signatory to the Bologna declaration, Bulgaria is obliged to adopt credits both externally and internally. In order to accelerate the process of introducing the credit system the present government is preparing changes in the Act that include: (i) a requirement for institutions' quality assurance systems to adopt an internal credit transfer system; (ii) a requirement for the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency to review the operation of the institution's credit transfer system and check its performance as an important aspect of the institution's ability to assure the quality of its provision.
- 5.24. The government would also like to reduce the number of university faculties and consolidate the number of institutions in the public sector. Faculties are the main units of Public universities incorporating several departments for training students in one or more related specialities (Higher Education Act, article 26 (1)). In the older universities some faculty units (i.e., departments), demonstrate rigidity in reforming their programmes, a lack of cross-disciplinary links or links across types of institutions (e.g. colleges and universities). In an attempt to achieve a reduction of the number of departments and to enlarge the faculties, the previous government introduced changes to the Higher Education Act (1999) by setting up specific requirements for the number of staff needed to form each unit. This measure proved to be effective to some extent at the faculty level, but not at the institutional level. The present government intends to relate the legal requirements for all institutional units (faculty, department, branch, college etc.) to the number of students, rather than staff. A specific unit is going to be required to provide a certain number of staff linked to the number of students and the more students a unit can attract, the more staff it can employ.

6. Access to Tertiary Education

Entry Requirements

Source: (UNESCO 2002)

Entry Requirements for a Bachelor Degree

- 6.1. The autonomy of higher education institutions allows them to define their own admission requirements every year. Access criteria can include written competition exams, tests, and the Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie. The requirements will vary according to institution and discipline or speciality, depending on demand. Criteria are made explicit in university materials such as prospectuses.
- 6.2. Admission is organised on a competitive basis and is regulated at national level by a government Ordinance on 'National requirements for students admission' which determines the number of places available for admission into degree courses. Institutions organise the application process, design the examination content and criteria for assessment, and rate the candidates. They are also responsible for the publication of detailed information regarding the

admission procedure they adopt, including the types of application forms, application, examination, selection, and registration dates, etc. It is also their responsibility to publish their internal admissions' regulations in both Bulgarian and English and to make these electronically available.

- 6.3. Each institution receives a set number of places in each subject field and from the Ministry, and has the responsibility to distribute the places among the specialties. When the number of applicants for a given specialty exceeds the number of places, the applicants are considered on a competitive basis, which includes their grades from the entrance exams, from their Secondary education Diploma, or from their college diploma. Each institution also reserves a number of places in one or more Bachelor degree programmes/specialties for its own College graduates, who may apply on a competitive basis to continue their studies. If they do not qualify, they enter the job market.
- 6.4. The government would like the public sector institutions to develop standardised admissions criteria through a final Secondary exam (Matura). However, there has been resistance to this idea so far, from students and their families, as well as the institutions themselves.

Entry Requirements for non university-level studies

- 6.5. Entry requirements for college studies are defined by the college governing body in the case of Independent Colleges, and by the Senate in the case of University Colleges. In both cases, the requirements are published in the institution's catalogue. Usually the access criteria include (i) Secondary Diploma grades in relevant subject/s; (ii) an applicant's achievement results from a test, designed and approved by the college/Senate. Many colleges also validate exam results from the competition for a place in a similar or the same degree programme, especially when the college is based in the same university. Admission requirements for colleges offering non university-level studies in the health care field are regulated by the USR, which specifies the type and number of entrance exams.

Entry requirements for a postgraduate degree

- 6.6. The entry requirement for postgraduate study is a Bachelors Degree, or for courses that lead directly to a Masters, a Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie, with entrance exams specified by the institution.

Overseas/'foreign students'

- 6.7. Overseas students can study in Bulgaria either under inter-state and inter-governmental programmes for educational, scientific, and cultural exchange, or by direct payment of fees for training. Foreign students are classified as students not resident in Bulgaria. Foreign students require a qualification equivalent to the Diploma za Zavurcheno Sredno Obrazovanie, validated by the Ministry of Education and Science. Foreign students also require a valid passport or visa and references from qualified persons or institutions in their home country. In addition, as all studies are conducted in Bulgarian, a pre-university year Bulgarian language study is required followed by an examination at the Institute for Foreign Students (UNESCO 2002).
- 6.8. The admission of overseas students to Bulgarian institutions depends on their citizenship status: foreign citizens, who are permanent residents in Bulgaria, or nationals residing abroad, as well as foreigners who are granted legal alien status, must comply with the same rules governing applications as Bulgarian citizens wishing to enrol in higher education. These groups also pay the same fees as national students and compete for a place in the framework of the governmentally set quota. If an international candidate does not fit into one of the above-mentioned groups, he or she has to pay the full tuition fee for the course programme chosen. The application papers are usually in English and can be downloaded from the web sites of the universities (Georgieva, P. et al. 2002, Higher Education in Bulgaria, p.64).

- 6.9. There are no specific governmental quotas for overseas students with a few exceptions (e.g., for overseas students with Bulgarian origin, whose studies are supported by the contracted arrangements, such as SOCRATES- ERASMUS programme of Bulgarian state, or students whose studies result from an inter-governmental or other international arrangement with the EC). Institutions may internally set overseas students' quotas in the different programmes they offer.

Current demand for Tertiary Education

- 6.10. Since transition, the demand for tertiary education in Bulgaria has increased rapidly. In the period between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, the average enrolment rate was around 7%. The enrolment rate was strictly controlled by the Government through the numerus clausus for all programmes/specialties, and in the late 1980's, the number of students enrolled at tertiary level was around 170,000.
- 6.11. However, by 1998/99 the number of students had increased by 58% to around 270,000 (Georgieva et al., 2002). The enrolment rate for the 19-23 age group increased from 7% to 27% between the late 80's and 1998/99, and in 1999, around 60% of all secondary school leavers entered some form of higher education². The latter means that 60% of students within a standard secondary education class will probably be enrolled in a higher education institution in the autumn following graduation. There is around one university per 200,000 people in Bulgaria, compared with 1m in Italy and 1.5m in the USA.
- 6.12. Many factors contributed to the growth in this period. Firstly, high levels of youth unemployment led to postponed entry to the labour market. The liberalisation of higher education and the growth of new providers led to more opportunities to study more internationally marketable courses. In addition, the introduction of paid education stimulated providers to offer a wider range of courses and to tailor their admissions standards according to demand (Totomanova 2001, Metodiev).
- 6.13. However, since its peak in 1998/99 (270,077 students), HE enrolment progressively declined until 2001/2002 where enrolments were 14.7% lower than at the peak, although student numbers rose by 0.8% again in 2002/2003 to 230,513. The general decline can be explained by the state policy limiting the number of places for entrants, and the introduction of tuition fees for all students in 1999. There is also a demographic decline, which is expected to intensify in the near future; this is currently impacting on basic education and will follow through into the later levels of education in the coming years. Another factor is the more realistic policies and strategies on student intake that were adopted by higher education institutions following evaluation and accreditation processes.

² This covers all types of institutions: Universities, Colleges (non-degree institutions, issuing higher education diploma only), non-university type of institutions (Bachelor degree granting only).

Section 3. Legal Frameworks for Tertiary Education

1. Key Organisations

- 1.1. **The National Assembly** is empowered to establish, reform and close down education establishments. It also has a primary function in the financing of the higher education system via the annual vote on the State Budget Act, which allocates funds for each state-funded higher education institution.
- 1.2. **The Council of Ministers** is the executive branch of the government and develops higher education policy. Its specific responsibilities include:
 - Advising the National Assembly on the establishment, transformation or closing down of educational institutions.
 - Advising the National Assembly on the funding allocations for each state-funded higher school.
 - Approving the State Register of Educational and Qualification Degrees for the different specialities.
 - Establishing, reforming and closing down faculties, institutes, branches, and colleges in the public sector.
 - Approving the State Requirements for obtaining degrees in the various professional fields and specialities.
 - Approving the number of students and doctorands in the various specialities in state-supported education (the so-called 'State Quotas' - studies are free of charge for students holding a state quota place).
 - Approving the maximum number of students and doctorands to be trained in any higher school, whether state-funded or private.
 - Determining the level of tuition and administrative fees, the conditions for scholarships in state-funded higher education establishments and the use of hostels by the students, doctorands or trainees.
 - Representing the interests of Bulgarian higher education and science before other governmental and international organisations.
 - Arranging international treaties and agreements and establishing state requirements for recognition and acknowledgement of the diplomas of persons who have studied abroad.
- 1.3. The **Ministry of Education and Science** (Ministerstvo na obrazovanieto i naukata) is responsible for higher education in Bulgaria under the 1995 Higher Education and the Law on Scientific Degrees and Scientific Titles (latest amendments 1996). It advises the Council of Ministers on the key policy areas described above.
- 1.4. **Bulgarian Rectors' Conference (Council):** A non-profit association of the Rectors of all higher education institutions that has represented the academic higher education community since 1992. Its members are the Rectors (Presidents) of all the legally recognised public and private higher education institutions. The presidents of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the National Centre for Agrarian Sciences are not represented in the Rectors Council. Following the 1999 amendments to the Higher Education Act, the Rectors' Council became more influential in policymaking through making recommendations in key policy areas. It consults the Minister of Education and Science on the annual budget for higher education, any changes in the legal framework of higher education (including changes in the Higher Education Act, the National Classification (former State Registry), and the State Requirements for the award of degrees and the qualification frameworks, etc). This body also makes recommendations regarding the criteria for the award of academic titles and degrees, provides methodological assistance to individual institutions, and protects their interests in dealings with governmental bodies.

- 1.5. **The National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation (NEAA):** develops and approves the procedures and respective documentation for the process of accreditation. It also stores data on accredited higher education institutions, faculties, and specialities.
- 1.6. **National Academic Recognition and Equivalence Information Centre (ENIC)** at the Ministry of Education and Science: provides information on the higher education system in Bulgaria; collects, summarises and publishes information on the higher education systems in Lisbon Convention signatory countries; informs the National Recognition Committee (NRC) about the main documents approved by the European ENIC Network that deals with academic recognition, as well as decisions the Network makes at its annual plenary sessions; informs the NRC about the decisions made by the Committee on the Implementation of the Convention and any approved documents; provides information to national and overseas students and institutions regarding the national requirements for the recognition of higher education obtained in foreign higher education institutions.
- 1.7. **The Higher Attestation Commission (HAC):** works with the Council of Ministers on regulating the award of Bulgarian academic qualifications and recognising the overseas qualifications of Doctor and Doctor of Science. It consists of a Presidium, and Scientific Commissions for the various scientific fields and specialities. The present Government is preparing to reform the system of awarding academic degrees and titles by introducing new legislation in this field and replacing HAC with a National Attestation Agency. The new documents are currently under public discussion and it is expected that the National Assembly will legally approve the changes during 2003.

2. Main laws/decrees governing higher education

Source: (UNESCO 2002)

- a) **Law on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy (1990-1995):** gave institutions the right to determine their own organisational structure (e.g. faculties, specialties, and programmes), to generate their own income, and to admit paid students.
- b) **Higher Education Act (1995):** Strengthened state control over higher education, mandated obligatory accreditation for all institutions, defined state control over annual enrolment and funding levels, introduced the State Register of specialties, and Uniform State Requirements for course content.
- c) **Higher Education Act: Amendment (1999):** Amendments designed to align the higher education system with Western European trends and the Bologna Process.
- d) **Higher Education Act: Amendment (2002):** designed to abolish the SRS and USRs and to replace these with State requirements for the degrees and a National Classification of 9 general Fields of Study and around 50 narrower Subject fields.
- e) **Law on Scientific Degrees and Scientific Titles (1972) (last amendments- 2000):** Sets the arrangements for the awards of scientific degrees (Doctor and Doctor of Science) and titles (Professor, Associate Professor, Senior Research Fellow of 1st and 2nd degree (equivalent to the Research Professor and Research Associate Professor)).
- f) **Government Ordinance on the State Classifier of the fields of Study and subject fields (2002):** designed to help the Government in annual distribution of student quota per about 50 subject fields rather than 202 specialties. It also gave more freedom to institutions for type and numbers of courses in different fields.
- g) **Government Ordinance on the State Requirements for the degree qualifications of Bachelor, Master and Specialist (in specific professional field) (2002):** designed

to replace the USR with a broader framework to help institutions to adapt more quickly to the new degree structure and align the courses and programmes on offer with the Bologna process.

- h) **Government Ordinance on the State Requirements for students admission to higher education institutions in Bulgaria (2000):** sets the legal conditions for student admissions in national or foreign higher education institutions and provides a general framework for the organisation of the entrance examination and competitive selection of students from various social groups. It also sets the arrangements for admitting overseas students into Bulgarian HEIs, and for national students studying abroad.
- i) **Government Ordinance on the State Requirements for doctoral student admission to higher education institutions in Bulgaria (2000):** specifies the organisation of competitive selection of doctoral students and their financial support, their periods of study, appointment of academic supervisors, etc. This legal document is designed to stimulate Bulgarian universities and equivalent institutions to attract doctoral students and prepare them successfully for academic careers in view of the ageing academic community and the need for its rejuvenation.
- j) **Government Ordinance on the State Requirements for the content of the documents issued by higher education institutions (1997):** specifies the type and content of documents (e.g., certificates, diploma, student papers, etc.) issued by higher education institutions thus providing a common ground for their validation and recognition.
- k) **Government Ordinance on the State Requirements for the recognition of study and study periods in foreign higher education institutions (2000):** designed to align the recognition practices with the Lisbon Convention ratified by Bulgarian Parliament in 2000.
- l) **Government Ordinance on the exploitation of student hostels and canteens (1997) - last amended in 1999:** designed to guarantee student participation and responsibilities in the management and running of the student hostels and canteens.

3. Regulation/Licensing of Tertiary Providers

- 3.1. The main legal basis for the establishment of higher education institutions in Bulgaria is the 1995 Higher Education Act and its amendments.

Licensing/recognition for providers

- 3.2. An institution is legally recognised following a positive decision from either the National Assembly (for new universities and equivalent institutions) or the Council of Ministers (for colleges, faculties and branch campuses). These two bodies issue a decision/ordinance in the State Gazette for the establishment of a new institution, or faculty or branch campus **following their institutional accreditation.**
- 3.3. There are two types of accreditation (institutional and programme), and two modes: regular and provisional. All higher education institutions established before the 1999 amendments to the Higher Education Act are subject to periodical licensing (every 5 years) through institutional accreditation under the **regular mode.** This means that in order to achieve accreditation, an institution must satisfy a set of criteria designed and published by the Agency. The number and content of criteria for the regular mode of accreditation are different to those for the provisional mode. New institutions (established after 1999) need to first achieve accreditation under the **provisional mode** in order to achieve recognition (and appear in the State Gazette). Then, within a period of 18- 36 months, they must apply for 'regular' mode accreditation.

- 3.4. Only **accredited institutions** can apply for accreditation of their programmes (specialties). Again, programme accreditation has regular and provisional modes, depending on whether it deals with new programme of study or an existing programme. Accredited institutions and programmes receive a Certificate of accreditation issued by the NEAA. Accredited programmes do not need further licensing/recognition by the National Assembly or the Council of Ministers.

4. Accreditation in Tertiary Education

- 4.1. The NEAA evaluates proposals for establishing or restructuring higher education institutions, faculties, and specialties. It awards or denies accreditation status based on an assessment of the activities of higher schools' faculties and specialties. Institutions are given one of four grades in a rating scale of 'Very good', 'Good', 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory'. Accreditation is denied for institutions rated as 'Unsatisfactory'. Accreditation is given for 5 years and all institutions face the same requirements. All institutions were expected to be accredited by 2002 and all programmes by 2004. Most HEIs in Bulgaria have achieved institutional accreditation and are in the process of receiving programme accreditation.
- 4.2. Private institutions face problems complying with accreditation standards as the standards are based on the traditional disciplines and university structures (e.g. modes of delivery, units), which are not applicable to the private sector. All private institutions have institutional accreditation, but they have yet to obtain programme accreditation since the latter process is geared toward the disciplinary and course structures of the public sector (Slantcheva, 2002). However, the abolition of the SRS and the USR has solved this problem to a large extent and the University of Varna has already received accreditation for some of its programmes.
- 4.3. The Higher Education Act stipulates that the government cannot fund higher education institutions that fail to apply for accreditation in the set periods, or failed to get accredited for a second consecutive time. In the latter case, the state authorities would propose that the institution be closed down. Since the 2002 amendments to the Higher Education Act, institutions and programmes accredited with the highest scores ("Good" and "Very Good") can admit extra students on a self-supported basis (i.e. students that pay the full cost of their tuition).

Registration/Accreditation Process

- 4.4. The NEAA method of evaluation and accreditation is based on academic peer review of an institution's or a programme's performance. The criteria in use are embedded into the traditional understanding of academic excellence. Currently, the process takes 6 months for the regular mode and 3 months for the provisional mode. It involves the following steps: (i) the institution (unit) prepares a report containing information on the aspects of provision stipulated by the law, and additional methodological materials, published by the Agency; (ii) the Agency then appoints a peer review group for a site visit; (iii) during the site visit, the group collects evidence to satisfy the Agency criteria and prepares its own report; (iv) the report of the Peer Group is then discussed in the Standing Committee of the respective subject field; (v) the Chairperson of the Standing Committee presents a final report to the Accreditation Council, which makes the final decision following a secret ballot of its members, summarised in an overall evaluation score, based on the scores on each criterion.
- 4.5. The Agency publishes a list of all accredited institutions and programmes in the State Gazette every year. More detailed information on each programme and institutional accreditation is provided in the Agency Bulletins, published twice a year.

Public providers

- 4.6. Public (state subsidised) higher education institutions are required to have all of their programmes (specialties) accredited by 2004. Currently, the accreditation process at programme level requires academic units to prepare each individual speciality for accreditation alongside the Agency criteria for programme accreditation. In large faculties, this process

creates a great burden and there has been criticism of the Agency method by the Rectors' Council. It has been proposed that programme accreditation is organised on a subject level in the future. This would reduce the number of procedures at the Agency and the institution would prepare all its specialities at all qualification levels under the same subject field into a single 'pack', ready for external review by the Agency. In the last year, NEAA already made successful attempts to combine several procedures into one, by appointing a single peer group for simultaneously reviewing and assessing a Bachelor degree programme, one or more Master degree programmes, and several doctoral programmes in one subject field.

Professional courses

- 4.7. The accreditation of professional courses is regulated by the state through USR, by the Ministry of Education and Science in co-operation with professional bodies and academics. The abolition of the USR does not apply to those professional programmes that are included in the List of 'regulated professions' (e.g., Medicine, Architecture, Law, etc.). Such programmes are still considered for accreditation under the USR. However, this list is very short, according to the Ministry officials and university governing bodies. It is believed it should cover many more professional programmes, not just 'regulated' ones.
- 4.8. The accreditation of courses in the field of Architecture in three institutions has been postponed until the publication of USRs for the 'Architecture' courses. The process has slowed down because the requirements are designed to align with the relevant European legislation in this field.

Regional frameworks

- 4.9. The NEAA has cooperated with the Network of the CEE Quality Assurance Agencies since 2000. In 2003 the NEAA became an establishing organisation of this Network as it transformed into a legal entity registered in Budapest under the Hungarian legal regulations. The Network involves 18 nationally recognised QA agencies across the Central and Eastern European region. The Network has applied for membership of ENQA.

Recognition of overseas qualifications

- 4.10. The Bulgarian ENIC/NARIC and the Ministry of Education and Science undertake the recognition of overseas degrees and professional qualifications. The recognition process for overseas qualifications is regulated by the Government Ordinance No. 168 on the State Requirements for the recognition of study and study periods in foreign higher education institutions (2000). The recognition process operates outside the Accreditation Agency. The Minister of Education and Science appoints the National Recognition Committee composed of academic representatives of the higher education establishments and its members are appointed for 2-year terms. Currently, the Deputy Minister (higher education) chairs this Committee.
- 4.11. The recognition process is based on verification of data provided in the presented documents that are compared with the requirements set by Bulgarian laws and regulations in the same field or speciality. Qualifications are required to be translated into Bulgarian, English, or French and are subject to consular certification by the respective authorities of the applicant's country. The recognition process takes account of the following indicators: (i) the period of study; (ii) the total amount of contact hours in the qualification/course; (iii) the balance in the curriculum between general theoretical and practice oriented units; (iv) graduation or exit requirements.

Section 4. Transnational provision

1. Terminology/Typology

- 1.1. It is currently very difficult (if not impossible) to obtain accurate and up-to-date information regarding transnational activities, students, and providers, since no statistics exist; as such, institutions operate beyond the scope of the Higher Education Act. However, an inquiry made in 2002 by the Ministry revealed that there are 11 transnational providers that originate from universities in US, Russia, Ukraine, UK, and France. Transnational institutions rarely publish information regarding fees. However, a branch campus operation of Portsmouth University in Sofia, for instance, charges 3000 GBP for BA programmes and 4500 GBP for an MBA programme in Business Administration.
- 1.2. Bulgaria is predominantly an importer of transnational education. In most of the cases, the imported transnational education takes the form of franchised programme arrangements leading to dual awards. Cross-border import also takes place through conventional distance learning and branch campus operations (The Recognition, Treatment, Experience, and Implications of Transnational Education in Central and Eastern Europe 2002-2003. Report undertaken by Stephen Adam for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. July 2003, p. 17). Transnational provision is most popular with students with proficiency in a foreign language.
- 1.3. The largest providers of transnational education in Bulgaria are the US, UK, and German universities. The main subject areas in which the transnational education has the most significant presence are Business, Management, Engineering, and Technology. These are equally significant in both cycles with a slight predominance in the first cycle. (The Recognition, Treatment, Experience, and Implications of Transnational Education in Central and Eastern Europe 2002-2003. Report undertaken by Stephen Adam for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. July 2003. p. 16.)
- 1.4. Currently, the most popular form of transnational provision in Bulgaria is via **joint programmes** resulting from collaborative arrangements between two or more national institutions (at faculty level). Many such arrangements date back to the early 90's, when the Bulgarian higher education system, after decades of isolation from other European systems and practices, finally received autonomy, and academic freedom and institutions started to implement their own independent international policies and strategies. Some successful collaborations at institution and programme level led to the mutual recognition of credits, and opportunities for students to spend part of their studies abroad, resulting in dual awards (e.g., dual German/Bulgarian Bachelor degree in some Engineering faculties).
- 1.5. There are also a few examples of **twinning arrangements**, where joint programmes are offered that have credit accumulation and transfer arrangements that enable students to continue their studies in the partner institution (e.g., current collaboration between one Bulgarian, two Romanian and four German universities under the Stability Pact project BRIE - For more details see their website at <http://www.brie.ru.acad.bg/>). For twinning arrangements to take place, a signed contract between the institutions involved is required, preceded by an inter-governmental agreement for cooperation in the field of education, science, and culture between the respective states.
- 1.6. Following the establishment of private HE institutions, there were several attempts to establish Bulgarian **branch campuses of foreign institutions** (e.g., the American University in Blagoevgrad; the Maastricht College of Tourism in Albena, etc.) The legal environment, however, has not been favourable for such forms of collaborative provision, and in Article 4 (1) and (2) of the Additional provisions of the Higher Education Act, it is stipulated that foreign provision can take place **only in a national higher education institution** and upon intergovernmental agreements for educational cooperation. With the introduction of the Higher Education Act in 1995, such branch campuses had to transform into national institutions, licensed under the Bulgarian regulations. The AUBG, for instance, has to receive accreditation

both under Bulgarian and US legal requirements in order to secure the legal and financial grounds for existence. Others gradually transformed into national institutions and have lost the 'international' part of their titles, although many are still overseas-owned (mainly in the US).

- 1.7. **The amount of franchised** collaborative provision has increased in recent years, involving not just private, but also some public institutions. One of the earliest examples is the Sofia office of Portsmouth University in the UK (established in 1997). Russian and Ukrainian universities are quickly spreading their networks across the country, opening their offices in dozens of small and remote cities. Typically, they offer distance education programmes. There are also cases of large public universities in Central Northern and Southern parts of the country authorising small private colleges in the capital city of Sofia to offer their Bachelor degree programmes for college graduates. The government has not so far controlled franchised forms of transnational education, nor are they the subject of quality review and accreditation on the part of Bulgarian educational authorities, as they are considered 'beyond the Higher education Act'. Hence, they are treated as 'non-existent'. The authorised local agents for this type of service can register under the Trade Law and the quality of the respective programme is considered a responsibility of the awarding institution.
- 1.8. There are no **corporate universities** in Bulgaria, although in 2002, Microsoft representatives in Bulgaria announced plans for establishing an institution 55 km from the capital city of Sofia. Due to the legal limitations for setting up 'foreign' higher education institutions on the Bulgarian territory, this new initiative is taking place under the umbrella of the nationally accredited International Business School in Botevgrad.
- 1.9. Until 2002, **distance education** degree programmes were prohibited due to the restrictions imposed by the USR. As this obstacle has been eliminated, many local institutions want to get their distance education programmes accredited, due to the growing demand on the part of students. There is no information available on the plans of overseas providers with regard to distance learning.

Bulgarian students studying overseas

- 1.10. Many Bulgarian students study abroad, within Europe and beyond (both historically, and due to closer European integration in recent years).
- 1.11. Studying abroad at graduate level (Masters, PhD) is more popular than at undergraduate level. Overseas exchange programmes still have restricted access and they are not advertised widely. The USA and UK are the preferred countries for studying abroad (for English speakers or people who do not yet speak a foreign language) followed by Austria and Germany for German speakers, and then France and Italy. Before World War II Bulgaria had a tradition of French and Italian lycées, which slowly disappeared afterwards. In recent times, there has been a much stronger tendency to learn English, and German is still quite widely taught.

Overseas students studying in Bulgaria

- 1.12. In 2002/2003 Bulgarian higher education institutions educated 8,387 overseas students (National Institute of Education, MES). Fees for overseas students are higher than for home students, and average USD3, 000 per year. Fee levels are published annually in the State Gazette.

2. Status and Accreditation

Licensing and accreditation

- 2.1. According to Article 4 (1) and (2) of the Additional Provisions of the 1995 Higher Education Act, foreign higher schools cannot open subsidiaries or faculties on the territory of the Republic of

Bulgaria. Joint programmes can be opened with local higher schools based on intergovernmental agreements for educational co-operation. Existing Bulgarian legislation (The Act for the non-profit legal organisations) creates opportunities for the establishment of different units offering extra-qualification (non-degree) courses. This stimulates the establishment of consortia between the accredited higher education institutions and international or national foundations in setting up new programmes and degree courses requiring a robust initial support for start up.

- 2.2. A TNE mapping exercise in 2002 and recent evaluation and accreditation experience reveal that institutions that are most vulnerable tend to put greater emphasis on establishing links with other organisations inside and outside the sector and to gain support for setting up transnational education provision, thus becoming more attractive for their potential students (The mapping exercise took place in 2002 as part of a broader international study sponsored by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education).
- 2.3. Institutional vulnerability in the Bulgarian higher education system can be provoked either by a failure for an institution to get accredited, or by more complex social processes that give rise to quantitative developments and change in institutional patterns and status. Diversification, raising research productivity, and unification of the legal framework have contributed to the transformation of the highly specialised and narrow qualification model and its related institution type toward a more comprehensive and flexible one. The uniform administrative structure additionally fosters the process of transmutation of specialized higher education institutions (Spetsializirano Visshe Uchilishte) into organisations with a university status (thus, the Institutes of mechanical engineering in Sofia, Varna, Gabrovo and Burgas got licensed from the Parliament as Technical universities; similarly, the institutes of economics in Sofia and Varna turned into Economic universities, etc.). Another contributing factor is the common evaluation and accreditation regime which universities and specialised institutions undergo. (Georgieva, P. et al. 2002, Higher Education in Bulgaria, p. 56-57.)
- 2.4. Franchised forms of transnational education have so far been free of control by the government, and neither are they subject to quality review and accreditation by the Bulgarian educational authorities, as they are considered 'beyond the Higher Education Act'. They are not illegal, but are treated as 'non-existent'. The authorised local agents for this type of services can register under the Trade Law and they pay their taxes for the services they provide. The quality of the respective programme is considered a responsibility of the awarding institution.
- 2.5. Currently the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency has no explicit mechanism for regulation of transnational education. The present legal framework for the Agency's work sets up an approach similar to that of the Higher Education Act: entities offering transnational education provision must demonstrate conformity with the legal regulations in order to get the right to operate the institution and/or programme. The Agency criteria for evaluation of projects aimed at the establishment of new institutions and programmes that may contain cross-border elements are aimed at ensuring that they sufficiently built on the national system and comply with the legal regulations. Thus, transnational arrangements that are not an intrinsic part of the national system remain ignored by the evaluation and accreditation process. (The Recognition, Treatment, Experience, and Implications of Transnational Education in Central and Eastern Europe 2002-2003. Report undertaken by Stephen Adam for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. July 2003, p. 16.)

International frameworks

- 2.6. The Republic of Bulgaria has signed bilateral agreements on recognition of education documents with a number of countries. Bulgaria is a signatory to the 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ratified in 2000).

2.7. In addition, the Bulgarian higher education system is also involved in the following international networks/exchanges (UNESCO 2002):

- CEEPUS - the national office (placed at the Department for European Integration at the Ministry of Education and Science) is working for the enhancement of academic exchanges, co-operation between academic institutions, and recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.
- COPERNICUS - (INCO COPERNICUS) is a specific programme for research and technological development focusing on cooperation with third world countries, the CEE countries, and the new independent states. Bulgaria participated in 8 projects in 1998 and over 40 more have been initiated in subsequent years. In 2000, 30 Bulgarian projects were approved.
- ENIC - (established at the end of 1994): collects and publishes information on international education systems, prepares the national contributions to the "European Catalogue for Students" and to the "International Catalogue for Qualifications and Degrees in Education"; provides support for and facilitates the introduction of ECTS; is developing a comprehensive programme aimed at the realisation of the goals and objectives of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and the regulations of the ENIC-NARIC network.
- EURYDICE - The Bulgarian National Branch came into being in March 1995. Its activities include: (i) preparation of national contributions to the publications of the information network; (ii) support for bilateral cooperation and the development of national educational policy.
- LEONARDO - Bulgaria has participated in the programme since 1999. In 2000 the total number of projects involving Bulgarian universities was 25, with overall funding of 275 000 EUR. In the same year, Universities involved in the mobility measures of LEONARDO Programme received a total of 313 372 EUR in funding (Source: FIHE Project of the Centre for Higher Education Research, National Institute of Education).
- PHARE
- SOCRATES II -Bulgaria became a member of SOCRATES in April 1999. During the first two years of SOCRATES II (2000-2002), the number of universities involved grew significantly (from 10 institutions in 1999 to 26 in 2001/02). The number of distributed mobility grants in 2000-01 was 493, with total funding of 1,460,104 EUR. In 2001-02 the number of mobility grants was over 600. (Sources: National SOCRATES Office, HRDC; FIHE Project of the Centre for Higher Education Research, National Institute of Education).
- TEMPUS - Bulgaria joined the TEMPUS - PHARE Programme in 1991. Its focus is on curriculum development and the implementation of the two-tier system of degrees (Bachelors and Masters). A considerable amount of funding support was spent on modernising universities' infrastructure, computer equipment, updating library collections, and student mobility. Tempus was the main source of direct foreign (EU) investment in higher education institutions in the period 1991 - 1998 (around 70 million Euro). The funds were taken from the PHARE programme in Bulgaria (see Tables 4-1 and 4-2 in the Appendix).
- UNESCO Chair for Civic Education/CEPES: no published information is available.
- VIFAX-ACCT-FRANCOPHONIE: no published information is available.

Access

2.8. There are a growing number of cases where access to transnational education programmes differs from the standard written entrance exam. Sometimes, competition between the candidates is based on a range of criteria, including ethnic or geographical origin, age, gender, etc. (e.g., Roma Education Project for SEE countries under the Stability Pact, or the BRIE cross-border education Project of Rouses University, etc.)

2.9. Therefore, a detailed CV and certificates from previous study may form the only requirements for candidates in specific programmes, whereas in others, written exams in the subject field plus a foreign language proficiency test are required (e.g., Bachelor Programme of Industrial Engineering in English, or the joint German-Bulgarian programme in General Engineering at the German Engineering Faculty at the Technical university in Sofia).

3. Government policy

- 3.1. The present Government through the Ministry of Education and Science is currently developing proposals setting out the negotiating objectives for higher education services in the next round of GATS talks.
- 3.2. Although there is not yet a published official statement on GATS, the Government is aware of the need to address the new challenges posed by the processes of globalisation of the job market and the liberalisation of education services. It demonstrated its awareness and concern in its statement on the proposed Law for amendments to the Higher Education Act. There, it reaffirms its commitment to 'the harmonization of Bulgarian legislation with the European Union in the field of higher education, the mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications', and its intention to 'directly affect the implementation of the principle of free movement of people'.

4. Impact of TNE on national education system & culture

- 4.1. Reviews, analyses, and projects focused on transnational education are not published if indeed they are available at all.
- 4.2. However, the main factors responsible for the expansion of transnational provision include the competitiveness of transnational education, the expansion of ICT, innovative teaching methods and the rigidity of traditional education (The Recognition, Treatment, Experience, and Implications of Transnational Education in Central and Eastern Europe 2002-2003. Report undertaken by Stephen Adam for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. July 2003. p. 18).

Impact on providers

- 4.3. The processes of internationalisation, inter-university co-operation, and academic mobility have benefited Bulgarian HEIs in a number of ways. Bulgarian participation in different EU programmes has been particularly helpful in curriculum innovation and in the gradual transformation of the Bulgarian higher education system. Intensive partnerships between students and academic teachers have also altered the pattern of international cooperation: institutional policies have shifted from short-term and person-to-person collaboration towards an institution-led strategic orientation favouring continuous inter-institutional collaboration.
- 4.4. Universities' international departments are changing their functions and structures following the diversification of their activities, and have developed a variety of international support services. From being passive observers of the processes, they started to actively look for contacts and to develop these on a long-term basis. The increased number of collaborative projects and institutional contracts signed between the Bulgarian and foreign institutions and international organisations demonstrates this change.
- 4.5. There is no specific text regarding cross-border supply of higher education services in the proposed amendments to the HE act. However, transnational cross-border education will be affected positively by the new changes in the Law. This is particularly valid for the introduction of a credit accumulation and credit transfer system, and its placement into the heart of the institutions' internal quality assurance systems together with the introduction of the European Diploma Supplement. Through this, the Government is committed to ensuring greater transparency of qualifications, enhanced student mobility and, as a result, fewer obstacles to the international recognition of higher education degrees and qualifications.

- 4.6. With the anticipated liberalisation of the legal framework in mind, a growing number of providers are seeking to establish cross-border programmes and arrangements with an "international" constituent. Accordingly, the number of providers seeking accreditation for new projects increased, with 64% for the first 6 months of 2003 as compared to 2002 (National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, 2003. Bulletin No. 6).

Impact on students

- 4.7. For students, the main benefits associated with TNE in Bulgaria include: the creation of a competitive teaching and learning environment which is expected to foster innovation and expansion in the use of ICT in education; the formation of bases for comparisons and transfer of good practices; improvements in the quality of provision provided by the national institutions in an attempt to be as attractive for home students as for foreign providers.

Impact on Government

- 4.8. For representatives of national education authorities, the main benefits are associated with widening access to the job market, improved employability, and reduced brain drain. (The Recognition, Treatment, Experience, and Implications of Transnational Education in Central and Eastern Europe 2002-2003. Report undertaken by Stephen Adam for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. July 2003. p. 17.)
- 4.9. The main problems of imported TNE are associated with "commodification" of education, the existence of diploma "mills", and the import of bad quality education. The widespread commodification of education may in turn damage the universities' role in the transformation of society. Imported education in some cases may be associated with a channel for cultural domination, or brain drain, alongside cooperation.

Section 5. Public perceptions

1. Higher education - general

- 1.1. There is a perception by the government and many other commentators, that there are too many students in higher education studying courses that are popular with students but that are not directly linked to the needs of the economy. At present, around 60% of all secondary graduates enter higher education, but they cannot all find employment in their specialist field. Many will become part of a 'brain drain' to Western Europe, or become unemployed.
- 1.2. The government's attempts to develop a more flexible qualifications structure and less specialist degrees with a greater emphasis on transferable skills have achieved little success so far. The majority of Bachelors degrees are simply the first 4 years of the old one-phase degree, with some introductory/elective courses added and there has been no large-scale revision of curricula. Courses are still highly specialised and the majority of students continue on to a Masters or further professional studies, and there are perceptions that a Bachelors is a 'half-educated' Masters (Slantcheva 2000, 2002).
- 1.3. The vocational sector has also been slow to produce professionally skilled graduates since universities have higher prestige than colleges, because they can offer higher-level qualifications, they have better teaching standards, and also because university graduates are viewed as more employable (Popov 2001).
- 1.4. The finances in the public universities are not perceived to be sufficiently transparent, and control over how their budgets and other income are spent is left to university Rectors. This has led to allegations of corruption and the enrolment of low ability students for financial reasons. Totomanova (2001) suggests that the untaxed income from tuition fees was crucial to university management and, because it was classed as private income, there were no controls over how it was spent. In fact, the money was often spent on property, whilst the state subsidised salaries and infrastructure.
- 1.5. In an attempt to address the financial problems in the HE sector, the present government has appointed financial auditors in public universities on a permanent basis. Although the individual auditors are located in the respective universities, they are employed by the Minister of Finance. Totomanova also notes that private universities are more transparent in their finances and have mechanisms to help ensure accountability.

2. Economic relevance

- 2.1. Information about **students' perceptions** of the relevance of higher education courses is provided as part of the site visits of the NEAA peer experts, as well as by universities themselves, as part of their quality assurance at curriculum level. Universities are legally obliged to develop arrangements for eliciting regular student feedback on the quality of their taught courses as part of their quality control systems. Student opinion is also respected in the course validation process, where student demand and demonstrated interest in the programme is one of the key criteria for decision making. The other key criterion is the impact of the course on students' "employability prospects" (Georgieva, P. (Ed.) (2001) *Quality Management in Higher Education: processes, structures, and strategies*. Sofia (*available in Bulgarian only*)). The same study reveals that although academic management bodies receive regular feedback from their students on the quality of their teaching, they often show reluctance to take measures for improvement of where problems exist, due to different financial and legal restrictions (p. 107).
- 2.2. **The employers' perceptions** are less studied, although there are indications that they often rely on information issued by the NEAA. A 2002 analysis of the reasons for 'failed' new courses (specialities) reveals that in 76% of cases, the main reason had been "the lack of market or

economic relevance" (NEAA Annual Report 2002.). Also, in 1998, a project under the framework of the PHARE Project on the establishment of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency revealed employer dissatisfaction with some of the graduates they recruited due to their lack of practical skills, communication competencies, and teamwork skills. Another study from the same period (1996-8), from the Centre for Higher Education Research and the Association for Social Research, revealed discrepancies between the expectations of employers and university teachers regarding the most important knowledge, skills, and competencies of university graduates.

3. Private sector

- 3.1. Although they have been seen as innovative, entrepreneurial, and effective in recruiting students, many private institutions are having difficulties improving their reputation for quality with employers and potential students. The typical public and employer perception is that the quality of education in the private sector is inferior, with weak regulation and accreditation, a lack of tradition and high costs (Slantcheva 2002). Students and parents often equate private education with bought education and buying diplomas rather than working hard for a qualification (Totomanova 2001). This is not the case with the US and other foreign institutions.
- 3.2. In the field of Law for example, newspaper advertisements for jobs requiring Law graduates specify that applicants must have a Diploma from certain public universities. A similar situation exists for Accountancy graduates, where private companies prefer to hire accountants who graduated in Svishtov's Academy rather than from any other institution.
- 3.3. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that some private sector students fail to complete their studies if they are able find employment during their course.

4. Quality in higher education

- 4.1. The expansion of the higher education sector, combined with reduced funding, has led to concerns that quality levels in higher education have declined. The communist era higher education model was predominantly elitist and university education was considered a privilege for the 10% of the cohort aged 19-23 who participated in the system. Due to the high selectivity on input, the system only educated the most highly qualified secondary school graduates. Since these students also came from the best schools, there was an overall impression of the good quality of higher education. However, the explosion of student enrolments and new units and faculties and the desire to increase income has increased the pressure for improved quality controls. According to the NEAA files, since 2002, there has been growing public demand for information on the accreditation status of institutions and programmes.
- 4.2. Due to the lack of a standardised admissions process, universities unable to attract students are believed to reduce their admission criteria for entry of paying students, which has led to accusations of 'bought degrees'. There is no close monitoring of teaching quality, or continuous assessment of students during courses. Although there is a low drop out rate (around 5% in both the public and private sector), there is unease about the quality and amount of teaching in certain programmes (Totomanova 2001).
- 4.3. One of the key problems has been the limited number of qualified teachers available to teach in the new institutions/units. A phenomenon of 'travelling lecturers' who teach in a range of universities emerged, and these teachers were often operating in substandard accommodation with limited resources (Totomanova 1998, 2001). This is a particular problem in remote areas and in the private sector, where many staff are full-time public sector teachers who travel to the private sector institutions, purely for lectures and seminars. The new accreditation process has

attempted to address this, but in 2000-2001 only 23% of faculty in the private sector institutions held permanent posts.

- 4.4. The new accreditation process, as described in the 1995 Higher Education Act, may bring about changes in perceptions of quality over time, although this process will take time to produce results, and will need to be combined with improvements in university management, and greater collaboration between institutions. The present government intends to accelerate the development of internal quality management systems by setting deadlines in future amendments to the Higher Education Act. In addition, it also plans to provide support to individual institutions to implement their systems from the considerable funds available from the World Bank loan project for reform in Bulgarian education.

5. Transnational provision

- 5.1. In common with many of the newer courses that were established after the liberalisation of the system, some franchised courses were perceived to provide poor quality teaching, and inadequate resources and teaching accommodation. In the 1990s, the North-Eastern Branch of South-Western University had a programme in international relations (which no longer exists) from the University of Kiev, where the lectures and seminars took place in a hotel (Totomanova 2001).
- 5.2. In general, collaborative arrangements between national and foreign higher education providers are seen as legitimate because of the legal frameworks that exist, provided that they are both part of their respective national education systems. This explains why forms of transnational education such as joint programmes and dual awards are well accepted by the national authorities, enjoy longer life (10 years or more), and receive continuous financial support.
- 5.3. Individual foreign providers, even when these are universities, are often included in the governmental lists of 'illegal educational provision' as they remain outside the formal system and do not comply with the Higher Education Act. These examples illustrate the effect of the legal framework on different forms of transnational education, which is only geared to forms that fit into the existing structures and types of higher education rather than those seeking to establish themselves as independent entities. Therefore, it is easier to establish an independent/individual institution as a national rather than an international/foreign provider. Under the present legislative context, transnational education providers who intend to export to Bulgaria need to find a national partner institution first. As the Bulgarian public is becoming increasingly concerned with the quality of education (including transnational education), it is increasingly looking to the National Accreditation Agency for its judgements about the quality of provision. Therefore, it is likely that the legal status of transnational providers affects their public status and the level of confidence in the quality of their provision.
- 5.4. Government efforts to liberalise the system and eliminate the obstacles hindering trade in education services are confronted by a growing public concern that private education will displace the public education system and widespread fears that government-supported higher education will be displaced by a 100% full paid tuition fee training. Moreover, this enters into a conflict with the traditional understanding by the Bulgarian public of education as a social good and individual right for everyone, whether they are rich or poor.

Section 6. Demographic and Tertiary Sector data

Socio-Demographics

PCs per 1000 individuals in 1999

Country	N	%
Slovenia	250	25%
Poland	137	14%
Czech Republic	107	11%
Lithuania	91	9%
Bulgaria	37	4%
Romania	28	3%
Average	108	

Source: Georgieva, P., L. Todorova and D. Pilev (2002) Higher education in Bulgaria. UNESCO- CEPES Monographs on Higher Education. Bucharest, P. 66.

Ethnic Composition of Bulgarian Population (as at 1st March 2001)

Ethnic Group	N	%
All groups	7,928,901	
Bulgarian	6,655,210	83.94%
Turkish	746,664	9.42%
Roma (Gypsy)	370,908	4.68%
Russian	15,595	0.20%
Armenian	10,832	0.14%
Vlachs	10,566	0.13%
Macedonian	5,071	0.06%
Greek	3,408	0.04%
Ukrainian	2,489	0.03%
Jewish	1,363	0.02%
Romanian	1,088	0.01%
Other	18,792	0.24%
Not identified	62,108	0.78%
Not shown	24,807	0.31%

Source: National Statistics Institute (NSI), 2003.

Structure of the Bulgarian population by religion (2001)

Religion	%
Christian East-orthodox	82.6
Islam	12.2
Catholicism	0.6
Protestantism	0.5
Judaism	0.0
Armenian-Gregorian	0.1
Other	0.1
Not identified	3.9

Source: National Statistics Institute (NSI), 2003.

Enrolment data

Tertiary Level Students By Institution Type (International Standard Classification Of Education (ISCED - 97))

TOTAL	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Higher education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	195,447	206,179	223,030	250,336	262,757	260,487	270,077	261,321	247,006	228,394	230,513
Education in colleges (ISCED-5B)	30,261	27,791	25,161	25,311	24,981	23,747	22,065	18,461	16,369	16,646	14,801
Education in universities and equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	162,009	175,810	196,046	223,260	235,701	234,182	245,237	239,769	227,223	207,750	211,272
Qualification degree and scientific title 'Doctor' (ISCED-6)	3,177	2,578	1,823	1,765	2,075	2,558	2,775	3,091	3,414	3,998	4,440
PUBLIC											
Higher education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	190,538	200,688	210,400	230,064	239,011	234,310	237,583	233,907	219,067	199,716	199,529
Education in colleges (ISCED-5B)	30,090	27,545	24,224	24,217	23,743	21,671	19,374	15,945	13,929	13,599	12,166
Education in universities and equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	157,271	170,565	184,353	204,082	213,193	210,081	215,434	214,871	201,747	182,179	182,979
Qualification degree and scientific title 'Doctor' (ISCED-6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PRIVATE											
Higher education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	4,909	5,491	12,630	20,272	23,746	26,177	32,494	27,414	27,939	28,678	30,984
Education in colleges (ISCED-5B)	171	246	937	1,094	1,238	2,076	2,691	2,516	2,440	3,047	2,635
Education in universities and equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	4,738	5,245	11,693	19,178	22,508	24,101	29,803	24,898	25,476	25,571	28,293
Qualification degree and scientific title 'Doctor' (ISCED-6)									23	60	56

Source: NSI, 2003

Net Enrolment Rates of the Population in the Educational System

	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Group net enrolment rates: % of number of enrolments by levels compared to number of population in the relevant age groups.									
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pre-primary education (ISCED - 0)	59.7	64.5	66.2	62.1	65.3	66.4	66.8	73.6	74.2
Primary education (I-IV grade, ISCED-1)	92.8	94.9	95.5	96.0	96.8	96.4	96.3	98.5	99.8
Lower secondary education (V-VIII grade, ISCED-2A)	79.0	78.0	78.4	79.1	80.2	81.4	82.4	83.1	84.0
Upper secondary education (IX-XIII grade, ISCED-3A, 3C)	61.4	61.5	61.5	61.3	61.6	63.1	64.7	68.3	74.9
Post secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED-4C)	.	.	.	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.3
Education in colleges (ISCED-5B)	3.3	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.4
Education in universities and equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	18.8	20.6	21.4	21.6	23.4	24.0	23.0	22.8	23.9
Net enrolment rates: % of number of enrolments in age groups, independent of the educational level, compared to number of population in the same age groups									
3 - 6 years	62.9	67.4	69.1	65.7	68.3	69.6	70.1	77.2	78.5
7 -10 years	100.1	100.3	99.6	99.2	99.3	98.8	98.4	101.2	102.3
11 - 14 years	95.2	95.5	95.3	95.3	95.8	96.1	97.0	97.7	98.0
15 - 18 years	69.2	69.7	69.4	69.3	70.3	71.1	71.9	75.2	81.0
19 - 23 years	22.8	24.4	25.1	25.3	26.9	27.2	26.0	25.8	27.4

Source: NSI, 2003

Higher Education Institutions

Tertiary Level Educational Institutions By Type And Ownership

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
TOTAL	87	87	88	88	88	86	88	88	88	90	91
Independent colleges (ISCED-5B)	47	47	48	47	3	3	4	4	4	8	9
Colleges at Universities (ISCED-5B)	0	0	0	0	43	41	42	43	43	40	40
Universities/equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	40	40	40	41	42	42	42	41	41	42	42
PUBLIC	82	82	82	80	80	77	77	78	78	79	77
Independent colleges (ISCED-5B)	45	45	45	44	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Colleges at Universities (ISCED-5B)	0	0	0	0	41	38	38	39	39	40	40
Universities/equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	37	37	37	36	37	37	37	37	37	37	35
PRIVATE	5	5	6	8	8	9	11	10	10	11	14
Independent colleges (ISCED-5B)	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	2	2	6	7
Colleges at Universities (ISCED-5B)	0	0	0	0	2	3	4	4	4	0	0
Universities/equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	7

Source: NSI, 2003

Public Sector Higher Education Institutions

Public Universities & Equivalent Institutions			
	Name	Students (approx)	Note
1	St. Kliment Ohridski University, Sofia	31,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 78 specialities at 15 faculties and 3 departments
2	University of National and World Economics, Sofia	37,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 31 specialities at 7 faculties and 2 colleges. Formerly Economics Institute
3	Sts. Kiril and Methodi University, Veliko Turnovo	10,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 40 specialities at 7 faculties and 12 branch campuses
4	Ep. Konstantin Preslavski University, Shumen	7,200	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 36 specialities at 4 faculties.
5	Paissij of Hilendar University, Plovdiv	14,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 42 specialities at 8 faculties and 4 branch campuses
6	Neophyte of Rila University of SW Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad	10,500	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 37 specialities at 7 faculties.
7	Prof. dr. Asen Zlatarov University, Burgas	4,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 22 specialities at 3 faculties and 3 colleges.
8	"Angel Kanchev" university, Ruse	7,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 24 specialities at 7 faculties and 2 colleges and 1 branch campus
9	Thracia University, Stara Zagora	4,200	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 24 specialities at 3 faculties and 5 colleges
10	Technical University, Sofia	15,100	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 52 fields of Engineering and Technology at 11 faculties, 2 branch campuses and 4 colleges.
11	University of Architecture, Building and Geodesy	3,600	Masters and Doctoral level courses in 7 fields at 5 faculties.
12	University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy	3,600	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 11 specialities at 3 faculties and 1 college.
13	Technical University, Gabrovo	8,200	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 16 specialities at 3 faculties and 1 college.
14	Technical University, Varna	5,800	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 22 specialities at 8 faculties and 2 colleges.
15	St Ivan Rilski University of Mining and Geology	2,700	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 14 specialities at 3 faculties and 1 college.
16	University of Food Technology, Plovdiv	3,800	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 10 specialities at 2 faculties.
17	Agrarian University, Plovdiv	2,600	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 8 specialities at 4 faculties.
18	University of Economics, Varna	9,300	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 15 specialities at 4 faculties and 1 college.
19	Academy of Economics, Svishtov	10,200	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 21 specialities at 4 faculties, 1 college, and 1 branch campus. It degree courses in a distance mode, alongside the traditional face-to-face modes.
20	University of Forestry - Sofia	2,960	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 8 specialities at 5 faculties.
	<i>Medical University (4 sites)</i>		Masters and doctoral level courses in the fields of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacology, Bachelors level courses in the field of Health Care, and 'Specialist in...' HE Diploma courses in the fields of Nursery, Radiology, etc.
21	a) Sofia	5,030	
22	b) Plovdiv	2,800	
23	c) Varna	1,490	
24	d) Pleven	860	

25	National Academy of Music - Sofia	982	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 11 specialities at 3 faculties.
26	Academy of Music and Dance - Plovdiv	966	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 9 specialities at 2 faculties.
27	National Academy of Fine Arts	947	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 5 specialities at 2 faculties.
28	Academy of Theatre and Film	542	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 13 specialities at 2 faculties.
29	National Academy for the Sports	2,640	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 3 specialities at 3 faculties.
Public Higher education institutions offering first degree courses (Bachelors)			
30	Higher School of Transport	1,500	
31	Higher School of Building Constructions	720	
32-35	4 Military higher education institutions	3,400	
Public Independent Colleges (offering a 'Specialist in...' Diploma of Higher education)			
1	Librarian College - Sofia	640	
2	College of Telecommunications and Mail Services - Sofia	1,077	

NB: There are also 40 Colleges attached to universities

Sources: NSI 2003; DfES 2002 (updated 2003); Slantcheva 2002.

Private Sector Higher Education Institutions

Private Universities and institutions offering first degree (Bachelor) courses			
	Name	Students (approx)	Note
1	"Tchernorizec Hrabar" Free University, Varna	9,000	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in over 20 specialities at 5 teaching and research units, 1 college and 2 branch campuses.
2	New Bulgarian University	7,500	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes, structured around the undergraduate level (Liberal Arts programme) and postgraduate level (short Masters and Doctoral programmes) at 2 faculties. Degree courses in a distance mode, alongside the traditional face-to-face modes.
3	Free University, Bourgas	7,800	Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in 18 specialities at 4 centres.
4	American University in Bulgaria (AUBG)	560	10 Bachelors degree and 1 BMA programmes in 4 academic directions.
5	International Business School - Botevgrad	1774	Joint programmes in Finance, Accountancy and Business administration at 'Specialist in...' and Bachelor levels with two Danish Trade Colleges and the Copenhagen Business School; also a joint degree programme in Organisation and Management of Tourist Services with Dutch School of Higher Education in Breda
6	School of Insurance and Finance, Sofia	325	Offers First degree level (Bachelor) courses in Finance, Accountancy, and Insurance.
7	The Holy Bible Institute of Theology in Sofia	n/a	Programmes are under the regulation of the Committee on Religious beliefs at the Council of Ministers
8	School of Islam in Sofia	65	Programmes are under the regulation of the Committee on
Private Colleges offering professional ('Specialist in...' courses)			
1	Management, Trade and Marketing College, Sofia	837	Offers Higher Education Diploma in Marketing only.
2	International College - Albena		French Diploma (BTS in Marketing and Management of hotel services, and Dutch Diploma in Hotel Management)
3	European College of Economics and Management - Plovdiv	550	
4	College of Telematics - Stara Zagora		Offers professional courses in the field of Electrical technologies and Electronics.
5	"L. Groys" College of Drama		
6	Agricultural College, Plovdiv	667	Full-time and correspondence Courses in Farming, Agrarian Economy and Business Administration, leading to Higher education Diploma.

Sources: NSI 2003; DfES 2002 (updated 2003); Slantcheva 2002.

Disciplines

Share of newly enrolled students by educational field

Educational field	1998	1999	2000
Management and administration	20.9	21.0	20.4
Engineering	19.4	18.3	18.0
Social and behaviour studies	11.1	12.8	12.2
Pedagogic studies	10.7	12.2	11.7
Humanities	7.9	7.6	8.8
Law	4.1	3.8	3.6
Arts	2.5	2.5	2.7
Architecture & Building construction	2.5	2.6	2.6
Informatics	1.5	1.7	2.4
Industry & Technology	1.6	2.3	2.3
Personal services	2.2	2.1	2.3
Physics	2.2	1.8	2.1
Agriculture and Forestry	1.8	1.6	1.6
Security & Safety	3.7	1.7	1.6
Healthcare	1.8	1.1	1.4
Social services	1.5	1.5	1.2
Environmental protection	1.2	1.4	1.1
Transport	0.5	0.5	0.9
Journalism and technical information	0.6	0.7	0.8
Natural sciences	0.6	0.7	0.8
Mathematics	0.9	0.6	0.7
Veterinarian medicine	0.5	0.6	0.5
Other	0.2	0.2	0.3

Sources: NSI 2003; DfES 2002 (updated 2003); Slantcheva 2002.

Structure of college graduates (specialist in...) by educational fields

	1998	1999	2000
Educational Fields	%	%	%
Healthcare	35.3	38.7	34.4
Engineering	14.0	17.8	19.1
Social and behaviour studies	8.2	9.2	15.0
Management and administration	13.8	12.0	11.9
Personal services	10.0	8.1	8.8
Pedagogic studies	11.3	8.2	4.2
Journalism and technical information	1.5	2.4	1.6
Social services	0.6	0.9	1.6
Industry & Technology	0.4	0.8	1.4
Transport	0.8	1.3	0.7
Humanities			0.2
Architecture & Building construction		0.4	0.0
Agriculture and Forestry			0.0
Security & Safety	4.2		
Other	-	0.2	

Sources: NSI 2003; DfES 2002 (updated 2003); Slantcheva 2002.

Structure of university graduates (Bachelors and Masters) by educational fields

	1998	1999	2000
Educational Fields	%	%	%
Management and administration	24.1	27.0	31.3
Social and behaviour studies	9.5	10.5	13.7
Pedagogic studies	18.9	15.6	10.7
Engineering	9.7	10.7	9.9
Humanities	5.4	6.0	6.3
Law	7.0	5.1	5.2
Healthcare	5.0	4.0	3.3
Security & Safety	3.4	2.9	2.6
Arts	1.6	2.0	2.2
Agriculture and Forestry	1.8	1.5	1.8
Architecture & Building construction	1.5	1.6	1.7
Social services	2.4	2.8	1.7
Personal services	2.1	2.7	1.7
Informatics	0.5	1.1	1.6
Physics	2.3	1.8	1.5
Industrial studies	0.9	1.2	1.1
Environmental protection	0.9	1.3	1.1
Natural sciences	0.6	0.8	0.7
Journalism and technical information	0.6	0.6	0.6
Transport	0.3	0.3	0.6
Veterinarian medicine	0.5	0.4	0.4
Mathematics	1.0	0.4	0.3
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0

Sources: NSI 2003; DfES 2002 (updated 2003); Slantcheva 2002.

Staffing

Academic staff in HEIs 1996-2001

	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01
Total	26,303	22,118	24,490	26,735	23,329
Professors	2,219	2,099	2,229	2,447	2,179
Associate Professors	5,910	5,593	6,160	6,840	6,350
Assistant Professors	13,286	10,322	11,400	12,264	10,467
Lecturers	4,402	3,997	4,426	4,930	3,821
Researchers	486	107	275	254	512

Source: NSI, Education in Republic Bulgaria, S. 2001

Age profile of academic staff by age level for the academic year 2000/01

	Total	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65 and over
All Academic staff	23,329	0.3%	4.9%	6.5%	10.6%	16.0%	16.9%	16.6%	13.9%	9.1%	5.1%
Professors	2,179	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1.6%	10.4%	20.8%	29.6%	37.5%
Associated Professors	6,359	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	2.0%	9.9%	15.3%	26.7%	23.1%	18.1%	4.4%
Assistant Professors	10,467	0.2%	8.3%	10.4%	16.0%	21.0%	19.1%	13.3%	9.2%	2.2%	0.4%
University Lecturers	3,821	0.8%	6.6%	10.3%	16.4%	20.3%	21.3%	12.7%	7.7%	2.3%	1.5%
Researchers	512	0.8%	6.1%	1.8%	9.4%	26.6%	25.8%	13.3%	13.1%	2.7%	0.6%

Source: NSI, Education in Republic Bulgaria, S. 2001

TEACHING STAFF BY LEVEL (INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED - 97))

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
All Higher education (ISCED-5B, 5A, 6)	21,976	21,148	24,274	25,339	26,303	22,118	24,490	26,735	23,329	23,888	21,004
Colleges (ISCED-5B)	3,081	2,990	3,047	3,111	3,018	2,702	2,418	2,367	2,167	2,342	2,294
Universities/equivalent higher schools (ISCED-5A)	18,895	18,158	21,227	22,228	23,285	19,416	22,072	24,368	21,162	21,546	18,710

Source: NSI, 2003

European Funding

Table 4.1: Funds allocated to support Individual Mobility Grants - IMG (Tempus I and Tempus II)

IMG	Tempus I				Tempus II
Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Funds in ECU	463,163	258,430	591,800	474,567	380,330

Table 4.2: Investments of Tempus Programme in the period 1990-2000

Tempus phases	Budget in EURO (mill)	% of total
Tempus I (1991 – 1994)	30,630,000	44.44
Tempus II (1995 – 1998)	32,000,000	46.42
Tempus II bis (1998 – 2000)	6,300,000	9.14
Total	68,930,000	100

Table 4.3: Participation of Bulgarian Universities in the SOCRATES Programme of EU

	1999-2000		2000-01		Total
	Number	In Euro	Number	In Euro	
"Erasmus"					
University Co-operation	9	19,650	26	65,000	84,650
Mobility Of University Teachers	73	28,616	147	136,766	165,382
Student Mobility Grants	125	318,505	493	1,460,104	1,778,609
Preliminary Visas	29	20,086	54	-	20,086
ECTS	2	8,910	10	45,000	53,910
Thematic Networks	5	15,000	39	117,000	132,000
Intensive Programmes	1	-	11	33,000	33,000
Total	244	410,767	780	1,856,870	2,267,637
"Lingua"	Number	In Euro			
New Teaching Methods	2	106,320			
Training Aids Development	2	218,133			
Total	4	324,453			
"Grundtvig" Programme	Number	In Euro			
Projects	4	141,672			
"Minerva" Programme	Number	In Euro	Number	In Euro	Total
Projects	2	50,867	4	169,672	220,539

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Section 8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Outstanding queries

Section 1: Country Overview

1. More information on the Bulgarian economy and more detailed information if available on the current growth rate, debt levels, and recent national and regional economic policy initiatives
2. Is it still true that Bulgaria is a net exporter of medical and other skilled workers? Is there still a brain drain, particularly to the US and Europe?

Section 2: Education System

1. How did Spetzializirano Visshe Uchilishte (Specialist Higher School/Technical University) come about, and in which ways are they different to other HEIs?
2. Can a 'speciality' be described as study programmes leading to a professional / academic qualification, or is a more detailed description required?
3. Are the average fees levels for public and private universities different or the same? Is data available on this?
4. We mention a drop out rate for HE (degree?) courses of 5%. Is this still true, and can we clarify the differences for Public, Private, TNE, etc.
5. What is the intended role and status of each qualification level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, etc.)? Are there problems clarifying these to students/employers?
6. When we describe Bachelor's level study we mention that assessment can be by examinations or by thesis. Does this mean that the student does not have to complete both types?
7. When we say that some Bachelors level studies can lead directly to doctoral level studies – does this mean that students don't require a Masters, or must they obtain this as part of their doctoral study?

Section 3: Legal Frameworks for Higher Education

1. Has the new legislation for replacing the HAC with a National Attestation Agency been approved?
2. How has the abolition of the SRS and the USR affected the accreditation of professional programmes?
3. When we mention that the 1995 HE Act recognised private HE institutions, what did this recognition involve and what did it mean? Did recognition mean that they were simply allowed to operate? Could they enrol students? Did they then have to apply for institutional accreditation?
4. Have the proposed amendments to the 1995 Higher Education Act passed through parliament (due June 2003)?
5. Why were the specific requirements for the number of staff needed to form each faculty unit under the Higher Education Act (1999) effective to some extent at the faculty level, but not at the institutional level?
6. What kinds of criteria (e.g. standards/indicators) are used in institutional and programme accreditation?

Section 4: Transnational provision

1. If possible, we need updated figures on the origins of overseas students in Bulgaria, and the destinations and the number and destinations of Bulgarian students studying overseas.
2. What is the Bulgarian government's current policy on transnational provision (overseas providers in Bulgaria, overseas students in Bulgaria and Bulgarian students studying overseas) if any?

Section 6: Tertiary Sector data

1. How many transnational providers are there? What are their countries of origin?
2. What are the total numbers of students enrolled in transnational higher education by type of institution.
3. Information about fees, modes of delivery, qualification levels and subjects offered by transnational providers, compared with indigenous providers.

Appendix 2: Contributors and Contacts

Case Study Consultant

We would like to acknowledge the work of **Dr. Patricia Georgieva**, Senior Research Associate at the National Institute of Education in the Centre for Higher Education Research who provided the information and data for many sections of this case study.

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