

System of early education/care and professionalisation in **Bulgaria**

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Europe is charged with positive energy – vigorous and well-meaning in every nation’s perspective.

In 2007 Bulgaria was in the limelight and acknowledged as equal member of Europe.

We have always belonged to Europe – in searching for the truth for ourselves and for the others, in building our own national identity and representing Europe with dignity.

The wide and dashing spirit of the Bulgarians went through the centuries, life-asserting and teaching, with the oldest state system, culture, literacy and education in Europe. A nation for which the education is weaved into its most elevated strivings and hopes. A nation knowing that not only “union makes the power”, but also that the power rises from the culture and the education, making way for the merited union with the other European nations; that the worth of this unique zeal is defined from the preserved dignity and contribution in enriching the diversities in the united Europe.

Full Prof., PhD Elena Russinova

I. Sources from the normative order (laws, regulations, statistical data)

In the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Chapter I: "Fundamental principals", Art.6 is underlined the idea of the freedom and equality for all: (1) "All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights. (2) All citizens shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identity, sex, origin, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status.

Art.13. proclaims the freedom for practicing religions beliefs as separating them from the state and does not permit religious beliefs to be used to political ends.

Art.14. „The family, motherhood and children shall enjoy the protection of the state and society”

Art.16. "Labor shall be guaranteed and protected by law."

Art.23. The free development of science, education and the arts is guaranteed: "The state shall establish conditions conducive to the free development of science, education and the arts, and shall assist that development. It shall organize the conservation of all national monuments of history and culture. "

Chapter 2. Regarding the Bulgarian citizenship, reliefs for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship are available for the persons of Bulgarian origin, as well as for the refugees without citizenship:

Art. 26. "Foreigners residing in the Republic of Bulgaria shall be vested with all rights and obligations proceeding from this Constitution, except those rights and obligations for which Bulgarian citizenship is required by this Constitution or by another law."

Art. 27, (2) „Republic of Bulgaria shall grant asylum to foreigners persecuted for their opinions or activity in the defence of internationally recognised rights and freedoms."

Art. 28-57 contains the main rights and liberties of the citizens

Art.47. (1) The raising and upbringing of children until they come of legal age shall be a right and obligation of their parents and shall be assisted by the state.

(2) Mothers shall be the object of special protection on the part of the state and shall be guaranteed prenatal and postnatal leave, free obstetric care, alleviated working conditions and other social assistance.

(3) Children born out of wedlock shall enjoy equal rights with those born in wedlock.

(4) Abandoned children shall enjoy the protection of the state and society.

Art.48. Guarantees the right to work, freedom to choose an occupation and place of work, conforming the qualification and provides healthy and non-hazardous working conditions.

Art.51. (1) Citizens shall have the right to social security and welfare aid.

Art.52. (1) Citizens shall have the right to medical insurance guaranteeing them affordable medical care, and to free medical care

(5) The state shall exercise control over all medical facilities and over the production and trade in pharmaceuticals, biologically active substances and medical equipment.

Art.53. (1) Everyone shall have the right to education.

(2) School attendance up to the age of 16 shall be compulsory.

(3) Primary and secondary education in state and municipal schools shall be free. In circumstances established by law, the higher educational establishments shall provide education free of charge.

Art. 57. (1) The fundamental civil rights shall be irrevocable.

The Bulgarian legislation covers the main areas in the realization of the Constitution. With relation to the present report, the following laws, codes and regulations will be considered:

LAWS

CHILD PROTECTION ACT

(Prom. State Gazette, 48/2000, amend: SG 20/2007)

Art.1. (2) The state shall protect and guarantee the basic rights of the child in all spheres of the public life, for all groups of children according to their age, social status, physical, health and psychic state, as well as provide to everybody an appropriate economic, social and cultural environment, education, freedom of convictions and security

Measures for protection are:

Art. 4. (amend., SG 36/03) (1) The protection of the child under this law shall be implemented through:

1. assistance, support and services in family environment;
2. accommodation in a family of relatives or close friends;
3. adoption;
4. accommodation in receiving family;
5. accommodation in a specialized institution;
6. police protection.
7. specialized protection in public places;
8. information about the rights and obligations of the children and parents;
9. provision of preventive measures for security and protection of the child;
10. provision of legal assistance by the state;
11. special care for the children with lesions;
12. (new – SG 59/07, in force from 24.07.2007) undertaking of provisional measures for protection of a child in cases and under the provisions of Art. 12 of the Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and cooperation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children, drawn up in Hague on 19 October 1996 (ratified by a law – SG 09/06) (SG 15/07), herein after referred to as "The Convention of 1996".

LAW FOR THE FAMILY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

In force from 01.04.2002, amend. SG 113/2007

This law shall provide the conditions for acquiring the right to family support at pregnancy, birth and bringing up children, the forms and the order for conceding them.

The family support under this law shall be:

- (3) monthly support for a child till graduating high school but not more than 20 years of age;
- (4) monthly support for bringing up of a child till one year of age;
- (5) purposed support for school-children

The aids are received by the parents, relatives or the adoptive family where the child has got into according to the Child Protection Act.

LAW OF INTEGRATION OF THE PEOPLE WITH HANDICAPS

In Force from 1st of January 2005, No108/2007

Art. 16. (1) Teams for complex pedagogic assessment and integrated training of the children with handicaps shall be established at the regional inspectorates of the Ministry of Education and Science.

(2) Resource centers for integrated training shall be established at the Ministry of Education and Science for supporting the integrated training of the children with handicaps.

Art. 17. The Ministry of Education and Science shall ensure:

(1) training of the children with handicaps of pre-school and school age at the schools of art. 26, para 1, items 1 – 10 of the Law of public education and at the kindergartens of art. 18 of the same law.

(2) supporting environment for integrated training of the children with handicaps;

(3) early auditory – speech, logopedic and psychological rehabilitation and rehabilitation of blind and weak-eyed children;

(4) textbooks, study aids, modern technologies and technical means for training of the children with handicaps up to 18 years of age or till finishing of secondary education;

(5) Professional training of the children with handicaps.

LAW OF FIGHTING THE ILLEGAL TRAFFIC OF PEOPLE

Prom. SG. 46/20 May 2003, amend. SG. 86/28 Oct 2005

Art. 21. On receiving information regarding a child - victim of the illegal traffic of people, the bodies of art. 2 shall be obliged to inform immediately the State Agency for protection of the Child, which shall undertake the respective measures according to the Law of protection of the child.

Art. 22. The children - victims of the illegal traffic of people, shall be accommodated in individual rooms, separately from the persons of age.

Art. 23. Provided for children - victims of illegal traffic of people, shall be education in the state or municipal schools in the country under the conditions and by the order of the Law of the national education.

LAW FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Amend. SG 113/2007

Art. 2. The system of the public education shall include kindergartens, schools and servicing units.

Art. 4. (1) The citizens shall have right to education. They can constantly increase their education and qualification.

(2) No restrictions or privileges shall be admitted based on race, nationality, sex, ethnic or social origin, religion or public position.

Art. 5. The education shall be secular.

Art. 6. The education in the state and in the municipal schools shall be free of charge.

Art. 7. (1) The school education up to 16 years of age shall be compulsory.

(2) (amend. SG 36/98) The school education shall start at 7 years of age, rounded in the year of starting the first class. In first class can go children, rounded 6 years and their mental and physical development, by discretion of their parents or their guardians, permit this.

Art. 15. The state education requirements shall determine the levels of the necessary general education and professional training and create conditions for:

(1) (Amend., SG 90/02) creating of free, moral and initiative personality, who as a Bulgarian citizen respects the laws, the other's rights, their language, religion and culture;

- (2) Satisfying the individual interests and needs and acquiring of wide general culture;
 - (3) Mastering of basic scientific notions and principles for integrating past experience with new knowledge from different spheres of science and practice;
 - (4) Choice of options for training and professional qualification according to the capacity of the students and the school, chosen by them;
 - (5) Development of the material, the cultural and the ecological environment of the kindergartens, the schools and the servicing units.
- Art. 16. (amend. SG 36/98) The state education requirements shall refer to:
the pre-school education and training;

KINDERGARTENS

Art. 18.(1) The kindergartens shall be for children from age of 3 years till their enrolment in the first grade.

Art. 19. (1) (amend. SG 36/98) The upkeep of the children in the state and municipal kindergartens shall be covered respectively by the state or the municipal budget.

(2) The parents shall pay fees in extent, determined by the municipal council, in compliance with the Law of local taxes and fees.

Art. 20. The preparation of the children for school one year before their admission in the first year shall be obligatory and shall be implemented at the preparatory groups in the kindergartens or preparatory classes at the school, whereas the parents or the guardians shall be exempt from fees.

Art. 20a. (1) The entering of children in the kindergartens shall be by the choice and by the wish of the parents or guardians, with exception of the cases of art. 20, para 1.

(2) In the cases of art. 20, para 1 the parents or the guardians can choose a preparatory group or a class carrying out the preparation of the children.

Art. 21. Children with special educational needs and/or with chronic diseases shall enter the kindergartens under art. 18.

(2) Obligation of the kindergartens under para 1 shall be to admit children with special educational needs and/or with chronic diseases.

STATE BUDGET OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA ACT

In force from 01.01.2008 Prom. State Gazette 113/12.2007

III. TRANSFERS (SUBSIDIES, CONTRIBUTION) – NET

Granted to:		BGN thousand
1.3.4.	Ministry of Education and Science	2 620,0

Art. 6 (1) Determines the revenue of the amount BGN 1 036 667, 8 thousand, expenditure in the amount of 6 427 936,8 thousand, transfers (net) in the amount of BGN 367 098,8 thousands, subsidies from (payments to) the central budget in the amount of BGN 5,813,63.5 thousand, the surplus/deficit and the financing in the amount of BGN 55 262,7 thousand of the public authorities, ministries and administration for 2008, as follows:

No	Public authorities, ministers, Administrations	Revenue	Expenditure	Transfers (net)	Subsidies from /payments to/ the central budget	Surplus (+)/ Deficit (-)	Financing
9.	Ministry of education and science	14 200,0	357 209,9	-403 043,2	746 053,1		
11.	State Agency for Child Protection	3,6	1 949,8		1 946,2		

LABOR CODE

In force from 01.01.1987, amend. SG 104/2007

Inadmissibility of Overtime Work

Art. 147. (1) Overtime work shall be not permitted for:

(3). mothers of children up to 6 years of age, as well as mothers raising handicapped children regardless of the latter's age, except with their own consent;

Leave for Pregnancy, Birth and Adoption

Art. 163. Female employees shall be entitled to a leave for pregnancy and birth amounting to 315 days for each child, of which 45 days shall obligatorily be used before the childbirth.

Paid Leave for Raising a Young Child up to 2 years of age (amend., SG 25/2001)

Art. 164. (1) After the leave for pregnancy, childbirth or adoption has been used, in case the child is not placed in a child-care establishment, the female employee shall be entitled to an additional leave for raising a first, second, and third child until they reach 2 years of age, and 6 months for each subsequent child.

(3) With the consent of the mother (adoptive mother), the leave under para 1 shall be granted to the father (adoptive father) or to one of their parents in case they work under an employment relationship.

(4) For the time of the leave under the preceding paragraphs, the mother (adoptive mother) or the person who has taken over the raising of the child shall be paid a cash indemnity under terms and in amounts specified by a separate law. The time of the leave shall be recognized as length of service.

FAMILY CODE

Prom. SG. 41/1985, amend. SG 59/2007

Protection of the family

Art. 5. The society and the state shall provide conditions for development of the family, shall encourage the child birth, shall protect and encourage motherhood and support the parents in their raising and upbringing of the children. They shall take care for the preparation of the young people for married life.

Care for the family

Art. 18. The spouses shall be obliged, through mutual understanding and common efforts, and according to their abilities, property and income, to provide the welfare of the family and to take care of the raising, upbringing and support of the children.

Care of the parents for the children

Art. 68. (1) The parents shall be obliged to care for their children and to prepare them for socially useful activity.

(2) The step-father and the step-mother shall be obliged to assist the parent in fulfillment of these obligations.

Place of residence of the children

Art. 71. (1) Underage children shall live with their parents unless important reasons require their living elsewhere. In case of departure from this obligation, at the request of the parents, the regional court at the place of their residence, upon hearing out the child, if he/she has accomplished ten years of age, shall issue an order for his return to his/her parents. This order can be appealed against before the chairman of the district court, but the appeal shall not stop the execution. The order shall be executed through administrative channels.

(2) If the parents do not live together and they cannot reach an agreement on where their children will live the dispute shall be settled by the regional court at the place of residence of the children, after being heard out, if they have accomplished ten years of age. The decision can be appealed against by the general order.

Support of children by parents

Art. 82. (1) The parents shall owe support to their underage children regardless of whether they are able to work or they can support themselves from their property.

REGULATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW OF CHILD PROTECTION

Prom. SG. 66/2003, amend. SG 84/2007

Conditions and order of granting aid

Art. 46. (1) Financial aid and/or aid in kind may be granted for support of the child and the family.

(2) The aid under para 1 shall be designated for prevention and re-integration, the raising of the child by close friends and relatives and in receiving families.

(3) The financial aid under para 1 shall be:

1. monthly;

2. one-time.

(4) Basis for determining the financial aid and the aid in kind shall be the guaranteed minimal income determined by the Council of Ministers pursuant to art. 12, para 3 of the law of the social support.

Art. 57b. (New – SG, 93/2006, in force from 0.01.2007) For every child, accommodated in a professional receiving family, a contract shall be concluded pursuant to art.27, para 4 from Child Protection Act.

Art. 57c. ((New – SG, 93/2006, in force from 0.01.2007) (1) The amount of the basic monthly labor remuneration of the professional receiving family is determined as follows:

(1). Accommodation of one child – 13 % of the minimal salary for the country;

(2). Accommodation of two children – 14 % of the minimal salary for the country;

(3). Accommodation of three or more children – 15 % of the minimal salary for the country.

REGULATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT

In force from 01.11.1998 г., amend. SG 101/2007

Art. 9. (1) Right to monthly support shall have persons or families whose income for the preceding month is lower than the determined differentiated minimal income.

(3) (amend. SG 31/05) The differentiated minimal income shall be determined as follows:

(8) for a child from 0 to 16 years of age and if he studies – till graduation of secondary or professional education, but not more than 20 years of age – 75 percent of GMI, and if he is from 7 to 16 years of age and does not study – 37 percent of GMI;

(9). for an orphan child; for a child accommodated in a family of close friends or relatives or in receiving family under art. 26 of the Law of protection of the child; for a child with permanent damage – 100 percent of GMI;

(10). for a parent bringing up alone child/children:

a) up to 3 years of age – 120 percent of GMI;

(11). for pregnant women 45 days before childbirth and for a parent bringing up a child up to 3 years of age – 100 percent of GMI.

REGULATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

APPROVED WITH A DECREE No23/1974 BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, amend SG 47/2005.

Art. 125. (1) For supporting the families to bring up small children and ensure them normal physical and mental development, regular and seasonal nurseries are established.

(2) For implementation of the activities following paragraph 1, private and seasonal nurseries are established, pursuant to Art. 25c in the Law for public health.

Чл. 126. The minister of Health approved the regulations for the organization and function of the nurseries.

On the grounds of the Regulations for implementation of the Law for public education:

Art. 27. (1) The kindergartens are: full day, half day, weekly

(2) (amend. SG 33/03) Half day, preparatory or seasonal groups for children of pre-school age can be organized in kindergartens or at schools.

Kindergartens from art. 27, para 1, item 1 up to 4 children with special education needs shall be accepted in a group.

Art.30 /4/ Additional pedagogical and other services shall be offered against payment at parents' or guardians' will, accordingly children's needs and interests.

Art. 38 /1/ For children that have to be admitted in 1st grade and do not speak Bulgarian language and/or do not have readiness for school admission, preparatory class shall be established.

Art 69 /3/ Logopaedic offices and offices for hearing, speaking and sight rehabilitation can be opened at kindergartens and schools in coordination with the financing body under conditions and by an order determined by the Minister of Education and Science, the head of the inspection for the education or the mayor of the municipality.

Art. 124. (1) A diploma for graduated degree of higher education "bachelor", "master" or "specialist" shall be required for occupying the posts "teacher" and "instructor".

(4) The conditions and the order of taking the occupations in the system of the national education related to the instructive, educational, diagnostic, corrective and rehabilitational activity with children and students shall be determined according to the state educational requirements for the pre-school instruction and training, for acquiring qualification on professions, for the education of children with chronic diseases and/or specific educational needs and for out of class and out of school activity.

Art. 132. The children in the kindergarten shall be raised, educated and instructed in conditions which guarantee:

1. equal chance of physical, spiritual and social development;
2. their rights, freedom and safety;
3. respect for their dignity, respect and love for the child;
4. education in the spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance;
5. affiliation to the national traditions and cultural values.

II. Higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria

General characteristics of the transition

During the last 10-15 years, the transformations in the society lead to renewal in the education, related to certain objectively well-grounded reasons:

1. The economical, political and socio-cultural transformations put their corrective in the educational development.
2. Building new model of education is in compliance with the professional structure of the society and the needs of the society development.
3. Searching for optimization and mobility of Bulgarian education for effective integration into the European structures.
4. The target is forming generations of a new type, based on the quality of the Bulgarian educational system that can be realized in the civil society and in conditions of European integration.

The reasons for the transformations also have an impact on:

1. Demographic development (see the data from the National Statistical Institute below):
 - negative population growth;
 - reducing the birth-rate;
 - aging of the population;
 - reducing the childhood population.
 - Increasing the number of population in the bigger cities, especially in the capital.
 - Closing and transforming preschools and primary schools in the small towns and villages
 - Increasing the number of children in the preparatory groups and preparatory classes in the big cities and in the capital (the quota is 12 to 22 children in one group, now there are groups with more than 35 children);
 - Insufficient buildings for preschools.
2. Reflux from the teacher profession due to:
 - Low salaries and high number of children in the groups in the big cities;
 - Unemployment in the small towns and villages;
3. The “export” of young pedagogical personnel abroad, where they can grow in experience due to the fact that they have achieved high professional competencies and skills in the Bulgarian universities.
4. Tendencies of migration among the youths;

The general characteristics of the transformations influence on the appearance of the higher education. Reconsidering the goals of education has to be done both for global and national specific operational goals.

The global goals outline the humanization of the society, the integrative processes for achieving positive pedagogical practices in the European countries and their constructive reconsideration in the local conditions.

In the reality of the Bulgarian education, the achievement of the national goals reveals achievements connected with the children’s rights, democratization of the managing processes, motivation of the pedagogical labour, professional qualification and evaluation of the quality of the pedagogical interactions at preschool and school.

The specific operational goals of the education are used for developing the specific state educational standards.

Data from National Statistical Institute, Bulgaria

BIRTH RATE OF THE POPULATION

During 2006, 74 495 children were born, 73978 (or 99.3%) from which born alive. Compared to the previous year, the number of children born alive has increased to 2 903. The birth rate ratio (the number of children born alive per every 1000 people of the average annual number of the population) is 9.6 ‰.

From all children born alive during 2006, 38 108 are boys, 35 870 – girls, or for every 1000 boys, there are 941 girls.

In the cities born alive children are 55 043, countrywide they are 18 935, or per every 1000 people in the cities there are 10.1 children born alive but for every 1000 rural people – 8.3 children born alive.

At the present moment the birth rate in Bulgaria is at the level of the birth rate in some European countries⁴ such as Italy, Greece, Hungary, Austria, Poland and Switzerland. With lower birth rate there are countries such as Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia – around 9.0‰. For most of the other European countries however, the birth rate is up to 10 ‰, as the highest level is in Ireland (14.7‰) and France (12.9‰).

Birth rate and population growth

Year	Birth rate (1000 people)	Population growth (1000 people)	Total fertility rate ⁵
1990	12.1	-0.4	1.81
1995	8.6	-5.0	1.23
2000	9.0	-5.1	1.27
2001	8.6	-5.6	1.24
2002	8.5	-5.8	1.21
2003	8.6	-5.7	1.23
2004	9.0	-5.2	1.29
2005	9.2	-5.4	1.31
2006	9.6	-5.1	1.38

During the recent years a tendency for increasing of the absolute and relative share of the extramarital births has been observed. Their relative share of 38.4% during 2000 increased to 49.0% in 2005. During 2006 the number of the extramarital children born alive is 37 572 or 50.8%. The high extramarital birth rate could be explained with the considerable increase of the cohabitation number among the young people without legal marriage contract. There are existing data for the father in 60% of the extramarital births which means that not all children live out of the family environment. The father is “unknown” only in 20.3% of the number of all born alive children.

General mortality rate, infant mortality and untimely mortality rate

Year	General mortality rate ‰	Infant mortality ⁷ -‰	Untimely mortality rate ⁸ -%
1990	12.5	14.8	29.7
1995	13.6	14.8	28.3

2000	14.1	13.3	25.0
2001	14.2	14.4	25.2
2002	14.3	13.3	24.5
2003	14.3	12.3	24.3
2004	14.2	11.6	24.9
2005	14.6	10.4	24.6
2006	14.7	9.7	24.6

As the infant mortality rate attained high level of 117.5‰ in 1997, in 2005 it started to decrease continuously to 10.4‰. In 2006, 720 children died at up to 1 year of age, as the infant mortality rate was 9.7‰.

Population growth

The difference between born and deceased people represents the population growth. Since from 1990 on the number of deceased has exceeded the number of born people, the result is a continuous reduction of the population.

In 2006 the absolute number of the population growth is minus 39 460 people. The population growth ratio is minus 5.1‰⁹. It has very high negative value in the villages – minus 12.4‰, while in the cities it is minus 2.1‰.

NURSERY GROUPS AND CHILD ATTENDANCE

FOR THE PERIOD 2000-2006¹

Published on May 23rd 2007.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Nurseries	636	630	631	637	638	641	668
Vacancies at December 31st	21 296	21 174	21 516	21 542	21 850	22 094	23 478
In the cities/towns	19 255	19 035	19 448	19 411	19 214	19 990	21 361
Countrywide	2 041	2 139	2 068	2 131	2 636	2 104	2 117
Children Enrolled	21 001	22 071	22 582	21 144	22 136	22 675	24 082
Attendance at December 31st	20 149	21 167	21 816	21 029	22 155	22 993	25 040
At age:							
Up to 1 year of age	132	114	114	133	129	70	88
From 1 to 2 years of age	5 588	5 801	6 372	5 926	6 428	6 617	7 025
Over 2 to 3 years of age	13 052	13 907	14 066	13 680	14 397	15 208	16 892
Over 3 years of age	1 377	1 345	1 264	1 290	1 201	1 098	1 035

¹ Including nursery groups in the preschools

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE CENTERS

FOR THE PERIOD 2000-2006

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Health and social care centers	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Vacancies at 31.12.	4 726	4 720	4 037	4 072	4 066	4 045	3 988
Children							
at the beginning of the year	3 544	3 375	3 243	3 139	2 907	2 888	2 960
Attended	3 446	3 308	2 829	2 479	2 324	2 347	2 344
Left	3 525	3 339	2 850	2 619	2 254	2 199	2 161
Dead	90	101	83	92	89	76	80
Attended at Dec. 31	3 375	3 243	3 139	2 907	2 888	2 960	3 063

Published on May 23rd 2007

Based on 2006 official data from the National Statistical Institute, the following tendencies are observed:

- the nursery groups have increased with 668;
- the vacancies there have increased up to 23478 (mostly in towns);
- the number of the enrolled children has increased up to 25 040.
- the health and social centers have reduced their vacancies down to 3988, as there are 3063 children in these centers.

There are two types of nurseries – daily and weekly (with sleeping accommodation). They are under the direction of Ministry of Health. For each nursery group there is a pedagogue appointed, who is responsible for arranging, planning and managing the educational activities of the children. In practice, these obligations are accomplished by a nurse. In principle, the director of the nursery is a senior nurse.

The nurseries accept children from 10 months to 3 years of age. In practice, the children enter the nurseries after they learn how to walk.

The educational training is implemented by special “Educational program for working with children at 3 years at age“, approved by Ministry of Education and harmonized with the Ministry of Health.

Children development is evaluated by a Bulgarian method (authors: V.Manova – Tomova) developed for children up to 1 and up to 3 years of age.

The centers for health and social care for children are under the control by the Ministry of Education as well. They accept abandoned children-orphan and children from large families. Some of the children are for bringing up, others are for adoption. The director of the center is a doctor, while the personnel are usually nurses. The educational activities are implemented by pedagogues but the evaluation for the mental development is done by a psychologist. Also, there are rehabilitation therapists appointed. In the centers there are two departments: for healthy children and for children with heavy abnormalities. At pre-

sent a reform is being implemented with a focus on the social development of the children and educational activities.

The pedagogues working in the nursery groups are well trained and have diplomas obtained for graduated degree of higher education from certain medical and pedagogical universities.

The data from the centers for health and social care shows that the children, abandoned in 2001 were 3563 and this number reduced with 503 to 2960 in 2005. Compared to 2004, the abandoned children have increased with 72. This increasing tendency can be featured for the next few years as well for the following reasons:

1. Social and economical

- Low remuneration
- Poor living conditions
- Unemployment of the parents
- Low capacity of the parents

2. Medical

- chronic diseases of the parents
- child disease, requiring specialized medical care
- violence over the child in all varieties – from neglecting to sexual maltreatment
- refusal from taking care of the child and giving consent for adoption

In the centers for health and social care for children the following tendencies can be observed:

1. There is an increase in the relative share of the abandoned children /2004-2005/. A real chance for realization have these children that are waiting for adoption and an insignificant part of the children that will be reintegrated in a receiving family.

2. It is advisable that the social work be directed towards prevention of abandonment and for social, pedagogical and economical help and support for reintegration of the abandoned children in receiving families or relatives.

3. The experts in the centers for health and social care to go through a special training for “aiding interaction” in order to support the processes of prevention and elimination of children abandonment in an institution.

An alternative of accommodation in an institution could be arranged by the public organizations trained for social work with abandoned children, adopting families and also institutions where the created atmosphere is very close to a typical family environment.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BY TYPE AND FORM

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
TOTAL	6 791	6 746	6 534	6 648	6 638	6 750	5 838
Preschools	3 249	3 242	3 127	3 278	3 301	3 331	5 2470
Mainstream and special schools	2 981	2 948	2 852	2 823	2 784	2 757	6 2654
Primary (I-	379	372	325	315	295	277	252

IV grade) 1							
Secondary (I-VIII grade)	1 966	1 950	1 901	1 892	1 877	1 872	1 791
Private preschools	18	22	20	24	26	34	32

STUDENTS STUDYING ON THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STANDART CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED-97)

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
TOTAL	1522401	1474077	1475262	1451284	1419405	1398751	1381948
Early childhood education (ISCED-0)	200 449	199 206	201 317	201 145	202 803	206 243	206 745
Primary education (grades I-IV ISCED-1)1	374 361	349 616	333 016	314 221	290 017	273 045	267 584
Private preschools	318	458	555	605	708	952	1011

TEACHERS STUDYING ON THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STANDART CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED-97)

Year	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
TOTAL	126 048	126 248	121 672	122 986	122 002	122 339	119 694
Early childhood education (ISCED-0)	18 693	18 637	18 276	18 675	18 893	19 254	19 305
Primary education (grades I-IV, ISCED-1)1	22 618	22 208	19 775	19 089	18 182	17 668	17 054
Private kindergartens	51	70	72	96	120	121	148

4.1 PRESCHOOLS

DECREE № 4 for early childhood education

/Issued by the Minister of Education and Science, State gazette, No89, 3 Oct., 2000)

PART I

General conditions

Art.1. (New - State gazette No. 70, 2005) This order defines the National educational standards for early childhood education and preparation of children for the primary school.

Art.2. (New - State gazette No. 70, 2005) The preparatory group/class curricula includes/covers attainable knowledge, skills and attitudes, resulted from the early education and care (from 3 to 7 years old) on certain educational directions and are conformed with the cultural and educational subjects by Art. 10 from the Law for the educational levels, general education minimum and school curricula.

Art.3. The requirements for the school curricula on Art. 2 includes general and specific knowledge and skills depending on the purpose of the educational directions.

PART II

Art.4. The curricula in the different educational directions is distributed as follows:

1. Bulgarian Language and Literature (application № 1);
2. Mathematics (appl. № 2);
3. Orientation in the social world (appl. № 3);
4. Orientation in the nature (appl. № 4);
5. Fine Arts (appl. № 5);
6. Sport activity (appl. № 6);
7. Music (appl. № 7);
8. Construction and technical activities (appl. № 8);
9. Learning through play (appl. № 9).

Art.5 (New – State gazette No. 70, 2005) The knowledge, skills and attitudes of the children as expected results from education in the educational directions and age groups, are specified with the curricula for early childhood education and with the school curricula for compulsory preparatory group/preparatory class.

PRESCHOOLS IN BULGARIA - 2004

Type of the preschool	Preschools	Vacancies		Pedagogical staff		Groups	Children	
		Total	For 100 children	Total	Incl. preschool teachers		Total	Including girls
Total	3301	224717	110,81	18893	17790	9258	202803	98134
01 Regular	3291	224489	110,77	18873	17770	9248	202668	98059
02 Full day	2438	200013	109,91	17343	16272	8007	181973	87986
03 Health	6	448	85,01	50	46	24	527	262
04 Special	13	880	100,69	209	199	76	874	329
05 Weekly	25	1979	99,7	197	182	95	1985	932
07 Half-day	809	21169	122,3	1074	1071	1046	17309	8550
08 Seasonal	10	228	168,89	20	20	10	135	75

AGE RATE OF CHILDREN IN THE PRESCHOOLS – 2004

Type of preschool	Total	At age (years):						
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total	202803	8731	39298	48724	52935	52467	606	42
01 Regular	202668	8720	39272	48685	52898	52445	606	42
02 Full day	181973	8458	38091	46344	47956	40767	347	10
03 Health	527	24	113	155	141	93	0	1
04 Special	874	19	102	177	273	217	70	16
05 Weekly	1985	75	387	585	517	416	5	0
07 Half-day	17309	144	579	1424	4011	10952	184	15
08 Seasonal	135	11	26	39	37	22	0	0

PEDAGOGICAL STAFF IN THE PRESCHOOLS – 2004

Type of preschool	Total	Female	Principals	Preschool teachers				
				Total		Including:		
				Total	including not fully qualified teachers	Principals also working as teachers	Music tutor	Mentors
Total	18893	18847	1103	17790	60	1352	535	108
01 Regular	18873	18827	1103	17770	60	1351	535	108
02 Full day	17343	17304	1071	16272	53	1333	523	71
03 Health	50	50	4	46	0	1	1	3
04 Special	209	209	10	199	1	3	4	23
05 Weekly	197	197	15	182	0	8	4	2
07 Half-day	1074	1067	3	1071	6	6	3	9

08 Seasonal	20	20	0	20	0	1	0	0
PRESCHOOLS IN BULGARIA - 2005								
Type of preschool	Preschools	Vacancies		Pedagogical staff		Groups	Children	
		Total	For 100 children	Total	Including preschool teachers		Total	Including girls
Total	3331	228146	110,62	19254	18125	9496	206243	99944
01 Regular	3329	228051	110,61	19246	18117	9492	206170	99909
02 Full day	2421	201617	109,81	17589	16491	8113	183608	88996
03 Health	6	438	86,73	52	48	25	505	266
04 Special	12	812	99,63	200	191	72	815	321
05 Weekly	24	2050	100,99	211	196	95	2030	919
07 Half-day	866	23134	120,41	1194	1191	1187	19212	9407
08 Seasonal	2	95	130,14	8	8	4	73	35
AGE RATE OF CHILDREN IN THE PRESCHOOLS - 2005								
Type of preschool	Total	At age (years):						
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total	206243	7940	40435	46046	52234	58945	555	88
01 Regular	206170	7938	40413	46036	52215	58943	537	88
02 Full day	183608	7731	39203	44022	47530	44870	246	6
03 Health	505	11	98	123	147	119	6	1
04 Special	815	6	99	161	256	227	51	15
05 Weekly	2030	64	441	513	560	442	10	0
07 Half-day	19212	126	572	1217	3722	13285	224	66
08 Seasonal	73	2	22	10	19	2	18	0
PEDAGOGICAL STAFF IN THE PRESCHOOLS – 2005								
Type of preschool	Total	Female	Principals	Preschool teachers				
				Total		Including:		
				Total	including not fully qualified teachers	Principals also working as teachers	Music tutor	Mentors
Total	19254	19204	1129	18125	76	1305	534	124
01 Regular	19246	19196	1129	18117	76	1304	534	124
02 Full day	17589	17550	1098	16491	58	1288	522	89
03 Health	52	52	4	48	0	1	0	4
04 Special	200	198	9	191	0	2	3	21
05 Weekly	211	211	15	196	0	8	3	2

PRESCHOOLS IN BULGARIA – 2006

Type of preschool	Preschools	Places		Pedagogical staff		Preschool groups	Children	
		Total	For 100 children	Total	incl. preschool teachers		Total	incl. girls
01 Regular	2467	225860	109,28	19295	18153	9483	206671	99801
02 Full day	2418	200454	108,61	17686	16573	8160	184562	89077
03 Health	5	445	92,71	47	44	24	480	239
04 Special	10	748	93,62	185	177	66	799	297
05 Weekly	23	2013	97,81	212	197	93	2058	900
07 Half-day	11	22200	118,26	1165	1162	1140	18772	9288
08 Seasonal	3	114	154,05	10	10	5	74	33

AGE RATE OF CHILDREN IN THE PRESCHOOLS – 2006

Type of preschool	Total	At age (years)							
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Total	206745	8404	42421	47162	49645	58490	591	32	
01 Regular	206671	8399	42397	47150	49632	58476	585	32	
02 Full day	184562	8156	41153	45075	45293	44534	344	7	
03 Health	480	11	104	127	106	126	5	1	
04 Special	799	9	106	171	249	201	50	13	
05 Weekly	2058	59	437	540	522	493	7	0	
07 Half-day	18772	164	597	1237	3462	13122	179	11	
08 Seasonal	74	5	24	12	13	14	6	0	

PEDAGOGICAL STAFF IN THE PRESCHOOLS – 2006

	Total	Female	Principals	Preschool teachers				
				Total		Including:		
				Total	including not fully qualified teachers	Principals also working as teachers	Music tutors	Mentors
Total	19305	19248	1142	18163	65	1288	535	103
01 Regular	19295	19238	1142	18153	65	1286	535	103
02 Full day	17686	17640	1113	16573	54	1269	521	75
03 Health	47	47	3	44	0	1	0	4
04 Special	185	183	8	177	0	1	3	19
05 Weekly	212	212	15	197	0	8	4	2

07 Half-day	1165	1156	3	1162	11	7	7	3
08 Seasonal	10	10	0	10	0	2	0	0

Other personnel in the preschools:

	Total	Female	Regular	Seasonal
2004	17660	15810	17646	14
2005	17940	16122	17932	8
2006	17874	16048	17865	9

Ratio of enrollment of the population in the early education¹

2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007
73,6	73,7	73,9

The ratio has been calculated in percents as number of children in the age group 3-6 attending kindergartens, divided to total number of children in the same age group.

As seen in the statistics, the number of the preschools from 2004 to 2006 has reduced considerably (from 3301 to 2470), as the number of children has increased which influences on the quota for the children in the groups, appointed by the Ministry of education and thus surcharges the professional obligations of the teachers.

Year	Preschools	Places	Children
2004	3301	224 717	202 803
2005	3331	228 146	206 243
2006	2470	225 974	206745

The number of children in the health and social preschools has reduced, which is connected with the Regulation for Integration of children with special educational needs.

The total number of the pedagogical personnel has increased (principals, teachers, music tutors, etc): 2004 – 18 893; 2005 – 19254; 2006 – 19305.

The number of non-graduated teachers in early education is very small - 2004 – 60; 2005 – 76; 2006 – 65.

4.2. Expert evaluation for the transformations in the early childhood education

(based on the study of BG-OMEP)

Review from the inquiry conducted among the principals and teachers in the preschools regarding the new normative documentation

Question 1: Which of the normative changes in the early childhood education do you refer to the optimization of the preschool activities?

- Elaboration of state educational standards for early childhood education (Regulation № 4), 2000, amend. 2005
- Regulation № 4 of Ministry of Health, 2007
- State framework program for school and preschool education and care development
- Opportunity for teachers' career development
- Opportunities for participation in various educational projects and programs
- Timely introduction with the new working approaches and programs
- Compulsory preparatory group/class.
- Curricula for the preparatory group at school
- Delegated budget of the preschool
- Differential remuneration of the teachers
- Variety of program textbooks
- Methodological tools for measuring children's achievements

Question 2: Which are the main problems during the application of the normative requirements, related to:

2.1. Standards:

- Lack of unified tools for evaluation
- Lack of exact criterion scale for assessment of the results on the State educational standards.
- Need for unified standards for evaluation of the child development
- Lack of system for internal/external evaluation by unified tools and methods
- High number of children in the groups, which hinders the measurement of their academical level of development

2.2. Programs:

- Need of new curricula (age 3-6);
- Accessible consultations on the problems and the implementation of the new programs and curricula;
- Need for training on all programs before choosing the particular working program;
- Lack of elaborated tools for each program
- Establishment of new programs without knowing their content
- Need for program and curricula updating
- Need for approval of unified working program for all educational institutions
- Need for establishment a single program for early childhood education, approved by Ministry of Education, assuring succession in the curricula for all children – in the preschool and primary school.
- Lack of modern didactical literature and tools
- Need for elaboration of curricula for children at age of 3-5, corresponding to the State educational standards, by Regulation № 4 from Ministry of Education

2.3. Budget:

- Management of the delegated budget;
- Minimum funds for implementation of the educational activities
- for replacement of the teachers in leave
- for renovation of the didactical materials and technical equipment
- for organization of events, celebrations, entertainment and club activities
- Need for training on management of the delegated budgets
- Very low upkeep for child upbringing

- Unclearness for delegated budgets application;
- Very low payment conditions

2.4. Interactions between the institutions

- Lack of equipment for communication in the preschools and lack of foreign language skills
- Inappropriate and underqualified persons holding key positions in the administration
- Lack of information and coordination between the Regional Inspectorates at Ministry of Education, municipality and preschool
- Need for encouraging and improvement of the interactions between the institutions for exchanging experience, ideas, approaches and well working practices.

2.5. Others

- Lack of interest among the young people for the job of preschool teacher
- Inconsistency in the normative and sub-normative orders

Question 3: How can the education in Bulgaria absorb structural funds from the European Union? (Expert opinion from Regional Inspectorates at Ministry of Education – Sliven)

After the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union, the country will have the opportunity to absorb the funding, granted from the Structural funds, namely: European Social Fund (ESF), The Cohesion Fund (CF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The absorption of these funds can be done by seven operative programs, approved by the government and European commission, as European Social Fund is the fund which provides the largest amount of program funds in the area of education and training. The goals are: introducing reforms in the educational and training system supporting the labor market and continuous career development of the teaching staff, while focusing on the innovations and economics, based on knowledge. For achievement of these goals an operative program “Human resource development” is established, which is of a great importance for people working in the education area. For this program 1.2 billion Euros are provided. The management of this program is structured by the following manner: managing body is the Ministry of labor and social policy (MLSP), the intermediate units is: The ministry of Education and Science, The Employment Agency and the Agency for Social Support. Committee for program observation is established which includes representatives from state institutions, non-governmental organizations, syndicates, etc.

“Human resource development” operative program contains eight priorities. Priorities 3 and 4 are the ones that concern education directly, as the Ministry of education is in charge for their successful implementation. The absorption of the funds has to be done on the basis of projects, planned to be proposed from the beneficiaries in the following directions:

Priority 3: The improvement of the quality of education and training in accordance with the requirements of the labor market for developing an economy based on knowledge. Each priority has operational goals and key activities which can be funded.

Operative goal 3.1 is: Improvement of the quality of the educational services. The key activities for project funding are: updating and elaboration of curricula at all educational levels; introducing modern IT technologies in the educational process; improving the

teachers' qualification and establishing system for career development; introducing European system for credit transfer in the higher and professional education.

Operative goal 3.2 is: Modernization of the educational system. The key activities for project funding are: introducing state system for evaluation of the quality of education and training; improvement of the reporting and monitoring, involvement of the community in the process of control and evaluation of the educational services; optimization of the school network; standardization of the qualifications.

Priority 4: Improving the access to education

The operational goal 4.1 is: Access to education and training of disadvantaged groups.

The purpose is to integrate people with special educational needs and people from minority groups, providing them equal access to quality education. The key activities for project funding are: ensuring required educational conditions, supporting environment and recourses for integration of people with special educational needs and implementation of the minority's integration process; enlarging the social system for inclusion of people at risk in the educational process.

III. Preschool teacher education

(The data for the theoretical and practical preparation of the students is based on the schedule of the Faculty of Preschool and Primary school education, Sofia University St. "Kliment Ohridsky"?)

1. Bachelor's degree

The requirements and conditions for admission to the subjects: "Preschool education and foreign language teaching" and "Preschool and primary school education" are described in a Candidate student guide, issued by Sofia University "St.Kliment Ohridski".

Full time – duration: 7 semesters.

Subject: "Early childhood education and foreign language teaching"

total length of the training course – 3105 hours

- Number of lessons: 3105
- Number of exams: 19
- Number of current marks: 27

State exams:

1. State practice in a preschool and primary school – 240 hours
2. Oral and written exam

Subject: "Preschool and primary school education"

Total length of the training course – 3375 hours

- Number of lessons: 3225
- Number of exams: 25
- Number of current marks: 21

State exams:

1. State practice in a preschool and primary school – 240 hours.
2. Oral and written exam

External Education

Subject: "Preschool and primary school education" – duration: 9 semesters

total length of the training course – 1695 hours

- Number of lessons: 1695
- Number of exams: 25
- Number of current marks: 19

State exams:

1. State practice in a preschool and primary school – 100 hours.
2. Oral and written exam

2. Master's degree

The degree program in Pre-school Education and a Foreign Language: trains qualified professionals for the field of pre-school education and foreign language teaching; was

included as an autonomous specialty in the State register of the specialties in 1997 and was accredited in 2003; is conducted on a full-time basis.

Graduates of this program are eligible to organize and conduct instructional process with pre-school children in state, private, specialized and profiled children institutions, as well as to conduct foreign language teaching in English, German, French, Spanish and Russian languages. Graduates can apply for the Master's degree program in Pre-school and Primary School Education, for the Master's degree programs in the Faculty of Classical and New Philology, as well as for Ph.D. studies.

The degree program of Pre-school and Primary School Education

Undergraduate studies are either full-time (a 4-year course) or part-time (a 2- or a 5-year course). Graduates of the program can organize and conduct instructional, educational, methodological, organizational-managerial, expert, advising, diagnostic-prognostic and cultural-enlightening activities in the educational system, in administrative-managerial and cultural institutions, social and sport organizations for pre-school and primary school children. Graduates have the right to continue their studies at master's level in Pre-school and Primary School Education and to apply for Ph.D. programs.

Those who have graduated from a college (a semi-higher education institute) and have the acknowledged educational degree of "specialist" and the qualification of Pre-school Education, Primary School Education, or Pre-school Education and a Foreign Language, are also eligible to apply for the programs. Admission score comprises of: average results from state examinations, average results from semester examinations, and an examination of speech and communication skills. The required application documents are a diploma for degree from a college in any of the above mentioned specialties and student application forms.

The Master's degree program provides an opportunity for further specializing and extending the training which students have received at undergraduate level. Studies are either full-time (2 semesters) or part-time (3 semesters). Students who have a Master's degree share the same rights with those having a Bachelor's degree although they have an advantage in applying for a job. They can also apply for Doctoral studies.

At master's level there are places with state subsidy and places with full tuition fee. The admittance for subsidized places involves an examination in the form of conversation. The right for fee-based study is given to applicants who have completed higher education with average result not lower than Very good 4.50.

The Master's degree program of Pre-school Education

This Master's degree program is designed for students who have a BA degree in Pre-school and Primary School Education or other humanitarian studies. Master's studies are either full-time (2 semesters) or part-time (3 semesters). Application and admittance rules for this program are the same as the described for the Master's degree program in Pre-school and Primary School Education.

After the completion of their Master' degree students have the right to apply for Ph.D. programs.

Those who hold the educational and scientific degrees of Doctor, are eligible to do research and lecturing. The course of study is either full-time or part-time.

The study follows an individual curriculum and finishes with a public defense of the Ph.D. dissertation.

3. Education Fees in the universities

The fees are determined by an ordinance from Council of Ministers from June 01 2006, in the Law for the higher education and the academic council for the current academic year.

Discharged from payment fees are: orphans, people with handicaps and reduced working capacity 70 % and more, war invalids, people brought till full age at orphanages.

4. Research

There is a great number of researches and publications, contributing to improvement of the quality of early childhood education and care for the children. Until the end of 2006, 350 scientist dissertations have been defended at the Specialized Pedagogical council.

On “Theory of education and didactic” direction 135 Ph.D. dissertations have been defended, with 30 of them in the area of Preschool education. Each fifth dissertation by code 05.07.01 is related to preschool education and each third dissertation on the theory of education is targets the preschool age.

The main subjects are the problems for upbringing and education, personality forming, preparation for school and children’s socialization. There are studies about family and school as a factor for education and development; intercultural pedagogy, integration of Roma children, educational activities in the centers for health and social care and orphanages, disadvantaged children, receiving families as an alternative care, etc.

There is insignificant number of researches on the problems on the European Integration, media pedagogy, higher education pedagogy, religious education.

There are new problems and topics such as: Socialization, integrated education, European mobility and transfer, pedagogical problems of the children in the social centers, etc. (Collection: “Social pedagogy, history and practice”, Sofia, 2007; Analysis of the problems in the dissertations on Theory of education and social pedagogy 1996 – 2006, p.88-84)

Scientific conferences contributing to school and faculty teachers’ qualification improvement and related to introducing innovative approaches in education are conducted every year. Some of these conferences are organized by the Faculty on Preschool and Primary education in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky: “Continuity and perspectives in the development of the pedagogical theory and practice. 125 years preschool education in Bulgaria, September 2007; Education and training in the primary schools, preschools and specialized school centers, September 2004; Art and pedagogy, June 2003, etc.

5. Projects and international partnership

In the faculty of Preschool and primary school education projects on different programs have been developed: TEMPUS, PIRLS – Leonardo da Vinci, Network of European Tertiary Level Educators (NETTLE), Socrates/Erasmus, European Linqua Trainer in Adult Education (ELTAE), etc.

It should be mentioned the increased number of national and international projects, implemented by the regional inspectorates at Ministry of Education and a lot of kindergartens countrywide.

Bulgaria is a member of the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education – OMEP. Programs for improvement of the quality of early education and professional development with the participation of 300 teachers are elaborating in 15 regions in Bulgaria.

International partnership with other committees is in process of updating the goals and approaches for pedagogical interaction and searching for new ways for European integration.

6. Priorities in the development of early childhood education and care

- Development of National educational standard for early childhood education in the framework of general educational standard for higher education, successfully applied into the practice.
- The year before entering 1st grade is compulsory and provided by the law.
- Updating and adapting the pedagogical technology for integrated education for children with special educational needs.
- Providing regular and external forms of university education (Bachelor and master degree) for the preschool and primary school teachers.
- Joint development and implementation of projects for partnership in the area of early education and care with other countries, members of the European Union.

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