



**Report on transferability in Bulgaria  
of the model for the validation of  
competences acquired as a result of  
professional experience  
for occupations in the social sector,  
developed in Italy within  
the project “Care Talents”**



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## Introduction

The following report aims to analyze the opportunities for transfer in the Bulgarian context the model and related tools for validation of competences, acquired outside formal education and training system for occupations in the social sector, in particular the occupation "badante", developed within the project "Care Talents". The aim of the report will be achieved through:

- 1.1. Analysis of the political and legal acts related to the policy of Bulgaria with a view to developing and introducing a system of validation of competences acquired outside formal education and training system;
- 1.2. Analysis of the political and legal acts related to the social policy of Bulgaria;
- 1.3. Analysis of occupations in the social sector in Bulgaria, close to the professional profile of "badante", to which the model, developed within the project "Care Talents", and associated tools validation of competences acquired outside formal education and training could be adapted.

## The project “Care Talents” (“Talenti di Cura”)

The project "Care Talents" ("Talenti di Cura") is a two-year international project that was initiated in Italy and carried out by partner organizations from Italy, France and Bulgaria. The project concept is related to the modern context, in which private social services are provided for elderly people in Italy. Analysis showed that most common in this sector are employed migrant women from Eastern Europe and South America who do not possess a particular professional education on the provision of social services. At the same time, this is a profession that is practiced for a specified period of time. Persons who wish to seek other employment opportunities in social services are unable to recognize already acquired expertise in this sector, there is a set of competences acquired as a result of professional experience, which must be given meaning through their validation and through recognition of the ability to meet the needs of increasingly complex support and care. On the other side, with a view to the provision of social services in institutions and domestic conditions in Italy, it should be noted, especially in terms of private organizations, that difficulties exist in finding workers with appropriate qualifications, as the labour market in this area is not observed and regulated. One of the reasons for this is the introduction in 2001 of the Instruction for Professional Development of Social and Health Workers, which is based on a very long training course (1000 hours, usually equivalent to 12 months of vocational training) and is often inappropriate in view to the real training needs of employees, providing care for adults.

The aim of the project “Care Talents” is, based on the system for validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience (V.A.E.), introduced in France, to develop models and tools for the validation of these competencies for professions in the social sectors, adapted to the conditions of Italy and to analyze the possibility to transfer this model in Bulgaria. The project "Care Talents" ("Talenti di Cura") is implemented under the Programme "Lifelong Learning". More information about the project is available on the project website: [www.caretalents.it](http://www.caretalents.it).

# System for validation of competencies, acquired as a result of informal or experience-based learning

## European context

Within the framework of Lisbon strategy for growth and development<sup>1</sup> the member states of the European Union (EU) engaged to modernize the European social model by investing in human resources, by improving of education and training, and by combating the social exclusion. In order to achieve a successful transition to a knowledge society, in this strategy was recognized the importance and was given a priority of lifelong learning<sup>2</sup>, as a major component of the European social model. Through the strategy for lifelong learning, which focus on both formal and informal learning, should be supported active citizen participation and employment. The Work programme “Education and Training 2010”, approved in March 2002 by the European Council in Barcelona, created a framework for European cooperation in education and training, based on common goals and focused on the development of complementary instruments at EU level, should help for the improvement of the national education and training systems<sup>3</sup>. One of the key issues to be placed in this programme is to develop formal methods for validation of experience, gained as a result of non-formal<sup>4</sup> or alone/ in-formal<sup>5</sup> education. In 2009, the Work

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<sup>1</sup> Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions, 23-24 March 2000:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> The EU defines the lifelong learning as “all activities, related to learning for life, which aim to improve the knowledge, skills, and/ or qualification for personal, social and/ or professional reasons” (European Commission, “Towards a European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning”, Brussels, 8.7.2005 SEC(2005) 957)

<sup>3</sup> Barcelona European Council Presidency Conclusions, 15-16 March 2002: [http://europa.eu/european-council/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/european-council/index_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Under the definition, approved by the European Commission (Working Document SEC(2005) 957, Brussels, 8.7.2005) and reproduced in the Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for lifelong learning for the period 2008 - 2013, non-formal training/ learning is learning taking place within the framework of

programme “Education and Training 2010” was updated and supplemented by a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (“ECET 2020”)<sup>6</sup>, in which validation of non-formal and informal learning and guidance are set as priority areas for the period 2009 – 2011.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of national systems for the validation of competences acquired outside formal education and training in Member States is closely linked to the development of national qualifications frameworks based on common principles and thus compatible within a common European Qualifications framework for lifelong learning. The European Qualifications Framework will be a reference framework that establishes connections between national qualifications systems, acting as an instrument to explain the content and to increase the clearness/ understandability of qualifications in different countries and systems in Europe. The introduction of the European Qualifications Framework pursues two main objectives: to promote citizens' mobility between countries and facilitate their lifelong learning. Because of the wide diversity of national systems of education and training, the EU adopted the approach, in view of the possibility of matching the national qualifications systems and procedures, that validation

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organized activity inside and outside educational institutions. It may include programs for adult literacy, life skills, work skills and general culture and others. Non-formal learning is intentional from the perspective of the learner, but does not issue an official document. Learning outcomes can be validated and certified.

<sup>5</sup> Under the definition, adopted by the European Commission (Working Document SEC (2005) 957, Brussels, 8.7.2005) and reproduced in the Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for lifelong learning for the period 2008 - in 2013 alone (informal) training/ learning is non-institutionalized form of intentional learning, which is less organized and structured and may include educational events (activities) in family, at the workplace and in everyday life of each person. These activities are self-oriented, family-oriented or community oriented. The results of learning can be validated and certified.

<sup>6</sup> Council Conclusions of May 12, 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training („ECET 2020“) (2009/C 119/02): <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:BG:PDF>

<sup>7</sup> The European commission defines validation of competencies as a “process of evaluation and acknowledgement of a wide range of knowledge, know how, skills and competencies, that people develop through their lives in different contexts, such as through education, work and activities in their spare time“ (Working Document SEC(2005) 957, Brussels, 8.7.2005)

must be based on learning outcomes (described in three categories - knowledge, skills and competencies).

### **System for validation of competencies in France- V.A.E.**

In France, a system of validation of professional experience (V.A.E.) has already been introduced, whereby people who worked for pay or as volunteers, and gained a qualification from their professional experience, be able to obtain official recognition of their competence. The system consists of several components: a diploma or a certificate of recognition of competences/ skills; enabling social and professional growth; an opportunity to reach or pass a course of study. The system is available to all salaried employees (on permanent or fixed contract) or without pay, job seekers, volunteers, civil servants, regardless of the degrees previously acquired or the level of qualification. The only condition is to demonstrate professional experience (for payment or not, on a voluntary basis) for a period of 3 years (with or without interruption) associated with the certificate (diploma) that the person wants to acquire. In view of the required period of experience gained, periods of initial and continuing education/ training, internships and study periods in a professional environment passing are not taken into account, to obtain a diploma or certificate.

V.A.E. system applies to various diplomas and certificates of vocational education and training system, and to this end the competent authority for the validation of professional experience is different.

The procedure of recognition of professional competence goes through several stages. The first stage is associated with evidence of at least 3 years professional experience, in salary, without salary or as a volunteer, directly associated with the certificate. The second stage is the determination of the diploma or certificate which he or she wishes to obtain. The third stage is associated with completing the eligibility form, and in the fourth stages the forms for submission of professional experience have to be completed. In the fifth stage, a special commission awards all or part of the required degree or certificate. In the case of partial recognition, the committee shall decide on the nature of knowledge that should be enhanced within the next 5 years after the decision has been announced. It is also provided an opportunity for individual courses.

## Italy – the model for validation of competences, developed within the project “Care Talents”

The model and associated tools for the validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience in the profession "badante" is based on detailed study and analysis of the professional profile for "auxiliaire de vie" in France, the related procedures for the recognition of competences for qualifying as "auxiliaire de vie", and a study of the state of Italian law for the recognition of competences acquired in the work experience or training.

Peculiarities of the Italian context are connected, on the one hand, with the national legislation and, on the other hand, with the specifics of the sectors related to private provision of social services: existing language barriers that most workers in this sector must overcome (because they are not Italians) and the informality of this labour market, which makes it difficult to prove work experience, and accordingly to acquire competence.

Based on the professional profile of an "auxiliaire de vie" and with the collaboration of experts in care provision for older people, has been developed a professional profile for the profession "badante", which identifies specific competences for this profession. It have also been developed the exercises and tests, designed to verify these competences, and a guide for the use of the model.

While working on building of a model for recognition of competences, the Italian partners identify several major problems:

1. Lack of national legislation and practical experience in validation procedures, models and actors. Currently, only the regions Emilia Romagna and Tuscany have laws and structural documents, which are about to be implemented in practice;
2. Lack of consolidated, consistent, shared, and subdivided into a comprehensive structure outline of the role of the worker providing family care;
3. Lack of an established system based on required competences;
4. Lack of shared and validated set of operating procedures, techniques and organizational characteristics associated with the provision of family care. What exists is taken mainly from the services for provision of home care in the public

sector, which dominates. This is often understood as shared, but especially social support.

5. Those who should be involved in the process of validation are mainly immigrants with poor language skills or Italians with low educational level. Both factors make the descriptive process, forming part of the information in the dossier for application for recognition, rather difficult.
6. As a result of undeclared and invisible work, documentation of work skills, experience and presentation for approval to the public in an unbiased manner, is difficult.
7. The definite and clear presence of various required competencies (behavioural, organizational and management) makes it even more complicated to record them, as they were not certified by a third party for a long time.

The developed model for validation of competences within the project “Care Talents” can be characterised with several main aspects:

- Preliminary assessment of the competences actually possessed, made by standardized tests, exercises and questions with several optional answers.
- Assistance during the process / procedure for validation of competences, leading to the development of new working practices, in order to enhance the experience.
- Targeted interventions through: a comprehensive training, practical skills and laboratory tests for competences that reveal the lack of preparedness in all areas.
- Documenting the entire process by printing and verifying the authenticity of documents for verification evaluation (done by the assistant trainer).

From September to December 2008 the model was experimented in Italy. Within this phase have been tested previously prepared written materials, exercises and tests. The experiment was conducted in 6 different Italian territorial contexts (the main town, 2 medium-sized cities; 2 small municipalities; zone, set up by six micro municipalities) and in 2 large areas Centre-north and South. Participants in the test phase are women - volunteers working in the sector of care provision - 57% foreigners (from Eastern Europe and Northern Africa) and 43% Italians. Apart from the persons with specialized work experience, the study also included women who do not have any, but perhaps, with a view to the age group to which they belong, have acquired an informal and unpaid experience gained during the care for a family member.

Participants in the experiment are the following age groups: under 30 years - 9%, from 30 to 45 years - 57%, from 45 to 55 years - 23%, over 55 - 11%.

The test results show that most mistakes are made by answering the questions related to national legislation on the provision of social care, and those relating to public health and social system. Overall, the tests are completed successfully by persons with professional experience.

The next part of the experiment is to complete the exercises, demonstrating the existence of specific skills acquired during the professional practice. Here, most mistakes were observed among participants without experience and educational qualifications.

The third part is devoted to different cases, and in order to record the behavioural relations of participants to the validation process, by means of a system of writing and reading, are developed situations with different possible solutions, from which must be selected one. The field, in which occurred a large discrepancy in giving answers, concerns dealing with work in which those behaviours are described as "personal trustworthiness" and "teamwork." However, most responses from participants were "involved" and "perseverance".

As a result of the experimentation several key findings have been made. Overall, the form for recognition of competences, adopted in this experiment, is workable and effective. Validated method, based on exercises included in the tests, practical tasks and sample cases, have to be adapted to the recognition of the competence of care providers for several reasons. Characteristics of the work are not standardized, since the overall competences are an expression of the relationship of private employment relationship between the family and the person providing care and not part of the services provided by the agency. Moreover, there are elements of a strict differentiation of the various tasks performed by the care provider, depending on the actual situation. In addition the various conditions and family relationships also influence the work. Therefore, the approach based entirely on structured tests should be improved in the direction of reflection of the acquired real level of experience, rather than its use as a measure only of written evidence for the presence of work experience.

The main product, produced by the Italian partner, is a guide for those in the field of providing care. It describes the system for recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience in Italy and consists of several parts.

The introduction describes the main problems of the sector for care provision in Italy, which are mainly related to lack of national profile for a home assistant, the lack of a set of

operating procedures for the provision of home care, lack of national legislation governing procedures for the recognition of professional experience, filling positions in the sector, mainly by migrants and the consequent difficulties (lack of knowledge of the language, illegal work, failure to demonstrate professional experience).

The next part of the product is dedicated to the cognitive domains associated with the necessary competencies. These areas are the professional and technical knowledge, practical skills and knowledge and behaviour related to human relations.

In the following part are presented the criteria for evaluation. For each of the cognitive domains are provided different ways of assessing competence. For technical knowledge is provided the use of tests with the opportunity to select from several responses. Practical skills are assessed through a standardized written test that must include several components. Behavioural competencies are divided into five main groups and their evaluation is related to the use of special means of identification and testing them.

The product contains several annexes. The first one includes example tests, assessing competence of candidates for the recognition of professional experience. These competencies are linked with knowledge of the various procedures in the care for the elderly - care about hygiene, nutrition, health care, maintenance of hygienic conditions in the residential, premises of the network, knowledge to provide care at the regional level, knowledge of the law. The second annex contains exercises for improving the above listed competences. The third annex is devoted to case studies and possible behavioural effects of care providers in different situations.

## **Bulgaria – the process of introducing a system for validation of competences**

In Bulgaria, the process of developing and implementing a system for validation of competencies, acquired as a result of informal training or learning, is related to the adoption of a National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training for the period 2005 - 2010, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2004<sup>8</sup>. The strategy approves that the introduction of such a system is a component of the measures, necessary to ensure high quality of continuing vocational training in Bulgaria. This priority is linked to underlying measures to boost employment in the Employment

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<sup>8</sup> Protocol decision of the Council of Ministers № 38.1/14.10.2004

Strategy of Bulgaria for the period 2004-2010. The system for validation of competencies, acquired as a result of informal training or learning has to be developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the social partners in the period 2005 - 2007. The specific measures include a study of the experience of other European countries in this area, an update of the legal framework for establishing a system for validation of qualifications acquired through informal training or learning (the Law on Vocational Education and Training; Decree № 4 for documents in the public education system; Decree № 3 for system evaluation), and the development of model documents to be issued by the respective institutions.<sup>9</sup>

In an official statement in 2007<sup>10</sup> related to the implementation of the National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training for the period 2005 – 2010, was indicated that within the Bulgarian-German project "Promotion of vocational adult education and employment" was launched the pilot development of models for validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the professional fields: "Manufacture of wood products", "Beauty and Cosmetic Services" and "Manufacture of textiles, clothing, footwear and leather goods". The official report on the implementation of that program in 2008<sup>11</sup> indicated that, with a view to develop a mechanism and tools for validation of competencies acquired through informal training and learning is established the Interagency Working group within which projects are accepted following documents:<sup>12</sup>

- model of the system for the validation of professional competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- Basic rules and criteria for selection of the executing authority/ institutions to the system for validation of knowledge and skills/ competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning;

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<sup>9</sup> Action plans for 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 in implementation of the National strategy for continuing vocational training for the period 2005 – 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Report about the implementation of the Action plan for 2007 is available at:

[http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left\\_menu/professionaleducation/](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left_menu/professionaleducation/)

<sup>11</sup> Report about the implementation of the Action plan for 2008 is available at:

[http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left\\_menu/professionaleducation/](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left_menu/professionaleducation/)

<sup>12</sup> The listed documents are not available to public by the time of preparing the report.

- Rules of procedure and action of the National commission for validation;
- Rules of Procedure of the regional commissions for validation;
- Instructions for the work of the specialist/ secretary of the RCV, receiving applications for validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- Models of the applications from candidates, of the information card for the initial interviews with candidates and of the candidate form.

Until the end of April 2009, the approbation of the mechanism and tools for validation of competencies, acquired in the non-formal or informal learning, should be implemented.

Simultaneously, within the framework of the National strategy for continuing vocational training for the period 2005 – 2010 has to be developed a national qualification framework, as a part of the system for introduction of European tools for acknowledgement and evaluation of qualifications. The official statement in 2008 related to the implementation of the National Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training for the period 2005 - 2010<sup>13</sup>, indicated that a working group was established to develop a model of the National Qualifications Framework, which should work gradually on its creation. In 2009, have to be realized preparatory activities and exploration of the foreign experience associated with the introduction of credit system in the continuing vocational training. These activities will be implemented within the project "Development and approbation of the credit system to facilitate mobility in the chemical industry - CREDCHEM" Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>14</sup>

The National Strategy for lifelong learning for the period 2008 - 2013<sup>15</sup>, defines the priority areas for Bulgaria and guidelines for future development in this area. The document envisages the introduction of a system for validation and certification of skills acquired as a result of non-formal and informal learning, including those from inner-company training (period - until 2013)

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<sup>13</sup> Reports on implementation of the Action Plan for 2007, 2008: available

[http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left\\_menu/professionaleducation/](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left_menu/professionaleducation/)

<sup>14</sup> Action Plan for 2009 to implement the national strategy for continuing vocational training for the period 2005 - 2010

<sup>15</sup> Document is available at:

[http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left\\_menu/professionaleducation/](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left_menu/professionaleducation/)

as an important element of the overall strategy for the practical implementation the concept of lifelong learning<sup>16</sup>.

The updated Employment Strategy of Bulgaria for the period 2008 - 2015 confirms the need of establishing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning on the basis of agreed principles and existing pan successful practice in European countries. The strategy stresses that progress in this area will be crucial for attracting new groups with currently very low levels of participation in the lifelong learning - people without education and training (period - until 2015)<sup>17</sup>.

### **Current laws related to the validation of competences acquired through informal and / or independent learning in Bulgaria**

According to the legislation, current during the development of the analysis, the main text, which constitutes the basis for the future introduction of a system for validation of competences acquired as a result of non-formal or informal learning/ education in Bulgaria, is included in the Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA). VETA regulates initial and continuing vocational training in order to ensure its quality according to the needs of the labour market and in line with the trends in the European Union. However, this law defines the functions of the system of vocational education and training to prepare citizens for the realization of the economy

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<sup>16</sup> The National strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Lifelong learning for the period 2008 – 2013 adopted the following definition for validation of competencies:

“Procedure for acknowledgement of acquired knowledge, skills according to specific requirements for level/ grade/ stage of education and/ or professional qualification, which result in issuing an official document for stage of education and/ or professional qualification. A specific type of procedures allows acknowledgement of key competencies, acquired and developed in the context of non-formal or informal learning. Knowledge and skills on part of professions and/or separate training modules can also be validated, which leads to upgrading of competencies and transfer of credits. Validation is one of the basic mechanisms for providing mobility and transparency of qualifications”

<sup>17</sup> Updated Employment Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria 2008 - 2015, available at:

<http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/indexstr.htm>

and society by providing conditions for acquisition and continuous improvement of professional qualifications.

VETA provides that apart from the specialized vocational education and training institutions within the system of vocational education and training<sup>18</sup>, acquisition of professional qualifications may be provided by ministries, municipalities, universities, employers' organizations, organizations of employees and individual employers<sup>19</sup>. It is also envisaged that training for acquiring professional qualifications can be realized through individual training<sup>20</sup>. Article 40 of VETA provides opportunities to validate the qualifications of persons trained outside the system of vocational education and training. It is provided that these persons can obtain a certificate of qualification or training certificate (issued to complete vocational training for acquiring qualification in part of the profession to update or expansion of vocational training) if they have not less than six months work experience in the profession or practical training conducted with a duration determined by the training provider. These persons have to take public examinations in theory and practice of the profession in national examination programs in accordance with state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions and acquiring a certificate of qualification. To obtain a certificate of qualification on part of the occupation, and for updating or expansion of vocational training examinations are conducted in tasks set by the training institution after consultation with representatives of employers and employees<sup>21</sup>. The relevant examinations are conducted and certified documents are issued by training organizations within the system of vocational education and training.

At the time the current legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria there are not statutory definition as for the process of validation of competences in the vocational education and training as for the related with it terms such as "formal," "informal" and "independent" learning /

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<sup>18</sup> Vocational schools, vocational high schools, vocational colleges, art schools, centres for professional education, lower secondary, primary, secondary general, and special sports schools, high schools and specialized schools with separate classes in them - on the basis of Order of the Minister of Education and Science, if they meet the requirements, set by the state educational requirements (Article 9, paragraph 1 of VETA)

<sup>19</sup> Article 9, p. 2 of VETA

<sup>20</sup> Article 9, p. 3 VETA

<sup>21</sup> Article 37, p. 1 и 2 of VETA

training. At the same time the text of Article 40 from the VET introduces significant restrictions on the possibilities for validation of competences acquired through informal or independent learning, by introducing a requirement for at least six months work experience in the profession or practical training conducted with a duration determined by training institution.

1. On the other hand, it should be noted that in accordance with the current requirements of Bulgarian legislation documents of recognition of professional qualifications may be issued only in relation to professions, for which state educational requirements have been adopted. Under Article 16, Item 7 of the Education Act the state educational requirements that relate to the acquisition of professional qualification shall be adopted by the Minister of Education and Science, in coordination with relevant ministries and departments. Vocational guidance, vocational training and vocational education in Bulgaria is carried out in terms of occupations included in the list of professions for vocational education and training, endorsed by the Minister of Education and Science after consultation with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and the relevant sectoral ministers and the representative organizations of employers and employees at national level<sup>22</sup>. Virtue of Article 42, Item 3 (b) of VETA National Agency for Vocational Education and Training develops and proposes to the Minister of Education and Science the list of professions for vocational education and training and state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions. Professions and specialties included in the List of professions for vocational education and training are classified in the professional fields and level of education and level of vocational qualification. The levels of vocational qualifications are four. For the degrees of professional qualification is required:

1. First degree - acquired vocational competencies to practice occupations, incorporating routine activities, performed in constant conditions;
2. Second degree - acquired vocational competencies to practice occupations, incorporating complex activities carried out under varying conditions;

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<sup>22</sup> Art 6 of VETA

3. Third degree - acquired vocational competencies to practice occupations, incorporating complex activities carried out under varying conditions, as well as taking responsibility for the work of other people;
4. Fourth degree - acquired vocational competencies to practice occupations incorporating a broad range of complex activities carried out under varying conditions, as well as the assumption of managerial responsibilities for the work of others and the allocation of resources.<sup>23</sup>

With the state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions are defined the mandatory professional competencies needed to practice a certain occupation and they are mandatory for all training institutions who have the right to organize training for obtaining a Qualification Certificate or Certificate of Vocational Training.

State educational requirements for occupations include:

- Minimum input level of education and qualification for students and adults;
- Description of the profession - work activities, responsibilities, personal qualities, characteristics of working conditions, equipment and tools;
- Opportunities for continuing of the vocational training;
- Opportunities for professional development under the National Classification of Occupations (NCO);
- Objectives of the training;
- Results of learning - competencies, knowledge, skills;
- Requirements for the training facilities in theory and in practice;
- Requirements for trainers

State educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions provide the necessary information in connection with:

- Individual career planning;
- Development of learning plans and programs;
- Planning of human resources development in enterprises;
- Selection and recruitment;
- Training and competence assessment of staff;
- Development of proposals for changes in the training content.

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<sup>23</sup> Art 8, Para 2 of VETA

In connection with the development of state educational requirements for acquiring professional qualification the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training has adopted a Framework for the development of state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions,<sup>24</sup> Rules for terms and conditions for the development of State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualifications in professions<sup>25</sup> and Practical guidance for developing state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Framework for the development of state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions / updated version / adopted by the Governing Board of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) with Protocol № 07 / 18.07.2007, available at [www.navet.government.bg](http://www.navet.government.bg)

<sup>25</sup> Rules for terms and conditions for the development of State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualifications in professions (adopted by the Governing Board of NAVET with Journal № 5 / 14.04.2004, Amended with Journal № 02 / 23.02.2007 and № 05 / 16.06.2007), available at [www.navet.government.bg](http://www.navet.government.bg)

<sup>26</sup> Practical guidance for developing state educational requirements for acquiring qualification on professions – adopted by the GB of NAVET with Journal 08/19.09.2007, available at [www.navet.government.bg](http://www.navet.government.bg)

# The social sector in Bulgaria

## Regulation of the social sector in Bulgaria

The social sector in Bulgaria is regulated in accordance with the Social Assistance Act and its implementing rules. The main body defining policy in this area is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which is supported by the Social Assistance Agency. The Social Assistance Agency for social support operates as an executive agency responsible for implementation of state social policy. In 2003, with a legislative reform was adopted a new approach in the policy of the state social support, characterized by the so-called decentralization or the introduction of shared responsibility between governments, social partners and citizens in this area (in contrast to the previous dominance of the state). As a result of this a new body with advisory competencies was established - the Council for Social Assistance, including representatives of ministries, local authorities, business community and NGO sector. The main objective of this body is to support the process of decision making in the field of social support and to contribute the implementation of the policy.

Along with social assistance, social services are part of the social assistance system. Social services are designed to help and enhance the opportunities of those at risk to lead an independent lifestyle and to promote their social inclusion. The social services are divided into two main groups: social services, obtained in the community and social services provided in specialized institutions. The so-called social services obtained in the community are services provided in the family or in environment, close to it. The new policy approach of the Bulgarian Social Assistance places among its priorities the provision of social services in the community as a way to achieve the goal of creating better conditions and opportunities for recipients of these services to participate fully in the social life.

There are different types of social services received in the community, such as personal assistants, social assistant, home helper, home respite care, day care centre, a centre for social rehabilitation and integration, a centre for family-type housing, a centre for temporary housing,

crisis centre and others. Each municipality can also decide to implement other social services according to the local needs.

Providers of social services may be the state, municipalities, natural persons registered in accordance with the requirements of the Commercial Code (the so-called traders) and legal entities, including NGOs. Private organizations which provide social services in Bulgaria may be registered in all European Union countries and in countries of the European Economic Area. Social services may also be provided through joint participation on the basis of a contract between the state, municipalities and private organizations.

The legal entities may provide social services only after registration in a special register of the Social Assistance Agency. According to the Bulgarian law, the Executive Director of the Social Assistance Agency authorizes the opening or the change in the type of a specialized institution for providing social services, as well as in organizations providing social services in the community. The mayor of the municipality may consign the management of social institutions and the provision of social services in the community of registered suppliers after an open competition. Requirements and procedures for the competition are governed by the Rules for implementing the social assistance act.

Providers of social services can apply for funding from the Social Insurance Fund. It is envisaged that the Social Insurance Fund will receive funding from the budget, donations and fees paid for licensing, as well as 30% of fees paid for provision of social services will be transferred to this fund. The Fund will be transferred to and the profits from state lotteries. As a result, the fund will be able to finance social projects proposed by social service providers.

In accordance with Bulgarian legislation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is required to develop national quality standards for providing social services with which all social service providers must comply in their activities. Common standards for the provision of social services are included in the Regulations for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act, adopted by the Ministerial Council. Failure to comply with the standards will cause the erasure of the social services provider from the register of the Social Assistance Agency. In addition, the Executive Director of the Social Assistance Agency approves methodologies and / or instructions for providing social services.

The social services are provided in accordance with the will and personal choice of the individuals. To become a beneficiary of social services, the person who needs it should apply to

the Social Assistance Agency, the municipality or private entity providing social services. In accordance with the submitted application will be signed agreement between the provider of social services and the recipient to provide social services. When the contract includes long-term provision of social services, the supplier is obliged to prepare a plan according to individual needs of the recipient of social services and to formulate objectives to be achieved in the work process.

The quality control of the delivery of social services is made by the Public Councils, established by a decision of the Municipal Council. Each Public Council shall consist of 3 to 9 people and include representatives of public and private institutions working in the field of social assistance

## **Professions related to the care provision for adults in the community in Bulgaria**

Providing quality care for the elderly people and people with disabilities is one of the problematic issues which should be resolved by contemporary Bulgarian society. The quality at the first place is connected to the good theoretical and practical training of the person who provides such care, as well as to the conditions in which they take place. Modern attitudes are that the best conditions for the provision of such services are in a home environment, which in turn requires particular attention to be paid to occupations connected with providing care for the elderly people and people with disabilities.

The Regulation for implementing the Social Assistance Act defines 12 types of services offered in the community:<sup>27</sup>

1. Personal assistant;
2. Social assistant;
3. Home assistant;
4. Home respite care;
5. Day care centre;
6. Centre for social rehabilitation and integration;
7. Centre for family-type accommodation;

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<sup>27</sup> Art. 36, Para 2 from the Rules for implementation of the Social Assistance Act

8. Centre for temporary housing;
9. Centre for public support;
10. Centre for work with children on the street;
11. Social-professional training centre;
12. Crisis centre;
13. Foster care;
14. Transitional housing;
15. Secure housing;
16. Observed housing;
17. Unit "mother and baby";
18. Shelters;

Based on these services we can identify three main occupations associated with the sector for provision of care for elderly people and people with physical difficulties, which are close in their characteristics to the Italian "badante" and French "auxiliaire de vie" and can serve as a basis for comparison and correspondingly implementation of the model and the related tools for the validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience, developed within the project "Care Talents", in Bulgaria. These professions are personal assistants, social assistants and home assistants.

Professions personal assistant and social assistant are included in the National Classification of Occupations in Republic of Bulgaria, developed and approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy in accordance with the Statistics Act.<sup>28</sup> The occupation home assistant is not listed under that name in the classification and instead of it in the same group is placed a profession called home nurse. According to the National Classification of Occupations in Republic of Bulgaria the occupation is defined as a set of related knowledge and skills acquired as a result of training or work experience and determining the ability of realization in certain type of employment and the position (name of the position) - as a set of functions, tasks and other demands on the person as possessing knowledge and skills for a specific type of work

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<sup>28</sup> The National Classification of Occupations in the Republic of Bulgaria is developed in the accordance with the Methodology of the International standard classification of occupations (ISO-88), issue of the International labor organization, Geneva, 1990 and is available at <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/law/classification/index.htm>

performed at the work place. The names of the occupations can be matched in case those requirements such as knowledge and skills pertaining to a particular profession are similar to those of the position.<sup>29</sup>

The professions personal assistant, social assistant and home nurse are included in Class 5” Personnel involved in public services, trade and security”, in which class the most occupations require knowledge and skills applying to the second education and qualification level. The second vocational and education level requires the second degree of professional qualification, defined as acquired professional competences to practice occupation, incorporating complex activities carried out under varying conditions, and a minimum level of education completed 10th grade. Educational and vocational levels from 1 to 4 are formulated in accordance with the Law for Vocational Education and Training.

Professions personal assistant, social assistant and home nurse are included in **Group 513 “Personnel taking care of people”, Unit group 5133 “Personnel in home conditions”**. According to the description in this unit group are covered people who assist other people in home conditions for meals, household needs, monitoring of their health status and informing the GP. A separate description of each occupation group is missing and it can not be clarified whether the occupations home nurse and home assistant are the same or are related to the same activity. After the last amendment to the List of professions for vocational education and training in 2009<sup>30</sup> in the professional field **“Social work and consulting”** is included the occupation of the **social assistant** from **Unit group 5133 “Personnel in home conditions”**, but the occupations **personal assistant** and **home assistant** are still not included.

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<sup>29</sup> Methodological notes to The National Classification of Occupations in Republic of Bulgaria are available at <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/class/store/azbuchnik.asp>

<sup>30</sup> LIST OF PROFESSIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, approved with Ordinance № 09-413/12.05.2003, amend. SG. with Ordinance № 09-04/08.01.2004, Ordinance № 09-34/22.01.2004, Ordinance № 09-255/09.04.2004, Ordinance № 09 - 274 / 18. 02. 2005, Ordinance № 09-1690/29.09.2006, Ordinance № 09-828/29.06.2007, Ordinance № 09-1891 /30.11.2007, Ordinance № 09-298/19.02. 2009. The list is available at: [www.navet.government.bg](http://www.navet.government.bg)

## Personal Assistant

According to definition provided in the Rules for the implementation of the Social Assistance Act:<sup>31</sup>

"Personal assistant" is a person applying constant care for a child or adult with a permanent disability or severe illness, to meet his daily needs. In the job description for personal assistant are provided the following key responsibilities:

- To take care for hygiene in the home of the person served;
- To assist the person with eating;
- To assist in movement and rehabilitation;
- To carry out rehabilitation activities and activities connected with the person's socialization;
- To require specialists for specific services required of the person to whom the care is provided;
- To perform household services - pay bills, provide heating material assistance in making minor technical repairs;
- To perform duties related to communication and maintaining the social contacts - organizing meetings with friends and relatives.

In the period from 2002 to now the activities associated with the provision of service "personal assistant" are organized mainly within the National Program "Assistants to People with Disabilities ". The aim of this program is to provide care in a family environment for people with disabilities or severe ill lonely people by providing employment to unemployed people as personal and social assistants. The activity "Personal Assistant" aims to provide employment for unemployed people to ease the plight of families in which there is a person with permanent disabilities in need of constant care. Another objective is by providing employment for unemployed people as personal assistants to people with disabilities brought out of specialized institutions in family environment, to be ensured the provision of quality care and the creation of conditions for their social inclusion.

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<sup>31</sup> Para 1, Item 17 from the Rules for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act

As personal assistants may be appointed unemployed people, taking constant care of disabled or seriously ill people and who meet the following conditions:

- To be in working age;
- To be members of the family;
- To live in the same household with the person for whom they take care;
- Not to have acquired pension rights.

Under the terms of the National Program “Assistants to people with disabilities” and the job description for "Personal Assistant" for holding the office no special skills are required and there is no training organized. The activities are funded from the state budget.

In 2003, when the social service "personal assistant" was launched for the first time, 6 230 people were hired for the position of personal assistant. For comparison, in 2006, the number of the personal assistants is more than 13 900. As a result of activities under the program by 31 December 2008 for 11 020 unemployed people from the country was secured employment in the occupation "personal assistant", where 2 119 of them were personal assistants of 2 134 children and 19 were personal assistants to people with disabilities who were brought out of specialized institutions. With the given opportunity for inclusion in the program under exception with a decision of the Executive Director of the Social Assistance Agency is provided employment for 1 156 personal assistants who do not meet any of the conditions for access. Until December 31, 2007 for personal assistants are recruited 12 441 people, where 2 317 of them were personal assistants of 2 333 children and 12 of them were personal assistants to people with disabilities who were brought out of special institutions. As an exception in the program have been employed 854 personal assistants.

The national program “Assistants to people with disabilities” will be active until 2013.

## **Social Assistant**

The Regulation for implementation of the Social Assistance Act contains the following definition:<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Para 1, Item 18 from the Regulation for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act

"Social Assistant" means a person providing a set of services aimed at social work and consultations to consumers and connected with the satisfaction of the needs of organization of spare time and making contacts.

The activities, associated with the provision of service "Social Assistant", are supported by the National program "Assistants to People with Disabilities" and "Social Employment Services" as well as the project "Social Services against New Employment" (SANE), initiated by Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

In the national program "Assistants for people with disabilities" is provided, that through the activity "Social Assistant" is intended to be provided employment for unemployed people who should meet the daily needs and organization of spare time of people with disabilities or of these suffering from severe illness, with making activities for their social inclusion. The aim is these people to be provided highly qualified assistance.

Under this program, as social assistants may be appointed unemployed people registered at employment offices, with giving priority to people with medical or pedagogical education or experience in providing social services. They must be in working age and not acquired pension rights. They also must be trained according to a program approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Employers of social assistants can be municipal administrations, as well as natural and legal persons enlisted in the register of the Employment Agency. The social services under the occupation "Social Assistant" shall be provided against payment of a tariff approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The activity "Social Assistant" is realized under the principle of co-funding from state and municipal budgets and taxes collected.

The project "Social Services against New Employment" (SANE) is supported by the Joint United Nations Program for Development and tests a new model for decentralized financing, provision and management of social services in the community, as his attempt applies within national programs for social inclusion and social services in home environment "Assistants to People with Disabilities" and the Operational Program "Human Resources".

The basic rights and obligations of the social assistants are regulated in the Social Assistance Act and its Implementing Rules. Social assistants shall be appointed on contract and their rights are defined and guaranteed by the Labor Code. As annex to the contract they receive also a job description, which describes their duties, responsibilities and subordination. According to the job description the duties of the social assistant are as follows:

- To organize and carry out daily activities, providing the necessary sanitary, domestic and social conditions to ensure the normal life of the consumer, including assistance in communicating and maintaining social contacts, entertainment and activities at home and outside;
- To provide lump social services (domestic, administrative, medical, etc.) at the request of the user for cleaning the premises occupied by him, for filing in documents in the Pensions Department, Directorate of Social Assistance, municipality, etc., for supply with aids, in preparing the necessary documents to appear before TELK, RELK and accommodation in or leaving a hospital, care after hospitalization, rehabilitation and others.;
- To contribute to effective social integration of the consumer, after consultation with the Directorate "Social Assistance" encourage the user's activity, organize meetings, carry out contacts with other people;
- To carry for the health and safety of the consumer by proposing measures to reduce or eliminate (if possible) the risks in his home in an emergency immediately to inform the GP of the consumer and that the contact person;
- To observe the confidentiality of the facts and circumstances become known to him in discharging his duties, except in cases where there is a risk to health and life of the user.

According to the documentation on the SANE project and National Program "Assistants for People with Disabilities" the social assistants provide a wide range of services to support daily activities of everyday life (eating, shopping, hygiene), health (support when taking medicines and contact with health professionals), the activity of users (accompanying outside the home, support during the activities) and others, which are described in detail below:

- Delivery and / or preparing meals, assistance with eating;
- Shopping - supply the needy with the daily necessary products and medicines;
- Assistance in maintaining personal hygiene - assisting with dressing, bathing, combing, putting in a wheelchair;
- Assistance in taking medication prescribed by a doctor, measuring blood pressure, accompaniment the person to his GP and in hospitalization;
- Payments - electricity, water, local taxes and others.;

- Administrative assistance - assistance for the preparation of documents required by TELK, completing and filing in the required forms as tax declarations, requests for aid from social welfare offices or other institutions; assistance in obtaining technical aids;
- Accompaniment outside the home of the user - to accompany the person to school, cinema, theatre, guests, etc..;
- Assistance in communicating and maintaining social contacts - organize entertainment activities at home and outside, reading books and newspapers;
- Support for children with disabilities who attend schools of general education, support their occupations at home in extracurricular time;
- Maintenance of the hygiene in the residential premises occupied by the person that receives care - current and thorough cleaning;
- Seasonal or other specific services (according to individual needs of persons).

Definition of social services for each individual user is done on the basis of the stated wish, discovered needs and rights of access to services.

Training for acquisition of a qualification required for the occupation social assistant is implemented under various projects within the National Program "Assistants to People with Disabilities" and "Social services in a family environment". The program "Assistants to People with Disabilities" provides for funding the training of unemployed persons participating in the program. In these funds are provided the cost of training itself, scholarships for trainees, transport and accommodation when the training takes place outside the village. These training courses are usually held according to the procedures and guidelines established by the Executive Director of the Employment Agency. They have duration of several days and provide only the acquisition of basic theoretical knowledge and skills for delivering of quality care. The people who passed this course receive a certificate giving them the right to provide the service.

According to the Handbook of social assistant, designed under the project SEIN for achieving the desired competencies for the implementation of the social assistant position the undergoing of training is required. In the developed methodology for providing the service in the community "Social Assistant" under the same project is stipulated this service provider to provide opportunities for the development of social assistants through training and exchange of experience. The training programs should be revised annually to meet the changing consumer and community conditions. The supplier provides introductory training for all new social

assistants, before starting work in the consumer's home, which lasts at least 3 days and must include the following topics:

- General knowledge of home care and necessary for a social assistant skills;
- main responsibilities of the social assistant;
- Specifics of the care for the elderly people, children and adults with disabilities for severely ill;
- Working standards during the provision of the service “social assistant”;
- Ethical standards in social assistant’s work;
- health and safety work conditions, providing services with physical contact;
- procedures for quality assurance and monitoring;
- Knowledge of the organization of the provider of social services;

The training can be done in several different forms: vocational training course, working with more experienced and competent social assistant, individual sessions with manuals and handbooks, consulting with a trainer or a combination of these forms.

The basic training of social assistants must include the following topics:

- Observing the basic principles of care in the community related to encouraging of the independence of the consumer, respect of his dignity and his right to privacy;
- Keeping privacy of the personal data and information;
- Anti-discriminatory practices, including respect for diversity;
- Prevention and early warning about risk of various forms of abuse or exploitation of consumers, including sexual, racial / ethnic and other forms of harassment;
- Actions and behaviour during the provision of services requiring physical contact;
- Actions and behaviour during handling with money and property of the user;
- Actions and behaviour in case of refusal of receiving gifts and bequests;
- Abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other health harmful substances at the work place;
- Ways of expressing concern about the management and / or service provision, including discussion of bad practices.

Training for healthy and safety work conditions including the following subjects:

- Risk assessment, including these in the home of the consumer;
- The choice of appropriate clothing and shoes, respectively, use of personal protective equipment;

- First aid and method of action in emergencies;
- Assisting with taking medications, rules and limits of liability;
- Basic rules for maintaining personal hygiene and control the risks for contamination;
- Actions and behaviour in cases of violence and challenging behaviour;
- Actions and behaviour in cases of sexual and / or racial / ethnic harassment
- Actions and behaviour for users who are addicted to harmful to health substances;
- Basic requirements for preparing and storing food according to the requirements of the health act and the regulations for its implementation
- Hazards resulting from the domestic living conditions of the user (ex, malfunctioning electrical installation, damaged appliances, etc.);
- Behaviour towards pets;
- Rules and procedures for access to the consumer's home;
- Rules for keeping records on incidents occurred with consumers or assistants.

## Home helper

According to the definition in the Rules for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act definition:<sup>33</sup>

"Home assistant" is a person providing services at home conditions, aimed at maintaining the hygiene of occupied housing, shopping and preparing meals, laundry and other public-utility activities.

Within the Operational Program "Human Resources" in 2007 opened a budget line called "Assistance in a family environment for a decent old age". The program aims to improve social service "social assistant" and to develop the service "home helper", as forms of social services provided in the community for people who due to various constraints related to health are excluded from social life and risk to become dependent on services provided in specialized institutions. Municipalities, public benefit organizations and all registered providers of social services can apply for financial assistance under the program.

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<sup>33</sup> Para 1, Item 18 from the Regulation for Implementation of the Social Assistance Act

According to the National program "Social services in a family environment" the home assistant may perform the following services:

- Current cleaning - arrangement of the room, washing the floor, dishwashing, etc.
- Maintaining of the personal hygiene - assisting in the daily toilet and dressing, assistance with bathing, assistance with combing, painting, trimming hair, shave, accompanying to the places where these services are provided.
- Eating - preparing food with products of the care person, delivery of prepared meals, preparing and assistance with eating, serving and clearing the table.
- Purchase of food materials, medicines and basic necessities with the money of the care person.
- Minor home repairs and / or assisting with their implementation.
- Public services - purchase of food, medicines and sanitary materials basic necessities by means of the care person, payment of electricity, telephone, water, taxes, etc. by the means of the care person, minor technical repairs, others.

Under the program, individuals are hired on contract by the employer as the Employment Agency by Direction "Employment Bureau" signed a contract with the employer for the payment of funds from the state budget for each unemployed person hired.

### **Draft of State educational requirements for acquiring qualification in the occupation "Social Assistant"**

In 2009, in accordance with regulations is developed a projects for the educational requirement for the acquisition of professional qualifications 762040 "Social Assistant" in the field of education "social services" under the list of professions for vocational education and training in art. 6, para. 1 of the Vocational Education and Training Law. The draft was presented for approval by the Ministry of Education and Science, which is to adopt an Ordinance in this regard. Once approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, a state educational requirements and framework programs of art. 10,Para. 3 of the Vocational Education and Training Law will be the basis for the development of curricula and programmes for training in the specialties 7620401 Child Support and 7620402 "Supporting the elderly". For the purposes

of vocational education they will be developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, and for professional training - from training institution.

With the proposed state educational requirement is determined the level of compulsory professional training at the end of training in the profession, ensuring for the learner the opportunity to practice 762040 "Social Assistant". It sets educational requirement for the acquisition of professional qualifications "Social Assistant" defines the overall, sector and specific mandatory professional training for the occupation and the mandatory foreign language training in the profession and optional training. The content of each type of compulsory vocational training in the profession of "social assistant" includes:

8. Necessary professional competence (knowledge, skills and professional-personal skills);
9. Thematic areas, which form the content of the training subjects / modules.

The draft of state educational requirements determined: entry educational level, the profile of the profession, the education, learning outcomes, requirements for facilities and training requirements.

In the draft state educational requirement for the acquisition of professional qualifications "Social Assistant" are provided educational inputs and requirements regarding qualifications of persons for their involvement in such training. For students and for persons aged 16 years is required the minimum input level of education completed VII grade or primary education and vocational training - completed X or XI grade, acquired the right to sit for the state matriculation exams to complete high school or completed secondary education. With regard to the qualification level of experience or training in the profession "Social Assistant" by acquiring a second level of qualification the trainee is required to hold a lower degree of professional qualification or professional experience.

When for training in the profession "Social Assistant" by acquiring a second level of qualification apply persons completed training in other fields of professional occupations "Social work and counselling" and "Home services", their training is acknowledged and supplementary training is organized. Training content is determined after comparison of the competencies and learning outcomes described in state educational requirements (Educational Requirements) to acquire the professional qualification. For persons with professional experience to organize

training in the profession of "social assistant" to the acquisition of second degree of professional qualification, which includes mastering the competencies described in paragraph 4 of Educational Requirements that the applicant has no training.

➤ **Description of occupation**

Activities carried out by a social assistant, are aimed to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people - children and adults with disabilities, children with sensory, physical, intellectual and chronic diseases, living alone and elderly people through daily support at home and beyond.

The social assistant provides help in organizing activities and occupations at home and outside (the organization of meetings, celebration of holidays, reading literature, organization of activities of interest - cards, chess, backgammon, knitting, embroidery, growing flowers, with accompanying walk and visit the cinema, theatre, concerts, church, etc.). He/ She Accompanies the children and elderly people to and from training institutions, if necessary attend during school activities (in support of both consumer and shadowing) and assists users in preparing for the lesson (homework). The social assistant helps the communication and maintaining social contacts and contributes to the emotional comfort of the user and their families. He/ She provides support in crisis situations of domestic nature (loss of close relative, serious illness, prolonged separation, situations of violence, etc.).

Social assistant helps in the preparation, submission and receipt of documents to and from public and private institutions, payment of taxes, fees and other bills and obligations by means of the user, the supply of aids, devices and equipment for teaching aids and supplies in severe disease and disability, as well as the use of various social services.

Social assistants maintain contact with family physician in deterioration of health or in an emergency, as promptly inform the family about their actions, if necessary accompanied by a personal user or another doctor, assist in placement in a hospital and sanatorium care in hospital (if necessary). He/ she also assist in taking drugs if specifically instructed by the GP of the user.

Social assistants discuss with parents or guardians of children the need of measures against the factors constituting a danger to the child. Promptly inform the provider organization for signals or cases of abuse and violence against the consumer.

The social assistant also organizes trips and accompanies the consumer to his workplace at a walk and visits to the cinema, theatre, concerts, church and others.

Social assistant helps in performing minor home repairs and purchase of products, materials and belongings.

In his work the assistant uses the guidelines relating to social service work records - individual work plan, a weekly schedule of activities undertaken and others, communication with institutions, relatives, facilities, computer equipment, and personal protective equipment when necessary.

The social assistant is responsible for health and life of the person to whom he cares during working hours and within his competences to protect the assets of the family or public institution. Social assistants should keep confidentiality when working with data or personal information related to the user and his family and relatives. Social assistants should show loyalty and tolerance of age, ethnic, religious and other differences, empathy, patience, emotional stability. It is necessary that the assistant possess good manners and pleasant appearance. Social assistants working with children should be able to attract attention and win the trust of the child.

Most often he works in the consumer's home, under different conditions - distance from public places and offices, home hygiene, condition of electrical and plumbing systems and installation of household appliances and others.

Social assistant provides hourly schedules developed by the service provider.

➤ **Opportunities for continuing vocational training**

Acquirer of the second degree of specialization in the profession of "social assistant" can continue their training for specialization in the profession of social work Assistant - third degree, as part of his training compulsory vocational training shall be respected.

Opportunities for professional development under the National Classification of Occupations in Bulgaria (NCOB) , approved by the Minister of Labor and Social Policy of 27.12.2005 № 742 , with recent amendments to the ordinance № 01/1114 from RD 30.12 .2008.:

Acquirer of the second degree of specialization in the profession of „Social assistant" may come to work in posts by NCOB: 5133-1001 Home nurse, Personal Assistant 5133-1002,

5133-1003 Serving ill Social Assistant 5133-1004, 5133-1005 errand food; Carer 5132-1001, 5131-3001 nanny, babysitter 5131-1005 and others, supplemented in updating NCOB.

➤ **Educational aims**

a) Objectives of training in general compulsory vocational training - one for all professional fields.

After completion of training in the profession, the student must:

- Know and applies to the basic rules for safe operation in the workplace;
- Recognize risk situations in their work and implement appropriate behavioural patterns;
- Provide effective communication in the performance of his duties in a working team - able to formulate problems, ask questions, submit a case by case, to keep such records for documentation;
- Know the state institutions involved in social policy, and their regional structures;
- Know his rights and obligations as a participant in the labour process under the Labour Code;
- Understand the contractual relationship between the assistant and social service provider;
- Know and apply the general rules for working with a computer, knows how to use e-mail and software to create documents, find information on the Internet.

b) Objectives of the training for the branch compulsory vocational training - one for all occupations for professional direction "Social work and counselling".

After completion of training in the profession, the student must:

- Know the laws and regulations in relation to: social services in the community (related to training and education of children with special educational needs, social support, child protection work with disabled people, promotion of employment);

- Facilitate interaction between users of social services and external individuals, institutions, organizations;
- Know and use the documentation required for the organization to provide social services;
- Know and use the standards and criteria for conducting social activities while their implemented;
- Inform consumers of social services for their rights;
- Know and observe professional ethics in social work.

c) Objectives of training specific to the profession "Social Assistant" compulsory vocational training

After completion of training in the profession, the student must:

- Know and apply the standards and criteria for service provision "Social Assistant";
- Organizes and assists the user in his participation in activities at home or outside it (the training institution, workplace, etc.)
- Assist consumers in filing documents in support of social institutions, pay taxes;
- Support users in their everyday life and activities;
- Assist the consumer in communicating and maintaining social contacts with individuals, institutions and organizations;
- In situations of risk to life and health of the consumer provide first aid and inform the family and the necessary institutions;
- Working knowledge and complete documentation - schedule of services provided, log important daily activities related to financial issues, accidents, compliance with a daily regimen of providing the service "Social Assistant".

➤ **Learning outcomes**

<b>Competences</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
	The learner must:
<b>Common to the occupation "Social assistant"</b>	
1. Comply with the rules for healthy	1.1. Describes the impact of harmful substances

<p>and safe working conditions and protect the environment when carrying out their duties</p>	<p>used in production, human health and prevention measures;</p> <p>1.2. Has first aid in domestic crisis situations (accidents, poisoning or sanitary disinfectants, injuries at home, etc.)</p> <p>1.3. Recognizes the fundamental materials for dressings;</p> <p>1.4. Indicates the sequence of action in various situations requiring the provision of first aid;</p> <p>1.5. Recognizes dangerous situations that may arise during the work and take action for their prevention;</p> <p>1.6. Uses personal protective equipment;</p> <p>1.7. Knows the rules and procedures for fire and emergency safety;</p> <p>1.8. Uses appliances intended for fire protection (fire extinguisher, etc.).</p>
<p>2. Applicable regulations in the provision of social services</p>	<p>2.1. Knows forms of social assistance and the institutions of national and local level;</p> <p>2.2. Describes the specifics of the social services provided in the community and involved in activities;</p> <p>2.3. Complies with quality standards of service, Social Assistant;</p> <p>2.4. Respects the rights and obligations as a social assistant and as a participant in labour, under Labour Code and the contractual relationship between employer and employee;</p> <p>2.5. Coordinates developed by the service schedule of activities;</p>

	<p>2.6. Complies with the rules for a safe workplace (the consumer's home and outside);</p> <p>2.7. Explains in plain language for the user's own obligations and the limits of social interaction between the user and assistant;</p> <p>2.8. Completes documentation related to the provision of service;</p> <p>2.9. Informs the consumer of his rights.</p>
<p>3. Build trust relationships with users</p>	<p>3.1. To be aware of and comply with the professional values and ethical standards in social work;</p> <p>3.2. Respects the principles of confidentiality and confidence;</p> <p>3.3. Recognizes the stages in the process of communication;</p> <p>3.4 Recognizes the individual characteristics of the consumer in communicating with him;</p> <p>3.5. Uses various methods and techniques in communicating with consumers and their families (active listening, setting the open and closed questions, verbal and non-verbal techniques to maintain a conversation, reflection of feelings, feedback, etc.)</p> <p>3.6. Develops empathy in communication with the consumer;</p> <p>3.7. Provides emotional support to the consumer;</p> <p>3.8. Maintains the relationships with consumers and their families on the basis of respect, respect for privacy and dignity, right to information and privacy.</p>
<p>4. Domestic support in dangerous</p>	<p>4.1. Identifies key risks for the clients in their</p>

situations	<p>daily lives;</p> <p>4.2. Recognizes situations that present risk to the client in everyday life;</p> <p>4.3. Cooperates in developing an action plan in situations of risk in everyday life;</p> <p>4.4. Helps to avoid the identified risks;</p> <p>4.5. Recognizes various forms of violence;</p> <p>4.6. Takes action to end violence against the client;</p> <p>4.7. Informs the relatives of the client and the service provider about the risks and proposes measures to overcome them;</p> <p>4.8. Signals the violence against on the client.</p>
5. Domestic support in crisis situations	<p>5.1. Identify signals of conflict emerged during the domestic situation;</p> <p>5.2. Mediation techniques used in conflict only if it is additionally trained for this;</p> <p>5.3. Shows ability to solve problems;</p> <p>5.4. Account the particularities of the experiences during the domestic crisis;</p> <p>5.5. Knowledge of human reactions in the event of mourning event;</p> <p>5.6. Supports the user in a situation of domestic crisis (serious illness, grief and loss);</p> <p>5.7. Presents a comprehensive case for his work with users that need more professional support (from a social worker, psychologist, speech therapist, special educator, psychiatrist, etc.).</p>
6. Help to maintain the health of the consumer	<p>6.1. If necessary, keeps in contact with the consumer's physician and other health professionals, informing the family, carers and</p>

	<p>relatives about it;</p> <p>6.2. Assists clients to follow recommended by a specialist regime and diet;</p> <p>6.3. Accompanies the user to GP for screening, as it has physical and emotional support;</p> <p>6.4 Assists in placement in a hospital;</p> <p>6.5. Supports user's emotionally before accommodation and during his stay in hospital;</p> <p>6.9. Keeps confidentiality on any facts or events which learns in the course of providing care (except in cases of risk to the consumer).</p>
7. Keep your emotional state	<p>7.1. Reports stereotyped patterns of behaviour of users of social support;</p> <p>7.2. Develops sensitivity to their own emotional state;</p> <p>7.3. Recognizes signs of professional stress and the syndrome of "emotional burning";</p> <p>7.4. Regularly attends sessions to reduce the emotional stress, which is out of work;</p> <p>7.5. Develops self-management of their own impulses and moods;</p> <p>7.6. Observes professional ethics;</p> <p>7.7. Recognizes situations that may arise ethical dilemmas, and if necessary seek the assistance of family, carers and relatives;</p> <p>7.8. Applies different approaches for the prevention of work stress;</p> <p>7.9. Regularly participates in supervision sessions.</p>
8. Develop willingness to upgrade their professional competence and develop their personal qualities	<p>8.1. Shows self-critical to their actions and level of knowledge;</p> <p>8.2. Accounts of their mistakes and limited</p>

	<p>knowledge in a specific work situation;</p> <p>8.3. Demonstrates a desire for professional development;</p> <p>8.4. Develops readiness for further professional advice in the difficulties in working with consumers and their families;</p> <p>8.5. Demonstrates ability to work as a team.</p>
<p><b>Specifics for occupation 7620401 "Child Support "</b></p>	
<p>9. Assist in building skills for independence in children with special needs</p>	<p>9.1. Knowledge of cultural, social and emotional needs of children with special needs;</p> <p>9.2. Knows the age periods in the development of the child;</p> <p>9.3. Know the specifics of the main groups of diseases and disorders in childhood;</p> <p>9.4. Know and abide by the rules in communicating with children with special needs;</p> <p>9.5. Knows the kinds of technical equipment designed for children with disabilities;</p> <p>9.6. Explains how to use and maintenance of technical equipment of both children and their parents, using the instructions for their use;</p> <p>9.7. Assists children with disabilities in catering and carry out activities to maintain personal hygiene;</p> <p>9.8. Tries to assist the child in the utmost to cope alone.</p>
<p>10. Contribute to building social skills in children with special needs</p>	<p>10.1. Knowledge of generally accepted traditions and values and to comply with them when working with children;</p>

	<p>10.2. Knowledge sources and additional information about the lives of people with different culture, religion, ethnicity;</p> <p>10.3. Builds a model emulated by the child with special needs;</p> <p>10.4. Builds skills in children to perform everyday activities associated with making purchases (identification and use of money), use of means of transport, communication and others.</p>
<p>11. Support children members to acquire social knowledge, social skills development and expansion of interests</p>	<p>11.1. Knowledge of local institutions that provide educational and social services for children with special needs;</p> <p>11.2. Communicates with the child, using a variety of techniques to promote success;</p> <p>11.3. Accompanies the child in another school or training center and support its operations there under the guidance of the specialist;</p> <p>11.4. Creates, structures and manages the daily activities (playing, resting, preparing lessons, etc.). Including the time for transition from one activity to another;</p> <p>11.5. Develops skills to meet the child on a daily regimen;</p> <p>11.6. Organizes social and gaming activities in accordance with individual needs and abilities of the child, after prior consultation with his parents;</p> <p>11.7. Organizes activities suitable for the interests, needs and capacities of the child, subject to the requirements of parents and programs of other professionals dealing with child;</p> <p>11.8. Informs parents about the problems in the</p>

	<p>social lives of the child;</p> <p>11.9. Gives suggestions to parents to improve the social behaviour of the child, opportunities for autonomy and self-service and comply with their opinion.</p>
<p><b>Specific for occupation 7620402 "Helping Adults"</b></p>	
<p>12. Support the user in his contacts with institutions and departments</p>	<p>12.1. Knows and informs the consumer of local institutions that provide different types of services and support (health, social, administrative, etc.)</p> <p>12.2. Knows and works with the structure of different types of documents (declaration, statement, appeal, etc.).</p> <p>12.3. Assists in the timely dispatch of letters by e-mail, documents etc or delivery to site;</p> <p>12.4. Assist in collecting necessary documents to appear in front TELK, NELK and other institutions for social support;</p> <p>12.5. Accompanies the client during visits to institutions, providing emotional support;</p> <p>12.6. Mediates the client to receive the necessary medical devices, facilities, heating equipment, facilities, equipment and others;</p> <p>12.7. Know how to pay (cash, bank cards, etc.) Mediate the consumer and pay taxes, fees and supplies;</p> <p>12.8. Protect consumer interests before the people and institutions within their professional commitments.</p>
<p>13. Assist the maintenance and</p>	<p>13.1. Initiates and maintain conversation on topics</p>

<p>expansion of social contacts and interests of the consumer</p>	<p>that are interesting to an adult user;</p> <p>13.2. Provides users with information on topics of his / her interests, according to age and characteristics of the consumer;</p> <p>13.3. Supports the organization of recreational and social activities in the consumer's home and outside;</p> <p>13.4. Mediates in the implementation of social contact between the user and his environment;</p> <p>13.5. Motivates users to show interest in events in the community and to involve them;</p> <p>13.6. Accompanies to and from work clients with disabilities, taking into account their individual circumstances and needs;</p> <p>13.7. Supports users at the workplace according to their powers.</p>
<p>14. Support and assistance to the consumer for its day to day activities</p>	<p>14.1. Plans the work tasks for the day aligning them with the consumer;</p> <p>14.2. Complies with the rules for conducting financial transactions on behalf of the user (negotiation, implementation, reporting), when authorized to do so;</p> <p>14.3. Contributes to the proper storage of food products in the consumer's home;</p> <p>14.4. Complies with the rules for physical contact in support of nutrition, personal hygiene of the user and others;</p> <p>14.5. Observes safety rules when using appliances in the consumer's home;</p> <p>14.6. Identifies health risks in the consumer's home (bumps on the floor, a broken foot, etc.) and</p>

	<p>notifies the family;</p> <p>14.7. Gives suggestions for overcoming the identified risks and to comply with the decision of the family in these matters.</p>
15. Helps meet the needs of different user groups	<p>15.1. Knows the specifics of the socially significant disabilities in Bulgaria;</p> <p>15.2. Recognizes basic needs of older persons with different disabilities;</p> <p>15.3. Uses different models to interact with users depending on how the adoption of disease and aging;</p> <p>15.8. Uses verbal and non-verbal signals to interpret consumer behaviour, where trained extra for it.</p>

At the completion of state educational requirements for acquiring qualification in the profession "Social assistant" laid down requirements for training facilities and the training in theory and practice.

Instruction in theory should be conducted in a training room or hall for conducting socio-psychological training. The training room is equipped with a workstation for each trainee (working table and chair), job shadowing (working table and chair), boards, cabinets, smooth wall for hanging the panels, a computer with appropriate software, training videos, multimedia, video equipment and other tools for learning and teaching techniques. The cabinet should provide opportunities to use interactive teaching methods (enough room to work in pairs and small groups, portable furniture, etc.).

Training practice is conducted in individual and group sites (bases) for the provision of social services in the community (day care centre, a centre for social rehabilitation and integration, and secure transitional housing, etc.). Teaching aids and resources: videos, audiotapes, CDs, slides, methodological materials, personal protective equipment, aids, appliances and equipment and others.

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Right to teach the Theory of the profession "Social Assistant" - the second level of qualification are individuals with educational degree or master's degrees in disciplines appropriate to the subjects (modules) of compulsory vocational training. Right to teach in practice the profession of "social assistant" - a second level of qualification are individuals with educational degree or master's degrees and work experience as a social worker, psychologist, speech therapist, special educator.

## Conclusion

Analyzing the EU policy in the field of Lifelong learning it must be noted the specific focus that EU puts on the role of non-formal and informal learning in the modern context as well as on providing opportunities for validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience. Promoting mobility of citizens, as well as their social and civic involvement is directly related to the establishment of National Qualifications Frameworks, based on learning results, which have to be comparable in a common European reference framework – the European Qualification Framework.

The system for validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience, introduced in France – V.A.E, represents a good practice. The V.A.E. system is based on professional profiles, developed in compliance with the principles of the European Qualification Framework and in particular defined with a view to required knowledge, skills and competences for each profession, as well as well defined procedures. It provides the opportunity to those who have acquired competences as a result of professional experience to receive official recognition for them. The model for validation of competences for the occupation “badante” and the related tools, developed within the project “Care Talents”, elaborates on the French experience related to the occupation “auxiliaire de vie”, which is transferred and localized in the Italian context. The main advantages of this product could be defined in the following aspects:

- **The product is completely in line with the guidelines, included in the common strategical framework of EU related to Lifelong learning.**

The model for validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience and its related tools, developed in Italy, are in compliance with the EU guidelines and requirement, to which Bulgaria has acceded as a member of the EU.

➤ **Adaptation possibilities**

The product was developed in such a way that provides the possibility to be adapted to the legal and the socio-cultural context and Bulgaria and to be effectively used for similar professions from the social sector.

➤ **Low price of the provided education**

The model for validation of competences acquired as a result of professional experience and its related tools, developed within the project “Care Talents” does not required specific equipment and is not related with investing considerable financial resources.

➤ **Flexibility (time and space)**

The product provides flexibility related to the time and space for the validation procedures, which makes the model convenient for application in different environments.

➤ **The product has been developed on paper version and on-line**

The product has been developed in printed version and on-line, which contributes to its flexibility and efficiency with a view to the different needs and abilities of the final user.

The positive effect for Bulgaria from the adaptation and implementation of the model could be defined in the following directions:

- **Ensuring higher quality of the social sector services;**
- **Promoting mobility of the people who have acquired competences in the social sector;**
- **Providing possibility for professional recognition of people, who have worked as a personal assistant, social assistant and home helper.**

After its adaptation and localization in the Bulgarian context the product can be used both in the private and public social sector. With this aim it should be adapted to the Training

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methodology for social assistants, approved by the Executive director of the Social Assistance Agency and/or to the State Educational Requirement (Draft) for the profession social assistant that will be approved by the Minister of Education. In addition the product content should be adapted to the socio-cultural context in Bulgaria.

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