Programmes for Adult Education in Basic Skills Courses

Syllabus for Bulgarian Language and Literature

The adult education course includes 336 classes for learning the subject of Bulgarian language and literature. This syllabus presents the curriculum as a component of general education in Bulgarian schools and is consistent with:

- the state educational standard for Bulgarian language and literature for primary school stage;
- the syllabuses for compulsory schooling for Bulgarian language and literature (I-IV classes);
- the features of teaching people, aged above 16 years of age, outside the education system;
- the reduced terms of training.

The training in Bulgarian language and literature is accomplished, as follows:

- literacy: 150 hours;
- linguistic competence: 90 hours;
- literary competence: 48 hours;
- formation of communication skills: 48 hours.

Class hours can be distributed among classes for linguistic competence, literary competence or formation of communication skills. The curriculum is defined by the teacher depending on the interests and the needs of the learners.

Syllabus on Mathematics

There are 180 hours of Mathematics in the program. The syllabus for Mathematics for adult education is based on the state educational standards for the curriculum of primary school stage. The curriculum is presented in four core areas (numbers, plane figures, measurement, modeling), defined as a curriculum on mathematics by the state educational requirements. The emphasis is on mastering arithmetic knowledge, distributed in 11 topics, including integers and the 4 arithmetic operations (summation, subtraction, multiplication and partition). Geometrical knowledge and knowledge of the units and the arithmetic operations with them are also included.

Syllabus on Man and Nature

There are 180 hours on the subject of Man and the Nature. The subject has an integrated nature and matches knowledge, skills and relations of different natural sciences:

- biology and health education;
- physics and astronomy;
chemistry and environmental protection.

These are structured in 6 topics. The curriculum is presented by the main informational core, determined in the state educational requirement on Man and Nature for the primary school stage:

- substances, objects and organisms;
- natural phenomena;
- man and his health;
- observations;
- experiments and studies.

As the learners have a significant social experience, labour skills and world knowledge the training is oriented towards the use of these advantages. That way it is possible to systematize and generalize the available knowledge in order to combine it with knowledge about society and labour rights, rationalization of the personnel experience, respective self-evaluation, motivation for continuing education. The subject forms cognitive and practical skills for selection, recognition, definition, use of available sources of information, setting problems, reporting experimental results and drawing conclusions.

**Syllabus on Man and Society**

There are 42 hours on the subject of Man and Society. The curriculum introduces knowledge responding to the main informational cores:

- Homeland;
- Man and his environment;
- National and cultural heritage;
- Bulgaria: "a part of the world";
- "My environment and I";
- "I am a citizen of my country", "Me and the world of adults";
- Sources of knowledge.

It is organized in 9 topics consistent with the state educational requirement for curriculum and the social experience and maturity of the learners. The specific age of learners suggests that they start their training with a solid social experience and life skills. Efforts are focused on the systematization of knowledge, and combining it with typical natural and social conditions of life and employment, thus promoting social and personal realization of the learners. Another important component is training in key competences (computer skills, foreign languages, etc.).

**National Programme for Literacy and Qualification of the Roma Population**

The aim of the programme is to support the employability of illiterate and unemployed adults. Adult illiteracy is a problem chiefly among the Roma population in Bulgaria. The project used a double approach, comprising of an adult literacy module and, and a vocational education (VET) module. Initial literacy courses are financed under the programme as a first step towards training for the first degree of professional qualification in professions currently sought on the labour market. To this end, the programme combined the efforts of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Employment Agency and its local sections, the municipalities, the school authorities and NGOs.
Formal Education

The VET system in Bulgaria prepares citizens for professional realization by establishing conditions for acquiring professional qualification and its continuous improvement. It includes professional guidance, vocational education, and vocational training. These three parts of the VET system are implemented by professions and specialties, included in the List of the Professions in VET. This List was created by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as with the sectoral ministries and stakeholders at national level. It was then approved by the Council of Ministers. There are state educational standards for acquisition of a qualification in a given profession approved by the Minister of Education, Youth and Science. They are obligatory for both the institutions within the vocational education system and the vocational training system itself. They are elaborated (in cooperation with the social partners), by the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), which is a state body independent of the Council of Ministers. A new element in these standards (as of 2007) is a text in English, which contains the name of the profession, the specialties included in this profession, the professional direction (by ISCED 97), and the learning outcomes, that are achieved after training in this profession. Professions and specialties in VET are classified by professional fields, by degree of education, and by degree of professional qualification.

Programmes for Acquisition of Vocational Qualification

**Framework Programmes** are specialized syllabuses which specify the minimum age of candidates at the start of training, as well as their prior education, the duration of their training, the theoretical and practical learning content, and the methods of awarding a qualification. The Framework programmes are listed below.

*Framework programmes “A”* for initial vocational training for acquisition of I degree of vocational qualification: I degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing routine activities, accomplished under constant conditions. Input level: VI grade completed; Output level: VI or VII grade completed for learners up to age of 16.

*Framework programmes “B”* for vocational training for acquisition of II degree of vocational qualification: II degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing complex activities, accomplished under variable conditions. Input level: VII grade or basic education completed. Output level: X or XI grade completed, rights for sitting for matriculation acquired for completion of secondary education, or secondary education completed.

*Framework programmes “C”* for vocational education for acquisition of II or III degree of vocational qualification: III degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing of complex activities, accomplished under variable conditions, as well as taking responsibility for other people’s work. Input level: VII grade or basic education completed. Output level: secondary education completed or acquired right for sitting for matriculation; it is determined by the state educational requirements for acquisition of a qualification by professions.

*Framework programmes “D”* for vocational training for acquisition of IV degree of vocational qualification: IV degree – with professional competences for practicing of professions, which require performing of complex activities, accomplished under variable conditions, as well as taking managerial responsibility for other people’s work and for distribution of resources. Input level: secondary education completed.

*Framework programmes “E”* for initial vocational training for acquisition of qualification in a part of profession.
Framework Programmes “F” for further vocational training for bringing up-to-date or extension of already acquired vocational qualification, as well as for acquisition of I, II, and III degree of vocational qualification (since 2004).

The evaluation of learning outcomes in vocational training for acquisition of a vocational qualification is performed by a state examination procedure by using national examination programmes, approved by the Minister of Education, Youth and Science. These programmes are obligatory for both vocational education and vocational training systems.

Vocational Training and Education for Adults

When adults enroll in regular schools, there are no special programmes for the vocational training of adults. Within the traditional Bulgarian education system, at ISCED Levels 1, 2 and 3 vocational education and training for adults is provided in a few schools such as the schools in prisons. Additionally, some general and Vocational schools offer evening courses and distance learning for adults. The number of participants is not very big. Upon successful completion of the course, every student receives the same certificate of the appropriate level of general education plus the vocational qualification attained, regardless of age.

Adult Learners in Higher education Institutions

High numbers of people of working age (25-64 years of age) are enrolled in university type institutions.

Training of Unemployed People

The training of unemployed individuals is performed through different schemes by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The “Development” scheme is directed to training for acquisition or raising of the vocational qualification of unemployed people registered in the labour offices with the purpose to be employed. The representatives of the target group are given vouchers to cover the training. The “Back to work” scheme is directed towards unemployed people, predominantly at pre-retirement age, and to people with education and qualification in the field of health, education and social activities. In the framework of the scheme the unemployed are trained in key competencies directed to child care. After completing the training, they can be employed in child care, working with children from 1 to 3 year, so their parents can continue their professional development. The “Training services and employment promotion” scheme is accomplished for the purposes of decreasing unemployment and increasing employability of unemployed people through training for acquisition and raising vocational qualification. Usually people from disadvantage groups (young people up to 29 years, women on long maternity leaves, people with disabilities, inactive people registered as unemployed in the labour offices) can benefit from that program.

Training of Employed People

The “Training services and training of employed people” scheme provides grants in 2 stages. Stage 1 offers training for employed people and promotes the investment in human resources. Stage 2 creates conditions for wider application of the principles of Lifelong learning. The schemes provide training for acquisition or raising the vocational qualification and training for key competences of employed people in micro-, small, medium and big enterprises, as well self-employed people. The main goal is to increase the labour productivity and to create conditions for sustainable employment. The “I can” scheme is directed to training for vocational qualification and/or key competences of employed people working under labour contact. The scheme is achieved through giving vouchers for training of people, guaranteeing direct and equal access of the employed people to training activities,
independently of the initiative of their employers. The “Adaptability” scheme is directed to workers and employers from enterprises which due economic reasons had to switch to a part-time job. These people can be included in vocational training which is organized during the unoccupied time of the day. People get vouchers for training for acquisition of a grade of vocational qualification or a part of profession, monthly scholarship, which transportion from and to the study center.

Grundtvig Programme for Adult Learning

It is important to underline that adult mobility with the support of the Grundtvig Programme [1] for Adult Learning in the framework of the Lifelong Learning programme of the EU 2007 - 2013 contributes to the development of adult learning and education in Bulgaria. The Grundtvig Programme has been applied in Bulagria for 10 years now (from 2001 on) and supports the Grundtvig Learning Partnership which are small-scale co-operation activities between organisations working in the field of adult education in the broadest sense. The budget allocated to the Grundtvig Programme in Bulgaria is relatively low compared to the other three sectoral programmes – Leonardo da Vinci, Commenius and Erasmus. Nevertheless, the programme is becoming more and more popular in the field of the adult learning providers in Bulgaria.

Some of the specific objectives of the Grundtvig programme in Bulgaria are:

- improving and update the learning content, training methodology and learning materials for adults towards better compliance of the education and training provision with the labour market requirements or in other words providing adults with key competences, knowledge and know-how corresponding to the needs of the labour market;
- assisting people from vulnerable social groups and in marginal social contexts, in particular older people and those who have left education without basic qualifications, in order to give them alternative opportunities to access adult education and professional realization;
- improving the qualification level of teachers and trainers of adults as well as the management of adult education organisations;
- elaborating new methodologies for assessing and validating learning outcomes, in particular those acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Teaching Methods in Adult Education

In Bulgaria the profession of an adult educator does not belong to the list of officially elaborated and recognized professions. This means that there is no specific difference between teachers and trainers for children, working in the formal system, and adult educators/trainers and facilitators. In most of the cases adult trainers come from the formal system: teachers and university lecturers. There are also cases when other specialist works in the field, especially in the non-formal system, because no official regulation has been established yet. In multi-national companies human resources managers are responsible for the in-service training. They work with teachers and trainers from the formal or non-formal sector and the quality of provision is tested “by doing”. In higher schools which teach pedaogy, a new major called “Adult Education” has been introduced. It includes about 60 hours of lectures and seminars. Additionally, in 2002 New Bulgarian University introduced a Master Study Programme called “Management of Adult Education”.