

All-European Study on Policies for Education for Democratic Citizenship

Contribution by Dr. Daniela Kolarova, Bulgaria

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I. National Context

Over the past twelve years, the most significant outcome of transition has been the considerable progress made in building democratic institutions and the promotion of civil liberties. **The adoption in 1991 of a new constitution** marked a turning point in the democratization of Bulgarian society. It established the legislative foundations for a parliamentary democracy, based on the principles of powers, political pluralism, free enterprise and the inviolability of private property.

The majority (68 %) of Bulgaria's 7.977 million people live in urban areas. Ethnic Bulgarians represent 83% of the population, while small ethnic minorities of Turkish and Roma Gypsy descent make up 8.5 % and 2.6 % respectively. Since 1990, the overall natural population growth has been negative.

Generally, economic developments in Bulgaria can be described as follows: fluctuating economical growth with increases in GDP (5 % Growth for 2000 compared to 1999), a low inflation rate, a negative foreign trade balance and an increasing amount in foreign investment. The GDP per capita for 2000 was 1700 EU. The average GDP per capita in European countries for 2000 was 22 816 EU.

The social cost of the transition in Bulgaria has been one of the highest in Central and Eastern Europe. Even though the transition process has introduced civil liberties a large proportion of the population has experienced a decline in their general quality of life, through mounting poverty, decreasing incomes, rising unemployment and greater inequality and insecurity. The higher rates of impoverishment could be found among ethnic minorities groups, especially Roma - around 84 % of the Roma population are estimated to live in poverty. The rate of registered general unemployment has been steadily increasing over the past five years, from 11.1 % in 1995 to 13.7 % in 1997 and 19 % in mid 2000.

Previous government clearly recognizes the need to proceed forcefully with reforms. This is reflected in its policy document entitled "Bulgaria 2000" aiming at achievement of strong economic growth and higher living standards, while substantially advancing critical social and infrastructural needs. It has been developed in the context of the government's European Union accession strategy with the aim of making substantial progress towards the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. The National Plan for Economic Development (NPED) of Bulgaria for the period 2000 - 2006 is being revised and brought into compliance with EU requirements. The document highlights five priority areas for policy intervention:

- Market economy and institutional framework for accession to the EU;
- Economic and business competitiveness;
- Infrastructure and environment;
- Quality of life and human resources;
- Sustainable regional development;

NPED is the first government attempt since 1989 to apply a systematic and coherent approach towards development, with a primary focus on Bulgaria's economic situation.

II. National Education System

The Bulgarian Government is actually trying to meet the challenges of the transition period and is also seeking effective policy for enhancing education and training quality. Within that framework, changes in the education legislative base are taking place on a long-term base. Within the system of secondary general education, changes are closely related to the following basic objectives:

- a) National education system improvement within the context of both the national and the European dimensions.
- b) Establishment of legal base responsive to the education system changes.
- c) Management and coordination with special focus on optimization of the national resources in the education system.

The recent amendments to the Public Education Act required development of the state quality standards. Standards concerning the study content and the assessment system have been elaborated. They lay an emphasis on the formation of personal, social and civic skills, as well as on the development of active study methods for teaching and learning. The changes within the general comprehensive curriculum were related to development of civic, economics and democratic knowledge.

One of the main features of the current education policy is **decentralization** of the education system in compliance with an active and independent school policy. Instead of the traditionally strongly centralized system, a new model of administration is now being developed, thus giving individual character to the regional educational structures. The process is mainly related to the redistribution of administrative functions of the units within the system in compliance with their specificity and readiness. School cooperation and partnership with local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations is also in a process of expansion. The School Board Act ensures the basis of such decentralization.

The Ministry of Education and Science controls the activities of all kinds of kindergartens, schools, servicing units and degrees of education and performs other functions, such as planning, organization, coordination, etc. State specialized regional body of managing the regional education system is the Education Inspectorate. Its structure, functions, headquarters are determined by Rules affirmed by the Minister of Education and Science (promulgated in Az Buki Newspaper, issue 22 from 1999). Its main purpose is to manage and exercise control over the activities of schools and the training process in relevant regions. Articles 36 and 48 of the Public Education Act determine the role of municipalities in the education system. They provide the necessary material, technical, personnel, financial (to a great extent), social and organizational conditions for practical implementation of education for all. Finally, the schools has adopted a number of innovation activities that affect profoundly the concept for its orientation and adaptation to market economy, its goals, principles and

strategies for activity and development. A principal manages the school. He heads the Pedagogic Council, which discusses and reaches decisions on main pedagogic issues.

Specifically established bodies, which have elective and consulting nature, assist the management at various levels such as: Municipal Councils (elective bodies to the municipalities); commissions to combat antisocial activities of minors in municipalities and schools; boards of schools trustees in schools, municipal or school public councils, etc.

For active parents participation in school activities the Under the Public Education Act (article 38, 4) a school trustee was created to ensure parents participation. Further, in each school, a School Council of Students has to be formed to stimulate students' participation in the decision - making process.

Obviously, there is a tendency for decentralization of the education system, but the process is not finished yet. For example, a bigger part of decisions on strategic problems as curriculum, school aids, and personnel policy is taken on a level of the Ministry of Education and Science (see Attachment 1).

The **further legal development** includes Rules of Procedure, concerning the implementation of the Public Education Act, concept for religious education, concerning curriculum and manuals development for grades 1 to 8, instruction for mother tongue teaching at Bulgarian secondary schools and programs for integrated forms of education for disable children with special needs. The new system of vocational education and training, tries to achieve better mobility and adaptability of the trainees for the labor market and to provide possibilities for everybody to acquire, develop, upgrade or continue her/his professional education and training meeting her/his personal and market needs. The changes within the system of vocational education and training are mainly oriented towards the process of decentralization and democratization of the respective system, as well as to the creation of preconditions for long-life learning and qualification up-grading. It includes active participation of NGOs and other social partners in the training process and in the process of study content development. The National Programme for Adult Education has a special focus on the development of a national system for adults. The preconditions for life long learning activities are supported also by the Higher Education Act (article 42, p.6 recommends higher education institutions to organize distance education courses). Thus a National Distance Education Center was created in 1995, providing the formal framework for both life long learning and adult education activities.

Generally there is a constitution and legislative base that would make the development of democratic values and respect for diversity legitimate goals for the public education system. The whole socio-political activities in Bulgaria associate with basic legislation carried with Bulgarian constitution. The constitution states that that all persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They 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. Everyone shall have the right to education. The Public Education Act and the Higher Education Act also ensure the right to education of everyone and underline a prohibition of all kinds of discrimination. The State budgets annual social scholarship for needy students. At the

present moment crediting system is developed. Through it, in optimum, the students could cover their tuition expenses and allowances.

III. EDC Policy

The education for democratic citizenship has been accepted among the priorities of current education reform. During the last several years the aims, objectives, content, organization and teaching methods of civic education has been widely discussed. The term "education for democratic citizenship" (EDC) is still less popular because the Public Education Act and the State Education Requirements use the term "civic education". The introduction of the term "EDC" happened recently and is associated with the concept of civic education. A serious ground for dissemination of EDC concept among the public was the result of the meeting of the Ministries of Education in Krakow, in October 2000 where the basic conceptions for EDC were outlined.

The civic education was accepted to be a part of the Social Sciences. It integrates school subjects that have leading role in introducing democratic values and citizenship knowledge and skills. The national curriculum that came into effect in August 13, 2000 defines the civic education is an interdisciplinary element of the general compulsory education. The preparation of the children in the field of social sciences and civic education is implemented through integral school subjects (see Attachment 2).

During 1999 in adopted normative documents by the Ministry of Education and Science civic education is set up as one of the prior cultural and education fields to children from 1st to 12th grade of the general education preparation. This finds expression in a new curriculum implemented with Ordinance # 4 from September 2nd, 1999. There, an education field called "Social sciences and civic education" exists. It includes the following basic subjects: homeland lessons; human being and society; history and civilization; geography and economy; psychology and logics; ethics and law; philosophy; human being and the world.

Issues related to democracy, human rights, peace culture and intercultural dialogue take central part in Bulgarian curriculum structure for civic education. In May 18th, 2000 with Ordinance # 2 State Education Requirements (standards) for social sciences and civic education (content, aims, and approaches) were approved. In the accepted documents both general characteristics of civic education (content, aims, approaches) and concrete requirements towards civic education in general compulsory school education are included. In its essence these requirements (standards) are statements describing learning, skills and relations that are a core of civic knowledge and which students have to gain as a result of compulsory school preparation. Interdisciplinary of its content, the civic education is mainly implemented by various compulsory subjects in the field of social sciences and civic education.

According to the state education requirements (standards) the training on civic education aims to develop and create young person, who:

- ✓ Is an independent and free thinking, able to assume responsibilities for himself / herself and for others;
- ✓ Knows and stands upon his / her rights, freedoms and responsibilities;

- ✓ Is aware of his / her spiritual harmony with the Bulgarian nation and the other European nations as well;
- ✓ Has an appropriate attitude toward the state and the society;
- ✓ Masters mechanisms for constructive social participation and change;

The State Education Requirements describe the most important learning, skills and attitudes that the children could and should have to receive as a result of their training within the bounds of the general compulsory preparation when finishing certain education level or stage. For example, in primary school (grade 4) the pupil has to:

- ✓ Know the equal worth of every human being;
- ✓ Be able to stand upon his / her rights, without breaking other's rights;
- ✓ Know how to resolve conflicts;

In secondary school (grades 7 - 8) the State Education Requirements fix that the children has to:

- ✓ Specify the term "state";
- ✓ Draw a conclusions for the contemporary tendencies in global economy;
- ✓ Discern ethnical from religious and from language belonging;
- ✓ Know the role of the cooperation among the nations for globalization;

In secondary school (grade 12) the children has to:

- ✓ Study the origin and the development of the idea for democracy;
- ✓ Expound the mechanisms of the power;
- ✓ Know and may take part in the forms of civic control on state institutions;
- ✓ Analyze the development of the idea for civic society;
- ✓ Know the international records for human rights;
- ✓ Know the idea for "citizen of the world";

The accepted State Education Requirements suit to the contemporary understanding for education on democratic citizenship and give a clear direction how the expected results in that particular field of Bulgarian education system have to look like. In fact, the State Education Requirements are result of public discussion, sustained efforts and cooperative work of experts, scientists, NGOs' representatives, teachers and citizens working under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Life Long Learning

The Republic of Bulgaria upholds the Memorandum for Life Long Learning of the European Commission. Life Long Learning is taken up as one of the main factors for development and improving professional and civic activity of people. Government policy for human resource development is an ingredient of the social policy aiming to transform the Bulgarian society into a learning and teaching one, to open the Bulgarian borders for an active cooperation on education, science, culture and technologies with the European countries. The following documents provide the basis of this policy: National Plan for Economic Development, Sector IV - Human resource development, the paragraph for labor market, employment and adult professional training (persons above aged 16) - employed and unemployed; National Employment Action Plan 2001; National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2006; National and regional employment and professional training projects and programs. Even though a special legislation, related to life long learning, is not developed, the Public Education Act (1991), the Higher Education Act (1995), the Unemployment Protection and Employment Promotion Act (1997) and others, ensure the possibilities

for continuous education and training of people. The civic organizations are especially active in training and including young people and adults in concrete activities. These are activities that develop practical skills for active civic participation.

Teacher training

The department of "Humanities and Civic Education" at the Teachers In-service Training Institute, which belongs to the Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski" is the leader in civic education teaching since 1993. The department promotes the concepts of civic education and the education for democratic citizenship and offers program for teachers' training. Teachers involved in different levels of education and from all the country are invited to attend the courses. This training center provides excellent facilities for teachers' in-service training. Two other regional institutes for in-service training of teachers, which located in Stara Zagora and Varna offer civic education courses. In addition the departments of pedagogic at several universities started to introduce courses for initial teacher training.

The National Education Institute, which implements scientific data of education policy of the Ministry of Education and Science, regarding theory and practice of civic education, is another active agent at the field of civic education. The National Education Institute accomplishes a research for successful implementation of civic education in Bulgarian school.

Many nongovernmental organizations develop training programs for children and adults concerning education in democratic citizenship. Even though usually there is collaboration with schools and with the structures of the Ministry of Education still the coordination among the different initiatives is quite small.

School authorities are looking for cooperation with Bulgarian NGOs and foreign organizations. Thanks to the active presence of Open Society Institute, Helsinki Committee, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, Safe the Children, Partners Bulgaria Foundation, The World Bank, Council of Europe, UNAIDS European Union Friedrich Ebert Foundation, St. Triphon Foundation, ARC Fund Center for the Study of Democracy, Headley Trust a large number of teachers and schools have the opportunity to participate in projects concerning the democratic citizenship. .

The conditions that help promotion of EDC policy are related to legislation and on government strategy to conform to democratic changes in the whole sociopolitical life in Bulgaria and to create a stable ground for qualitative education based on democratic values.

Beyond the successes in the education policy there is a need for more active promotion of the concept of EDC, which should find place in the official documents, in university syllabuses and in teachers training programs. Still NGOs are active agents in EDC, a system providing opportunities NGOs to train teachers should be developed. This means the licensing process to be speeded up together with provision of market conditions for training services and methodological supply. This process regarding other syllabuses is advanced. Also much broader mechanisms for youth participation in social processes need to be introduced and implement to practice.

Implementation of education policy

Financing. Pursuant to the Public Education Act and the Regulations for its Application the funding of Bulgarian education is provided mainly by the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Science and by the local budgets through municipal administrations. The amount of the funds is various depending on the levels of education and types of schools. The Government does not subsidize the education in the private schools.

According to data from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education and Science the relative share of costs for education in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the period from 1992 to 1998 is going down. Education costs as a percentage of GDP for education in 1998 became two-fold less compared with 1992 (from 3.2% to 6.06% in 1992)

Many of the acts, regulations, ministry decrees and other legal provisions regulate financing and legal relation in the education during the period 1990 - 1999. All aim at improving the quality of education by better funding from additional resources and their reasonable use.

In June 1994 the Ministry of Science and Education adopted Regulations No. 6. It is essential to note that Regulations emphasize that the institutions in the education system shall also receive funding from free funds provided by additional activities, from donations, contributions made by companies and government agencies for specific purposes (Article 4). Later, in the Act amending the Public Education Act (promulgated in Official Gazette, issue 36 from 1998) Article 44 was worded, which in its essence comprises requirements for the accumulation of funds from additional sources - types of activities, criteria, preferences, etc.

Through the project "Financial Managing of the Secondary Education", elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Science and funded by the PHARE program, 100 schools have been implementing the policy of decentralized decision-making through application of delegated budgets system. The essence of the delegated budget is as follows: subsidies from the state and municipal budgets are allocated to schools according to a certain formula based on several criteria such as the number of students, the size of the school building, expenses on repair work and maintenance. The principal of the school has greater freedom and flexibility to operate the funds, as he/she deems necessary. The Ministry of Education and Science or municipalities do not collect the remaining part or the accumulated funds, which are used during the next fiscal year without any reduction of the subsidy. The Ministry of Education and Science is expected to take a decision for expanding the practice of the delegated budgets.

Organizational measures. In some schools, Pedagogic Councils meant to analyze civic education training are conducted. There is not national strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science for monitoring and analysis of the process of training on civic education in Bulgarian school. For the time being, Education Inspectorates and Education Departments in municipality bear the responsibilities for **monitoring**. It is quite difficult to obtain financial security regarding civic education policy from the state budget. That is why, the Ministry of Education and Science is looking for partnerships with foreign donors and active Bulgarian NGOs aiming additional fund

raising. Beyond the fundraising, the NGOs are stimulated to introduce innovative models of teaching (e.g. interactive teaching), to organize summer training seminars for teachers and students and to develop and distribute educational materials.

A joint project for modernization of the education between the Ministry of Education and Science and the World Bank is going to be implemented. Teachers' upgrading training on new standards and syllabus is stipulated.

Quality Assurance. National Agency for assessment and authorization conducted successfully the first assessments and authorizations of universities (institutional authorization) and separate specialties (program authorization). The process will continue next years through launching of due normative amendments (implementation of specialty classifier, consistent with ISCED; implementation of state requirements on education training degrees and education standards). Although the Higher Education Act makes provisions for launching model structure for curriculum and assessment system their actual implementation is a fairly slow process.

There are not clearly defined and fully developed mechanisms for appreciation of non-traditional training. In actual practice, skills and learning gained in courses focused on education for democracy learning are not formally evaluated. There is not organized system for learning civic education in universities and there are not mechanisms for assessment of teachers who could provide training on civic education.

The Ministry of Education and Science still do not have a clear system for licensing NGOs, which organized training.

There are some mechanisms for enhancing training quality in school. The approved state education requirements are important step along these lines. In current education strategy a compulsory school - leaving examination on civic education is planned for June 2003.

According Regulation #1, civic education is included in the educative work plan, prepared by every school in the beginning of the school year. The so-called "Class' lesson" could be used for civic education and are meant to be compulsory. They are holding once a week.

Research and policy development. The Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" and National Institute for Education accomplishes researches on issues related to civic education. Projects and researches are elaborated both on National and International level. For example:

- Research on civic preparation of children aged 14 - 15. The research was made together with the International Association for Evaluation of education achievements, The Hague, under the guidance of Professor G. Purta, USA, 1996 - 1999;
- Education for democratic citizenship project of the Council of Europe. It started in 1997 and will most probably continue to 2002;
- Learning human rights and civic education. A research carried out in partnership with the International Federation of United Schools, 1997-1999;

- Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski" conducted researches on the themes: "The state of integrated education in Bulgaria", 2002; "Children rights situation in Bulgaria", March 2000.

Information and Communication Technologies. School equipment with Information and Communication Technologies is an important part of the education training process. In order the National Information and Communication Technologies Strategy for the year of 2001 to be fulfilled, a plan for equipment of computer rooms in 440 schools from 3500 general and vocational high schools was designed. A bigger part of these rooms will be established and equipped in small towns. So far 500 rooms are equipped. Some steps are taken towards supplying schools with adapted and original Bulgarian software for training. It is scheduled 35.000 computers to be supplied in school network till 2005.

Bulgarian Higher Education System has a long experience in launching Information and Communication Technologies. At the same time there are a lot of impediments in that field. The difficulties are mainly with a lack of necessary equipment. As a whole a tendency all students to gain computer literacy is came up.

Strategies for implementing EDC policies

Like an integrative interdisciplinary subject, the civic education training is incorporated into several school disciplines like "Social sciences and civic education" (from 1st to 12th grade). "Human being and the world" (12th grade) is a discipline aiming to summarize the learned materials during the whole education period. The approved state education requirements by the Ministry of Education and Science during 2000 confirmed the status of civic education. Learning, skills, values, competencies, which each child should gain in civic education field during his/her initial training, are regulated in the state education requirements. The adoption of new syllabuses for the compulsory subjects included recommendations for civic education in order to ensure development of basic civic culture and to respond to European standards and dimensions. A new package of textbooks on philosophy was published and used for civic education purposes.

Civic education training has been put into practice through elaboration of modern teaching models designed to be included in school subjects, especially in the humanities. These models are focused on skill development and learning through practicing civil behavior (e.g. collecting and using public information). Elaboration of integral lessons and forming connections among various school subjects is another useful school practice. In that case, issues related to peace values, peaceful conflict resolution, communication among people belonging to diverse cultures, cooperation and understanding among people become a rallying point of several school subjects. Children gain not only knowledge, but acquire and develop skills, for example - to debate, to be tolerant, to understand cultural diversity, to adopt and appreciate other's viewpoint, to take responsible decisions.

Manuals on civic education are still insufficient. There are few training textbooks, mainly produced by NGOs groups that could be useful when teaching civic education. The Ministry of Education and Science has approved some of them. NGOs' representatives participated actively in the discussions on the state education requirements concerning the civic education.

The role of NGOs is especially important in promotion of civic education and the education for democratic citizenship. Many of them implement projects financed by foreign donors and offer diverse forms of teachers' training and seminars. Many good professionals and experts work for NGOs. Widely practiced are interactive methods that exceptionally motivate the students for active participation in teaching process. The teachers themselves enlarge their practical skills using various teaching methods and activities according to what best fits the psychological and age characteristics of students. The most popular and recommended teaching methods and activities are role games, conversations, group discussions, observations, simulations of different institutions, literature and document reviews, small group activities, dramatizations, situation analyses, debates (structured), group and individual project works, conflict resolution and negotiation. Still NGOs licensing process is not finished, i.e. the certificates, which NGOs issue so far, are not acknowledged by the Ministry of Education and Sciences as an improvement of teachers' training skills.

Many seminars are conducted in the big cities rather than in the rural settlements and the isolated areas in the country. This build preconditions for unequal attending the training and for improving teachers' training skills, and furthermore for putting into practice the new forms for teaching. There is not a clear statement from the part of the Ministry of Education and Sciences how exactly this inequality to be overcome. The Ministry of Education and Sciences and the other institutions are willing to collaborate with NGOs' experts. Many national meetings, organized jointly by the Ministry of Education and Sciences and NGOs aim to analyze and discuss the issues on civic education and the NGOs' role in that field.

It could be said that all the important agents (teachers, headmasters, parents, and Ministry representatives, NGOs) are involved in implementation of EDC strategy into practice. Still there is insufficient coordination among the different efforts and many of the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education and Science are not wholly applied.

Democratic learning environment. There are very good practices applying democratic models. The school councils established by government regulation function in most of the schools in the big cities. It is necessary that the local authority and the Ministry of Education and Science to monitor and stimulate the work of the school councils in the rural settlements and isolated areas. There are a large number of school trustees, which help in fund raising, expert consultations, resolving school problems. Still there are obstacles that hinder the transformation of the school into cultural center for the community, where the citizens to have the right of free access to the school. The local authorities are still not averse to liberalize the process and this does not stimulate parents' and citizens' participation in school matters.

There are town and school students parliaments built under the guidance of NGOs. These parliaments work quite well with the school administration. The selection of members in these youth parliaments becomes through campaign. Each candidate has to uphold his / her platform. These parliaments are good example for the youth readiness and ability to be active citizens when there are appropriate conditions for that. In maintenance of this initiative is the voting of the Charter for the youth

participation in local self-government by the municipality councils. Unfortunately this does not exist everywhere.

The existing legislative opportunities for participation in the government of school are not used sufficiently. Very often it depends on the enthusiasm of certain teachers to work with the pupils. Unfortunately the environment (e.g. there is a lack of training, materials, textbooks and other resources) does not always support these efforts.

Strategies that help to promote the implementation of EDC policies. There are several measures for implementation of EDC policy, which are widely recommended by different educationalists.

- Elaboration of National Training System, which should focus on modern teaching.
- Provision of various educative textbooks and official international documents (declarations, conventions, memorandums, etc.)
- Dissemination of information and good practices through different means like conferences, seminars, meetings, Internet, books, etc.).
- Provision of supplies for education process in and out of the school; researches and comparative analyses, elaboration of uniform evaluation criteria aiming qualitative teaching process.
- Establishment of effective system for impartial monitoring and control. Application of measurable indexes in line with the state education requirements.
- Facilitation of youth participation and increasing their role in decision-making process.

Views from practitioners and stakeholders¹ on EDC policies

Besides the state that ensures the basic education and implements the national strategy of education for all there are number of non-government organizations, which elaborate programs, facilitate promotion of EDC, create opportunities for personal development of young people, provide training and qualification of adults and teachers. The interaction between the non-government organization and the Ministry of Education and Science is regulated usually by bilateral agreement.

Non-government organizations are active in different fields such as:

- Establishment of public mechanism for supporting and implementation of educational changes: Open Society Foundation, Potential Foundation, Open Education Center, Catholic help services, Step-By-Step Foundation
- Civil education and training – Open Education Center, Partners Bulgaria Foundation, National Debate Association, "School for Everyone" Association, etc.
- Engaging the free time and active civil participation of the children and young people – Partners Bulgaria Foundation, National Debate Association, To the Child

¹ Practitioners = professionals involved in formal and non-formal education and service providers (eg. teachers, headteachers, inspectors, NGOs, support organisations and youth groups, etc.).
Stakeholders = parents, young people and civil society.

with Love Foundation, Raina Kabaivanska Foundation, Bulgarian Song Foundation, Children Movement "Knights of learning", etc.;

- Rendering specific assistance to the children at risk and with behavior deviations, integration and re-integration of these children – "School for everyone" Association", Diversity Foundation, International Center on the Problems of Minorities and Cultural Relations Foundation, Partners Bulgaria Foundation, Save the Children, etc.;
- Social programs aiming at assisting children in unequal position– Future for Bulgaria Foundation, Childhood Public Fund, Christian Children Trust, European Children Trust, Partners Bulgaria Foundation, etc.
- Human Rights and Children Rights Education. Partners Bulgaria Foundation, Bulgarian National Committee of UNICEF. Organization "Save the children", "Bulgarian Gender Researches" Foundation, "Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights" Foundation.
- Broadening the education access to Roma children: Open Society Foundation Step-By-Step Foundation, Partners Bulgaria Foundation, Coalition of civic organization "Stolipinovo", Education for Democracy Center, "Dialogue development", "Drom" Foundation, "Romani Baht"
- Programs for stimulating bilingual abilities of children from minority groups as well as programs for supporting teachers in their work with bilingual children.
- Balkan Foundation for intercultural education and understanding "Diversity", Predtechi association. .

The **view of practitioners** regarding the EDC policy has been heard in several public discussions conducted in national conferences and workshops on civic education and EDC. Generally there is a consensus about the adopted civic education strategy from the Ministry of Education and Science and the state education requirements. At the same time there are many controversial opinions related to school-leaving examination on social sciences and civic education. Also the methodology of teaching and the issues of teachers training are widely discussed.

Conditions that help to promote EDC policy

- Collaboration between education institutions and NGOs on a national and local level. While the state institutions provide moral and organizational support, very often the civic organizations ensure funds, training and innovative methodologies.
- Municipalities and schools involvement in civil initiatives. Different activities organized by civic organizations and involving teachers and students are conducted.
- Well-developed program on civic education and EDC at the Central Institute of In-service training of teachers, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski". The Institute attracts teachers from all the country and assists them in developing programs for school and out-of-school activities related to EDC.
- New textbooks on civic education and philosophy circle were published.
- The government requirement for introducing civic education at school (through interdisciplinary methodology, the subject "Human being and the world" (at 12th grade), the class hours atc.).

Problems in education policy regarding EDC in a way they are seen by practitioners.

- State documents decreed that only universities and institutions could train civic education, although there are many well-trained experts on civic education out of these institutions.
- Licensing procedure related to training on civic education or EDC is delayed.
- Conditions for actual market of education services are not provided yet.
- Lack of effective integration policy for children with physical and mental disabilities. Instead attending the mainstream schools most of them have to attend the so-called special schools.
- The ethnic minorities face lack of educational advancement. They need effective state strategy for integration in the society.

The views of practitioners/stakeholders² on the implementation of EDC policies

The existing gaps and problems related to the current government policy implementation measures could be summarised as follows:

- The teachers upgrading training in EDC / civic education is still an open question even though the state education requirements have been adopted.
- The content of civic education was defined but there is insufficient knowledge about the concept of education for democratic citizenship.
- There is no special education for democratic citizenship department in the Ministry of Education and Science, which would facilitate the implementation of EDC policy.
- The democratic learning at school could be stimulated only through practicing democratic skills. The current school environment does not provide sufficient possibilities and models for civic participation.

² Practitioners = professionals involved in formal and non-formal education and service providers (eg. teachers, headteachers, inspectors, NGOs, support organisations and youth groups, etc.).

Stakeholders = parents, young people and civil society.