Teachers for the future:
Meeting teacher shortages to achieve Education for All

National Steering Group, Bulgaria
First Session, Sofia, 12 January 2005

Summary Notes and Decisions

Opening

1. The ILO National Correspondent in Bulgaria welcomed participants on behalf of the Director of the ILO Sub-regional office for Eastern Europe, with special thanks to Drs. Penkova, Director, and Zahariev, designated national coordinator by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for the programme, from the National Institute for Education (NIE), for helping to organize and host the meeting. The purpose of the meeting, with the active participation of teachers’ organizations and private schools, was to launch the national steering group (NSG) for the education sector action programme, to which the MES had made commitments. Though not represented at the meeting, it was hoped that the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy would also participate in future sessions. The ILO offices in Geneva and in Budapest, and the national correspondent, were prepared to support the work of this programme.

2. Dr. Penkova also welcomed the participants, noting that the main actors in Bulgarian education were present; it was particularly encouraging that the Presidents of the unions SEB and PODKREPA had decided to attend, along with representatives of Bulgarian private schools. The NIE was pleased to host the meeting and looked forward to supporting the work decided by the NSG. Dr. Zahariev noted that most participants had already worked together and were familiar with the programme theme and the concepts for guiding work that were suggested by the ILO, which should facilitate decisions. Introductions of participants were then made (list attached).

3. The ILO education sector specialist from Geneva presented the action programme background, including expected activities and potential outputs in Bulgaria, eastern Europe if a decision was made to involve other countries in the region, and internationally. In response to participants’ questions, it was indicated that: a) the main objective of the programme was a national assessment and report as the basis for recommendations on changes in teacher policies in Bulgaria; b) the programme did not involve OECD countries directly, including those from central and eastern Europe, because of a parallel OECD programme on teachers, but the ILO had approached some of these countries for knowledge sharing with countries in the ILO programme; c) involvement of these and other countries in eastern Europe could be envisaged as part of the policy dialogue forum if decided by the NSG; d) reports from many of the European countries participating in the OECD project could be accessed online, and the ILO would communicate the link; and e) Education International (EI) and the World Confederation of Teachers (WCT) to which teachers’ organizations were affiliated had participated in developing the ILO programme.

Priority issues relating to teacher shortages and EFA in Bulgaria

4. Participants identified the following key issues, which needed to be addressed within the action programme:
- upgrading teachers’ skills and qualifications, with special attention to enhancing secondary teachers’ competencies and preparation for higher education through better integration of higher and secondary education programmes;

- achieving a greater balance in the supply of qualified teachers by subject areas (languages, ICT, etc), reducing surpluses in some subjects to offset shortages in others through initial training and retraining of serving teachers, in order to meet changes in educational demand since the establishment of a market economy in the early 1990s;

- low comparative teachers’ salaries overall;

- improved recognition and rewards for teachers achieving Masters degrees compared to those with Bachelors degrees;

- upgrading teachers’ career perspectives and professional development as a further contribution to raising morale;

- better school leadership and support from principals and deputies to enhance effective schooling, teacher performance and morale;

- improved social dialogue on education at national level, especially on future reforms, many of which suffered from a lack of integration in their objectives and coherence with European standards;

- more institutionalised social dialogue, collective bargaining and a possible tripartite council, in higher education.

5. It was agreed that the ILO’s proposed conceptual framework for assessing issues and policy options encompassed most if not all of these issues, and should be the basis for work within Bulgaria. Nevertheless, participants wished to reflect further on possible changes to the framework as a guide for the national report, corresponding to the specific needs of the Bulgarian education system and teaching profession. Chapter III needed to fully assess the range of initial teacher education programmes, and in general, an emphasis on good practices within Bulgaria and from other countries would be welcome. Modifications should be proposed to the ILO and NIE within one month, and final decisions taken at the next meeting.

Plan of action and timeline for activities

6. After discussion on alternatives to carry out the national assessment and produce a report, it was agreed that members of the NSG would select various chapters to concentrate their work, and the NIE would coordinate and produce a draft and final report under the supervision of the NSG. The policy recommendation chapter would be a collective responsibility. By the next meeting, participating members should confirm the chapters on which they wished to work, taking account of any modifications that members proposed and agreed upon by that time or during the second meeting. Teacher organizations were particularly interested in Chapter V. Within its financial capacity for the action programme, the ILO will support costs of the NIE to produce the report on presentation and agreement of a budget.

7. On the question of statistics for the report, it was agreed that official statistics collected by the Government would be used. The ILO will assist with any problems to ensure statistical comparability among different countries in the programme.
8. It was agreed that the National Steering Group would next meet on 9 February 2005, 10 A.M. in the NIE Conference room unless otherwise indicated. The purposes of that meeting would be to:
   a. decide on changes in the conceptual framework to guide work, based on proposals circulated by email (by 31 January);
   b. agree on distribution of tasks for research, investigation or documentation support on the various chapters of the conceptual framework as amended;
   c. decide on a budget for work, notably regarding the policy dialogue forum (paragraph 10 below), including possible dates, venue and national/regional composition of such a forum, for communication to the ILO;
   d. confirm participation of other organizations in the NSG as indicated in the composition of the steering group (paragraph 12 below);
   e. decide on other issues as needed to advance work of the programme.

9. The ILO in Geneva will provide technical and financial support according to its available budget, and consult with the ILO team in Budapest on similar inputs if needed and feasible according to that Office’s capacity. Logistics and communications support to the NSG work will be given through the national correspondent, also within the capacity of her office.

Policy dialogue forum

10. To enhance the value of information exchanges and dialogue, the steering group confirmed the desirability of organizing a national forum on the programme outcomes, which would be open to other EU and OECD countries and organized if possible before the end of 2005. Such a forum might be associated with the 120-year anniversary of teacher education in Bulgaria. Possible dates, venue, composition, including invitations to other countries, and a budget for the forum would be worked out at the next meeting of the NSG. The ILO has agreed to examine support and assist in raising other support (for example through the EU) once such details are known.

NSG Chair and composition

11. The Chair and Convenor of the NSG will be NIE Secretary and the Government’s designated focal point, Dr. Zahariev. There will be no Vice-Chair.

12. The core partners of the NSG are understood to be the Government (MES, NIE and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy should it decide to participate), the teachers’ organizations present at the meeting, and the employers’ organizations present at the meeting, who had been nominated by the Association of the Organisations of Bulgarian Employers (AOBE) to attend on its behalf, along with a representative of the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) who had been invited but was unable to attend. An invitation to join the group would also be extended to the association representing school directors and deputies. Additional education stakeholders will be invited to participate in an

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1 Following the meeting, an official from the Ministry was nominated to participate in future meetings.
2 Following the meeting, Dr. Zahariev was informed by the ILO that, in accordance with the decisions of the Workers’ Group of the ILO Governing Body concerning the programme, the National Trade Union for Education and Science (NTUES) should be invited to join the NSG as from its next meeting.
observer capacity, such as the independent trade union of teachers, if and when the need arises for their inputs.

Closing

13. Ms. Markova thanked participants for a useful meeting, which had helped to identify short- and long-term priorities and means to address the priorities in order to enhance teachers’ development and educational quality in Bulgaria. The ILO looked forward to continued collaboration with the members of the NSG as part of the common objective to help resolve the key problems in this field and to improve social dialogue in the process.

Notes prepared and submitted by the ILO as initial convenor

Geneva and Sofia, January 2005
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List of Participants

Government

Ministry of Education and Science (MES)

Associate Professor Dr. Rossitsa Penkova, Director, National Institute of Education (NIE)
Associate Professor Dr. Zahari Zahariev, Research Secretary, NIE
Mr. Deyan Pilev, Research Scholar, Centre for Higher Education Research, NIE

Ms. Penka Krumova, Director, Division for Teacher’s Qualification Department, MES

Ms. Maja Ivanova, Union of the Employers in the system of Bulgarian Public Education

Associate Professor Roumjana Kusheva, Director, Department of information and in-service teacher training, Sofia University of St. Kliment Ohridski

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)

A representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was invited but was unable to attend

Teachers’ Organisations

Ms. Janka Takeva, President, Sindicat des Enseignants Bulgares (SEB)

Dipl. Eng. Kroum Kroumov, President, PODKREPA Education Union
Ms. Margarita Denkova, Trade Union Secretary, PODKREPA

Associate Professor Dr. Liliana Valcheva, President, National Trade Union for Higher Education and Science (NTUHES – CITUB)
Associate Professor Dr. Todorka Popova, NTUHES – CITUB

Employers’ Organisations

Association of the Organisations of Bulgarian Employers (AOBE)

Ms. Milka Slavcheva, President, Bulgarian Association of Private Schools
Ms. Diljana Bozinova, Bulgarian Association of Private Schools

Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA)

Mme G. Bozhanova was invited but was unable to attend
International Labour Office (ex-officio)

Ms. Plamenka Markova, National Correspondent, *ILO Bulgaria*

Mr. Bill Ratteree, Education Sector Specialist, *ILO Geneva*

Observers

Ms. Svetla Srumina, Journalist, Uchitelsko delo newspaper