The main groups of providers of formal and non-formal learning in Bulgaria are on the one hand public educational institutions such as general schools, vocational schools, universities, public VET centres, as well as Employments Centres and on the other hand private VET centres, language or computer schools, employers and associations/organizations, trade unions, NGOs and the enterprises which have their own training centres.

**Licensed Vocational Training Centres (CPOs)**

These centres may be run by the state, the local authorities or private providers and are licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) to teach vocational courses for specific occupations stated in the licence and are by nature addressed primarily to adults rather than children and young people. The CPOs are entitled to award certificates of vocational training at Levels 1 to 3, in the same way as the vocational schools and colleges in the formal system.

A glance at the register of licensed CPOs shows that they are sponsored or run by legal entities in all sections of society. These include many small or micro enterprises providing vocational training either as their main or an additional business activity. Other operators of licensed CPOs are voluntary associations and NGOs, such as the Central Association of Cooperatives, a Jewish organization, the Confederation of Trade Unions KNSB, various Znánie associations, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce. Most of the licences issued to date relate to construction, engineering, catering and tourism, office work and craft trades.

As of 23 March 2011 NAVET has licenced and registered 886 CPOs.

**Employers**

In-service training plans are far more common among enterprises in the public sector and major companies than in private businesses and micro enterprises. In-service training is found more often in larger enterprises.

**Trade Unions**

Trade Unions have the new role as independent representative bodies. The rapid changes in society and legislation to which trade union officials needed to adapt, require continuous vocational education and training as well as training in democracy for the pur of buliing up active citizenship in the Bulgarian society. Courses are opened up to participants from outside the ranks of the trade unions.

**Craft Chambers**

Training of craft trade apprentices is governed by the Commerce Act and the several regulations of the Bulgarian Chamber of Craft Trades, which are drawn up in consultation with the National Agency.
The list of craft trades, as defined by the Act, comprise 127 vocations which are divided into the following groups:

- Building and restoration;
- Electrotechnics and metalworking;
- Processing of timber and other materials;
- Sewing, textiles and leatherworking;
- Production of foods and drinks;
- Media, advertising and communication;
- Health and hygiene services;
- Glass and ceramic processing;
- Artistic crafts.

**Cultural Centres “Chitalishte”**

The Bulgarian cultural centres are self-governing cultural and educational institutions with a separate legal status, whose tradition is dating back to the 19th century. Their activities expanded with the years and laid the foundation for many aspects of modern cultural life in Bulgaria. The cultural centres nowadays are facing the task of finding new ways of operating. The more active cultural centres are now once again independent adult education institutions which are combined into several national networks. They are governed by the National Cultural Centres Act.

The centres usually work very closely with the local authorities, especially concerning funding and staff recruitment. The activities of the Chitalishte varies, from village cultural centres which serve as little more than places for choirs that keep up folk singing via more active cultural centres running children’s dance groups, brass bands or Art schools and playing an important part in planning local festivals, to large cultural institutions. Some particularly modern cultural centres are active in the field of regional development.

The more specific teaching branch of Chitalishte activity is organizing *language courses, music classes and ballet classes* all over Bulgaria. Cultural centres are funded by membership subscriptions, cultural events, renting out of premises, and donations. According to the legal provisions, cultural centres provide “basic local cultural facilities” free of charge. This applies to activities such as folk dance, singing, etc. They may charge fees for other provision, such as the use of the library, languages courses or of course vocational training, where this is offered.

**Non-governmental organisations**

NGOs, foundations and associations, governed by the Associations Act, regulating the legal status of non-profit organizations in Bulgaria.

- **Znanie Association** is one of the largest networks of associations involved in adult education in Bulgaria, called “Federation of Societies for Support of Knowledge” (FSSK). It is the umbrella organization for 30 regional associations, which are usually called “Znánie associations” for short. The Federation and its member associations provide a wide range of courses, seminars and other educational activities in such areas as languages and computing, business, book-keeping, banking, agriculture, tourism, culture, retraining, certification systems, vocational training and in-service training for teachers. Courses on human rights, environmental protection, public service, etc. are also organized.

- **Scientific-technical Associations** – The scientific-technical associations form another network. They are brought together under an umbrella federation, FNTS (Federation of the scientific-technical
The members of this federation and its member associations are engineers, entrepreneurs, academicians, farmers, technicians, students, etc. FNTS takes part in the adult education market through its own vocational training centre. Its NAVET licence covers over 100 different occupations, largely in the area of technology, and recently also in agriculture and construction.

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