



# THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

CONDITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES







**Youth Cultural Center - Bitola**

**“Recognition and Affirmation of the Non-Formal Education  
in the Republic of Macedonia” Project**

**THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:  
CONDITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES**

**November 2009, Bitola**

**Publisher:**

Youth Cultural Center - Bitola  
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7000 Bitola  
Tel: + 389 47 233 020  
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**For the publisher:** Sasho Dodovski, M Sc.

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**Computer editing:** Pece Ilievski

**Design and printing:** Grafoprom – Bitola

**Circulation:** 500

Available in Macedonian and English

CIP – Каталогизација во публикација, Матична и универзитетска библиотека  
“Св. Климент Охридски”, Битола

371. 322. 5 (497. 7) = 111

BUOVA, Elizabeta

The Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Macedonia: conditions and perspectives / [authors  
Elizabeta Buova, Ivan Dodovski; translation into English Ognen Vangelov]. – Bitola: Youth Cultural  
Center - Bitola = Младински културен центар – Битола, 2009 – 82 стр.: граф. прикази; 24 см

Податокот за авторите преземен од колофонот. – На врвот на насл. стр. : “Recognition and  
Affirmation of the Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Macedonia” Project. - Тираж 500. –  
Библиографија: стр. 64 – 68

ISBN 9989 – 2139 – 5 – X

1. Dodovski, Ivan [автор]

а) Неформално образование – Македонија

COBISS.MK – ID 18473281

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**Sustainable  
Communities**

**CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING PROJECT**

In partnership with the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law,  
Konekt, and the Macedonian Institute for Media

This publication is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID's) Civil Society Strengthening Project, implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC).

The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) or United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Furthermore, the mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.



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## List of abbreviations:

AEC	Public Institution “Adult Education Center”
BED	Bureau for Education Development
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FOSIM	Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFE	Non-Formal Education

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SAP	Stabilization and Association Process
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VCM	Volunteer Center of Macedonia
YCC – Bitola	Youth Cultural Center – Bitola

## Chapter 1: On the project and on YCC - Bitola

The Youth Cultural Center in Bitola has been carrying out the project entitled “Recognition and Affirmation of the Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Macedonia”, which has been supported by the Institute for Sustainable Communities funded by USAID. The goal of this project is to determine the conditions and to commence a process on recognition and affirmation of the non-formal education in the Republic of Macedonia, having in mind the role of citizens’ associations as deliverers of knowledge and skills for all age groups. The project is expected to allow an initial basis for a participative approach toward the development of future strategies and policies in the field of non-formal education.

The first phase of the project included a comparative research on the European and Macedonian policies and practices in non-formal education. In the period of February-April 2009 the research carried out a survey of 63 institutions, mostly from the civil sector, but also from the private and public sector. Apart from the survey, there were two round tables with focus groups and meetings with relevant state institutions. The main focus of the research can be broken down into a few segments: European orientation and current practices in the field of NFE, the conditions in Macedonia regarding the legal framework and institutional support, the role of the non-governmental sector in the field of NFE, and exploring the options for partnerships and synergic approaches that could contribute to a real improvement of the conditions in the country with regard to the non-formal education.

The second phase of the project (June-October 2009) based on research and through the application of civil participation model (seminar, and three debates across Macedonia) developed recommendations by a relevant group of stakeholders as a starting point in establishing consistence and systematic approach in the development of strategies and policies, as well as in the implementation of activities regarding the recognition and affirmation of the non-formal education in the Republic of Macedonia.

The publication “The Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Macedonia: Conditions and Perspectives” is a final product of the two project phases: the research and the recommendations. The Youth Cultural Center – Bitola thanks the two external consultants Ms. Elizabeta Buova, MA, who did the research on the conditions of the non-formal education in Macedonia (Chapter 2), and Mr. Ivan Dodovski, Ph.D, who created the recommendations (Chapter 3).

From the very beginning of its foundation, the Youth Cultural Center – Bitola has been actively participating in the sector of non-formal education, first through the participation of the work team in different educational programs (seminars and workshops) for the strengthening of capacities, and then with its own educational

program and a core of trainers as deliverers of trainings in project and voluntary management for its own target group - the young people. Such a set of experiences, knowledge, skills and competences are in a large scale invisible and unrecognized, and this also refers to the whole civil sector. This project will allow for a successful start of a more comprehensive and serious treatment of this field in the future by all relevant factors in the country. This process also entails years-long engagement in several activities as well as monitoring procedures in order to achieve a successful standardization of quality in the sector of NFE and its recognition as a complementary way of education in the Republic of Macedonia. The civil sector will actively participate into this process.

The Youth Cultural Center – Bitola mission is to unite and develop the creative potentials of the young individuals in the region of Southeastern Europe, as well as to activate them in the process of development of the civil society.

YCC – Bitola is leading and coordinating projects and programs connecting the youth through inclusion in events that emphasize their potentials in the field of volunteering, education, culture, arts and civil initiatives.

YCC – Bitola has been operating as a Volunteer Center of Macedonia for the last three years. As a national office the VCM coordinates the exchange on local, regional and international level, organizes camps across Macedonia, trains volunteers, offers consulting services to other entities and cooperates with other local and international organizations that promote similar values. The activities of the VCM in the current year have been directed toward the implementation of the Law on Volunteering (passed in July 2007) in practice, and the development of volunteering programs for the public institutions and civil associations, as well as volunteering programs and trainings for the volunteering clubs within secondary schools and the University of St Clement of Ohrid – Bitola. The program Local Volunteering Service has been carrying out the module for voluntary management of public institutions and NGOs, as well as the module for preparation and monitoring of the volunteers' personal development.

**Zlatko Talevski, MA**



Elizabeta Buova, MA

# **Analysis on the European and Macedonian policies and practices in non-formal education**





## Chapter 2: Analysis on the European and Macedonian policies and practices in non-formal education

### 1. Introduction

*“There is no royal path which leads to learning”*  
Euclid

The non-formal education (NFE) has come a long way in its recognition, validation, verification and acceptance by the member-states of the European Union and in other parts of the world. It is part of the education cycle in the life of an individual, and it is validated in his/her professional life. This is especially true for the so-called old democracies and the “old member-states” of the EU before its eastern expansion.

The research within the project entitled Recognition and Affirmation of the Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup> mainly relates to research and analysis of the policy development and practices in the field of non-formal education in Europe, as well as analysis of the conditions and practices that have already been developed in non-formal education in the civil sector, the Macedonian context, the current status of the NFE and the role of the non-governmental sector as a player in the NFE.

In a time of constant changes and reform, the education system in the Republic of Macedonia shares the same destiny. Upon abandoning the old systems and accepting the new ones, part of the values and achievements are being neglected and forgotten, replaced by new and fresh approaches and solutions. The non-formal education is precisely in a situation in which it searches its own place under the “transition” sun. As a part of modern concepts of adult education and lifelong learning, the NFE is transforming both in the way it is understood and in its acceptance and recognition.

This project is concretely aimed at one point of view: the role of the non-governmental organizations in the NFE and the status of its recognition, affirmation and validation. The goal is to have an insight about

<sup>1</sup> Implemented by the Youth Culture Center in Bitola, and supported by the ISC through USAID funds.

the functioning of the non-governmental sector which is active in the field of the NFE in Macedonia; the problems which it faces; the existing gaps; the challenges that need to be taken into account; the alliances that need to be built; to start activities that would determine the needs of the target groups; and to allow for a basis for securing consistency and thoroughness in creating future policies, strategies and activities aimed at the recognition, acceptance (standardization, verification and validation) and affirmation of the NFE through a participatory and constructive approach. The effort in this research was aimed at mapping both the domestic and the larger context through the perspective of the future accession to the European Union and the current context in the EU regarding the NFE. Hence, all recommendations drawn from this report precisely refer to that perspective and represent a modest contribution and incitement for addressing the need from the holistic, synchronized and integral approach in the recognition, affirmation and validation of the NFE in Macedonia.



## 2. Methodology

As regards the needs of this project aimed at the role of the non-governmental organizations in the NFE and the status of its acceptance, affirmation and validation, and certainly for the needs of this document, the work was divided into several phases.

The first phase entailed acquiring information for the European trends and conditions with the NFE, especially emphasizing the development of policies and trends in the EU. This desk research incorporated documents on the European context: the legal framework, the strategic documents and the current practices both in the public and the civil sector, as well as one of the key users, the private sector. This phase focused on research regarding current documents such as various acts, international legally binding documents, recommendations, reports, strategic approaches, policies, good practices and analyses.

Simultaneously with the research on the conditions abroad, we also worked on gathering information and documents regarding the Macedonian context, primarily through the prism of the EU accession process. This was followed by a series of interviews with relevant representatives from the institutions in the governmental and non-governmental sector and the donor community regarding the current issues with the NFE and the perceptions about it in Macedonia.

The second phase focused on creating a questionnaire, realizing a pilot phase, correcting the questionnaire and carrying out the survey. After collecting the questionnaires they were appropriately processed and analyzed.

Essentially, this phase focused on research and helped in gaining insight on the conditions in the civil sector active in the field of NFE in Macedonia. Also, the research took into account the opinions/answers of a representative number of public institutions (worker's universities and national technicals) and commercial operators (consulting firms and foreign language schools).

The last phase included two round tables with focus groups comprising mainly NGO representatives, but also representatives from the private and public sector. The last phase also included the preparation of the final report which summarizes the results of all three research phases.

### 3. European context, perspectives and development of the non-formal education

***Analysis of policies, legal framework and strategic documents of the European Union, as well as the application of good practices in non-formal education, the process of lifelong learning and the relationship and harmonization with policies of other international organizations***

*Lifelong learning is a necessity, not a luxury.*

Jan Figel, Euro Commissioner

#### 3.1. European context

During the research we took the European strategy and policy that is being promoted for the EU member-states, mainly due to Macedonia's certain future accession into its structures. Therefore, the key task and challenge is the harmonization of the domestic practices and policies with those of the EU.

The functioning of all three pillars of the society has been largely assisted in the EU by the unified approach toward the fundamental values of the Community and now the Union, i.e. the respect and the implementation of all four freedoms of movement (goods, services, people/workers, capital) and above all, the free movement and exchange of ideas and good practices.

In EU itself through its institutions there are efforts to preserve the best out of many educational experiences around Europe, at the same time raising the standards, overcoming the obstacles for the learning potentials, and fulfilling the conditions and the demands of the 21st century. Bearing in mind that the education field has not been fully harmonized in the EU, the basic policies that formulate the situation of the non-formal education (NFE) are The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment, or better known as the Lisbon Agenda, and within its framework the concept and the dedication to lifelong learning (LLL). This, on the other hand, points to the fact that the approach is inspired by the interests, needs and the influence on the economy, the competitiveness within the EU, but also in global terms, the labor market, as well as the needs expressed within the concept of civil society.

The White Paper on the European Commission – A New Impetus for European Youth and the EC Communication on Lifelong Learning since 2001 have been cornerstones in this field.

Lifelong education and, more concretely, adult education has been regulated by the EU with two legally binding documents from its corpus of the *acquis communautaire*. In addition, within the current dialogue on youth, education and competitive economy, there are additional conclusions, recommendations and even principles that are applicable and recommended to all EU member-states. This is also valid for all countries that wish to join the European Union.

### *3.2. International actors and linkage of policies*

The European Union largely monitors, follows and supplements the work of many international institutions in the field of education, UNESCO and other UN agencies, the World Bank, and especially the Council of Europe and OECD. With such an approach, part of the topics and policies of the EU have been placed on the agenda of the member-states. This has resulted in several outcomes: active attitude toward the education policies and lifelong learning, and, until now, a successful prevention of doubling the efforts or developing parallel standards on education and lifelong learning.

All strategies, approaches and policies are mutually connected and coordinated, and therefore the EU has an imperative to directly connect the education and training with issues arising from economy and the labor market, such as: skills and mobility, electronic learning, lifelong learning, employment and social inclusion. Hence, for instance, the EU has created an obligation for establishing the “European Higher Education Area” (Bologna).

Therefore, in 2002 the Copenhagen Declaration for mutual cooperation in Europe in secondary expert education and vocational training has been adopted. Its mandate is to create action plans that would lead to transparency, harmonization and quality in the secondary expert education.

More importantly, the EU has been harmonizing its policies and strategic approaches primarily based on the documents that are a result of a wider consultation and thorough research, and are part of international instruments arising from the Council of Europe. Namely, the activities of the Council of Europe regarding the youth policies have been accepted and respected within the EU, i.e. its initiatives and documents are a guide and a reference for the EU.

The United Nations (UN), within its policies and campaigns, directly tackle the NFE and affirm its role, influence and contribution in the educational process around the world. The UN organizations, such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, have a unified and shared approach toward education in their missions and strategies. In all, the initiatives that the UN and its members are undertaking, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Decade of Literacy, Education for All, the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and others, are becoming a standard in formulating policies in all countries separately.

Here we should emphasize the importance of CONFITEA's reports submitted by all UN members, which are a thorough and deep analysis, but also are a self-evaluation of the conditions in each country. At the same time, we should mention the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), as an idea that gives a mutual, unified, and above all a standardized framework on education, and together with it for the NFE as well.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also provides an important contribution in the acknowledgement, acceptance and affirmation of the NFE in its documents and non-binding guidelines for the policies in this field. A special emphasis is given on the economy needs and on the standardization of the NFE, and undoubtedly the greatest OECD's contribution is the PISA standard in the secondary education.

The World Bank through its project also actively supports the NFE, which on the other hand confirms the unity of policies and the priorities of the international community.

### *3.3. EU – Definitions and background information*

The definition which can most often be found with regard to the NFE on EU level is that the non-formal education is an education and training incorporating all kinds/forms of teaching and learning activities that are not part of the formal educational process. It is a complementary activity to the formal system of education. The European Youth Forum gives one of the most comprehensive definitions on the NFE which is currently being used in the EU:

“...an organized process that gives young people the possibility to develop their values, skills and competencies others than the ones developed in the framework of formal education. Those skills - also called ‘soft skills’- include a wide range of competencies such as

interpersonal, team, organizational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organizing, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility.”<sup>2</sup>

Bearing in mind that there is a different genesis and tradition within the EU 27 on the NFE – as a concept and practice it has been existing for over 100 years in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, whereas in the Anglo—French culture it was clearly defined somewhere in the mid 20th century. Within the new EU members, including the aspiring countries, the NFE has faced a collapse during the period of transition, and thus its reestablishment and its unified understanding, and above all, its regular application

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.projects.aegee.org/educationunlimited/files/Non-formal\\_Education\\_brief.pdf](http://www.projects.aegee.org/educationunlimited/files/Non-formal_Education_brief.pdf)

is clearly a difficult task. The civil sector and certain scientists and researchers have played a key role in the affirmation and directing the focus toward universally relevant issues about the European continent.

However, apart from the existence of various definitions on the NFE which fundamentally do not differ much, there are open questions that have not yet been answered, which leads to a confusion. Namely, the definitions on the non-formal education in all relevant organizations differ. Not only do the definitions differ, but also there is a difference among them on their focus. For example, within the UN organizations, the main prerogative is to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals, and thus in their approach the NFE is often related to raising literacy rates. The EU, on the other hand, insists on the basic, i.e. the “key competences” in the process of lifelong learning, which are necessary for a knowledge based society (knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to people’s engagement in building a sustainable development and a democratic civil society).

The second issue regarding the NFE is its unreserved relation to youth policies, or, on the other hand, its exclusive relation to adult education.

And certainly, perhaps the greatest danger is the discourse on the standardization of the NFE under the premises of securing quality, guarantees as well its close relationship with the education results or the learning based outcomes, which essentially leads to a formalization of the NFE sphere. With such formalization the NFE loses its point.

### *3.4. The Lisbon Agenda and instruments for its implementation in the field of education and training*

The non-formal education is also tackled within the policies and the *acquis communautaire* of the EU on lifelong learning, whose development as a concept, policy and a strategy is given a great attention and financial support on the EU level.

The correlation of lifelong learning, the unification of the formal, non-formal and informal education, with an idea to build a knowledge-based society followed by a competitive economy on the global scene in the 21st century, in the EU itself has been determined, formalized and institutionalized. Here we should mention that these strategic commitments of the EU are also reflected in the documents that unite the higher education and the labor market: The Bologna Process on creating a European area on higher education and the recognition of qualifications through the European Qualifications Framework.

### 3.4.1. *“Education and training 2010”*

With the adoption of the Lisbon Declaration in March of 2000, the new strategic goal of the EU is to become the “most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge, capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and a greater social cohesion.” The essence of this commitment is the education and training. At the Stockholm (2001) and the Barcelona (2002) summits the strategic goals and the detailed work program for achieving the Lisbon goal until 2010 have been adopted. The framework with the 8 key competences and the European dimension in education have also been determined during the same year. This work program is also known as Education and Training 2010, and it unites the Copenhagen and the Bologna Process. As a work program that has a synergetic and coherent approach toward education and training, it has a key role in the success of the Lisbon Process.

The key competencies on lifelong learning, i.e. the European reference framework, are as follows:

1. Communication in mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competencies and basic competencies in natural sciences and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning how to learn
6. Interpersonal and social competences as well as civil competences
7. Entrepreneurship, and
8. Expression of/on culture

All of these competences are aimed at helping the personal fulfillment and development throughout an individual's life (which is a cultural capital), to enable the citizen's active participation in society, i.e. to enable inclusion (social capital) and to enable each individual to receive a quality job (human capital).

The document Education and Training 2010, although non-binding, sets higher benchmarks and goals of the Lisbon Agenda, and therefore it reads that until 2010 in the EU;

- The average rate of early drop-out children should be less than 10%;
- The total number of graduates in mathematics, natural sciences and technology should raise to at least 15%, whereas the gender imbalance in these fields should drop;
- 85% of persons at the age of 22 should have finished secondary education;
- The number of persons at the age of 15 with a lower success in reading, mathematics and natural sciences should drop in half; and

- The average participation of adult persons that are employed in the process of lifelong learning should rise to at least 12.5%.

Evidently, it would be difficult to achieve such high goals in each member-state, and perhaps it would even be more difficult for the aspiring countries, and yet such a speedy engagement is the only certain ticket to the development of the economy, raising the living standard and the accomplishment of the criteria needed to join the EU.

### *3.4.2. European Qualifications Framework*

For the same purpose, after many debates especially encouraged by the possibility to implement one of the four fundamental freedoms – the freedom of movement of people and workforce, there is also a discussion on the recognition of both diplomas and professions. This complex and very sensitive matter has often been used for daily political goals, and there was also a period when it was a standard for discrimination (with the new eastern expansion). Based on the necessity for unification and a better understanding of educational systems and the levels of acquired education and qualifications, as well as the necessity to answer to the labor market requirements, and most importantly to encourage the mobility of workforce, the European Parliament passed the Recommendation for establishing the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) on 24 October 2007. This document recommends the member-states to adopt National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) until 2012. This will enable the employers and individuals to use the EQF as a reference tool for a comparison of qualifications in different countries and through different educational and training systems.

The EQF comprises all types and levels of education and training and refers to all types of qualifications. Essentially, the EQF defines 8 reference levels on what the individual knows, understands and is able to do in the process of learning (results from learning/learning outcomes, regardless of his or her actual qualification). In other words, the EQF moves the focus from the traditional approach that emphasizes the input in learning, to the learning outcomes:

- It supports the better connection of the labor market needs (from knowledge, skills and competences) and the provided education and training;
- Helps the validation of the non-formal and the informal learning;
- Helps the transfer and the use of qualifications in different countries, educational and training systems.



There is a work group and 8 clusters that actively contribute to the implementation of the EQF. One of the clusters deals with the validation of the non-formal and the formal education.

### *3.5. Recognition, affirmation and validation of the non-formal education in the EU*

Within the EU the key discussions with regard to the NFE are focused on its recognition/affirmation, on securing quality based results founded on learning and its validation.

The recognition of the NFE can be political, social or individual. The Commission has already made some steps in this regard:

- An affirmative approach toward recognition – which is essentially a political recognition, embodied in a series of legally binding and non-legally binding documents for the EU member-states;
- The political which builds on the social, through placing the European Qualifications Framework and insisting on creating national qualifications frameworks as a direct measure to support the Lisbon Agenda, and
- With regard to the formal education – having in mind that they are complementary, through introduction of methods and approaches in the areas of learning where the input of the non-formal education is valuable. Such a complementary partnership raises the awareness of the population, especially of those who are part of the formal educational process. Awareness is also raised on volunteering, lifelong learning, the stimulation of further learning and upgrading, and the importance of the trained and flexible human capital for a country and for the Union.

The EU has provided mechanisms, such as the EU programs for funding the youth education and training in order to implement all these policies related to all types of education and the principle of lifelong learning.

The EU institutions through a synergic approach with the national institutions and non-governmental organizations are making great efforts for the recognition and validation of the non-formal education, training and learning. The operations on the validation have gone a long way, thus there are ongoing inventories on validation as well as a break-down of the NFE into two levels or steps, one of which refers to basic and elementary qualifications, and another one based on competences. Additionally, there have been proposals on the method of certifying and when it should occur. Regarding the quality of the validation, the discourse of the employers as end users of NFE and the discourse of the deliverers of training does not always correspond. The former usually talk about the need of validation of competences in relation to tasks and strategic needs, whereas the latter talk about validation in relation to curricula and working plans.



Given the circumstance, special attention is paid not to use terminology or standardized practice, as this automatically makes the NFE very rigid and difficult to make it adaptable.

The EU based on the aforementioned policies on lifelong learning, the Lisbon goals and the strengthening of NFE's role in building human capital has created a unique and transparent framework known as Euro pass. The Euro pass contains 5 instruments: EU biography, Euro pass mobility, a supplement to a diploma, a supplement to a certificate, and a language passport/portfolio. Part of them is based on self-evaluation, while another part has been institutionalized.

A youth pass has been adopted within the same context - it is a certificate that is issued in the framework of the implemented activities from the Youth Community program.

### *3.6. Non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the non-formal education in the EU*

It is important to note that the role of the non-governmental sector in the non-formal education on EU level has already been recognized at the political, social and individual levels. The NGO sector is a key instrument in leading and directing the discussions on all policies related to the NGO, especially the youth organizations. The NGOs appear as creators of policies, as drafters, as providers of NFE, and oftentimes as “regulators” in this unregulated and informal sphere. Indeed, the application of part of EU's financial instruments (the community's programs and the programs on structural reforms and institutional strengthening) for the NFE which are almost exclusively aimed at the NGOs shows and proves the awareness and the recognition of NGOs role in the NFE.

The dynamic development of this matter imposes a need for change of behaviors and the matrix of thinking in all factors of the NFE. The attitudes and the role of employers are especially important as they care for the quality of human resources in their companies, i.e. it is important to secure an appropriate understanding and attitude toward the NFE on the EU level. Namely, employers recognize the NFE and continuously care for the upgrading of skills and competences of their employees through work training, and even through providing a high certification of the workforce. On the other hand, there is a lack of modern and open thinking and vision for the future of workforce, which has become absolutely essential after the last world economic and financial crisis. Employers are a key factor for providing and sustaining the legitimacy and credibility of the NFE.

During the Czech Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2009 several conclusions on the NFE have been passed, which reflect the unity of political factors of EU member-states, as well as the willingness for its support. The conclusions explicitly read:

- Recognition of the NGOs as main deliverers of the NFE and promotion/affirmation of the NFE on all levels;
- Developing a framework on providing/securing quality for the deliverers of NFE on EU level and on national level;
- Young individuals should be included in all processes regarding their education.

Finally, the most appropriate conclusion for the European context is the paraphrased thought of Patrick Werquin from the OECD, saying that all kinds of education and training, or all kinds of learning should be recognized, but only part of them should be formalized (certified).

### *3.7. What after 2010?*

EU policies in most cases are a result of prediction and envisagement. The attempt to predict the future pays off on the long run, bearing in mind that the goals are always set competitively and on the world level. Therefore, the triangle of knowledge (education, research and innovation) as well as the “updated framework for European cooperation after 2010” will set 4 strategic goals:

- Lifelong learning and mobility ought to become reality, not an exception.
- The quality and the effectiveness of supply/delivery and of results/outputs should be improved.
- To promote equality and active citizenship
- To strengthen innovation and creativity through education and science.” Jan Figel, 29.10.2008, Paris)

The Republic of Macedonia should coordinate, synchronize and strive to follow these trends, to apply them as its own and to do everything possible to achieve them. The non-formal education is an absolute factor in this process, and the role of the nongovernmental sector in society, and certainly the NFE is a very important factor for achieving the desired results, the level of socio-economic development and the creation of quality and competitive human capital in the country.

## 4. Non-formal education in the Republic of Macedonia

*Analysis of the legal framework and institutional solutions in the Republic of Macedonia on the non-formal education and the process of lifelong learning*

*“The policies in public sector should envisage future, but also they should prepare for it today.  
The future always begins today.”*

Jan Figel, Euro Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth

### 4.1. Basic information

The first strategic priority of the Republic of Macedonia is to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic structures (EU and NATO). Hence, all domestic policies, their orientations, strategies and legal framework are harmonized primarily in accordance with the conditions for accession.

The Republic of Macedonia is a candidate country to join the EU, it is a member of the Council of Europe, a member of the UN, and it builds active and productive relations with other international organizations (OECD, the World Bank, the IMF, the Francophonie, and others). Thus the policies, strategic commitments, benchmarks, indicators, formal and informal frameworks in which these international alliances and organizations act, represent a subject of active work and active application in the present time. The Holistic Approach would be the desired orientation which would provide harmonization and timeliness in the creation and formulation of the active socio-economic dialogue in the country, with an aspiration and inspiration to become a stable knowledge based democracy with a developed economy and with a strong human and social capital.

The Republic of Macedonia is a signatory and a party of most international instruments, especially those of the UN and the Council of Europe. They have been signed and ratified and represent a part of the domestic legislation with supremacy. On the other hand, the candidate status to join the EU means a continuous process of approximation, harmonization and transposition of the European law corpus - the *acquis communautaire*. Therefore, the education sphere, in its entirety: formal, non-formal and informal,

the legislation and applied policies in the public sector in Macedonia, are a subject to harmonization, change, reform and acceptance of new solutions, standards and practices.

The already schemed frameworks and achievements of the NFE emphasize the importance to research, understand and summarize the formalized and informal ways of how international factors act. This also unites the stakeholders and the factors in the sphere of NFE both on the country level and on the level of international organizations. That sort of knowledge will have a direct influence on what seems to be an obligation, but also a challenge to all actors in Macedonia.

The definitions of types of education in Macedonia are within the following frameworks:

The formal education is an educational process which is most often aimed at the cognitive development and acquiring qualifications within a certain time frame. The formal education is mandatory and individuals acquire recognized certificates and diplomas.

The non-formal education entails every form of organized learning on a voluntary basis, and often individuals do not acquire recognized certificates.

The informal education entails a group of unplanned educational processes that occur on daily basis in the family, at the workplace or during each individual's spare time.

It should be emphasized that Macedonia before its independence used to have a defined active policy in the field of NFE. Albeit in the previous system the state was the provider of the NFE in the primary, secondary and tertiary education, the focus onto the NFE was not neglectable. It referred to elementary processes such as literacy and creating opportunities for completing the primary and secondary education in adults. It also referred to opportunities for personal upgrading in a certain number of skills (languages, crafts) and opportunities given to the younger population to realize part of its interests through various forms of organized activities out of the formal system. In this period the work of the andragogic institute was notable, which died out during the early period of transition to a new system. From then on the scientific work, researches and participations in creating policies by experts is disorganized, without the possibility for continuity and institutional memory for the processes of social transformation.

#### *4.2. Analyses of current issues*

The greatest part of the information on policy developments in education, and certainly in the field of NFE, may be acquired from the analyses and reports that the Republic of Macedonia submits to international organizations as its member. These reports and analyses reflect Macedonia's progress in reforms and in the introduction of new forms of work, especially regarding its capacities – legal, institutional, budgetary and expert – so as it would be capable of implementing those reforms and policies. Here we

ought to mention the regular reports to EU institutions, the regular dialogue within the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the Accession Partnership; the annual report of the European Commission for Macedonia's Progress; the reports and recommendations by the European Training Foundation; the reports of UN instruments; the national report as a contribution toward the CONFITEA IV report (which is perhaps the most comprehensive self-analysis on the conditions of all forms of education in Macedonia); the reports from the Council of Europe under its respective instruments; the World Bank reports, etc. Here we should also add that the international organizations of which Macedonia is either a member or it intends to join form their insight on Macedonia's progress in reforms and in its application of harmonized policies through reports on implementation, institutions and reforms capacities. The insight can also be obtained from bilateral or multilateral projects that support structural and institutional reforms.

The National Report of the Republic of Macedonia from April 2008, as an addendum to CONFITEA IV is indeed an important, comprehensive and a realistic document which openly notes all processes and shortcomings. As regards the NFE (or as noted in the report – the adult education) it detects the chaotic conditions both in the institutions and at the deliverers, as well as the perception and the recognition of the non-formal education in all social spheres. The regular reporting and dialogue on technical and political levels with the EC services, within the Stabilization and Association Process and the regular annual EC Report for Macedonia's Progress in the SAA, clearly note both the progress in reforms and the shortcomings related to concrete policies and harmonization, i.e. the orientation and following current and actual EU policies. Hence, these reports note the slow implementation of the laws on secondary education and adult education particularly in the introduction of an appropriate institutional framework; there is a lack of an appropriate data collection and their statistical procession and presentation; there is a lack of evidence based policy creation; and there is a weak progress in the sphere of lifelong learning and non-formal education. This knowledge together with the analyses on the current conditions and the recommendations for their improvement may be found in the European Training Foundation Report that tackles Macedonian policies and priorities in light of EU policies and directives. The report was published in 2008 and it is a document that offers the most comprehensive “x-ray” of the conditions in Macedonia regarding education. On the other hand, it is important to mention that the EU as the largest donor has always supported the approximation processes with appropriate financial instruments, in order to assist a speedier transition.

Until now the only analysis on the conditions in the NFE sphere has been conducted by the NGO Triangle – Center for Non-Formal Education in its document *The Non-Formal Education as a Potential – Mechanism and a Tool for Lowering Unemployment in Macedonia* (October 2008). Albeit this document has a limited mission – analysis of the role and effect of the NFE in Macedonia in building individual but

also social capacities as well as its influence on the unemployment - it still gives an excellent breakdown of the conditions in NFE within the NGO sector and the institutional sector. The document also contains data for the level of informed opinions and awareness in the population for the NFE possibilities and for personal development. The research gives a special emphasis on NFE capabilities to overcome the unemployment problem.

The report *It Is a Long Way to a Knowledge Based Society - Macedonian Education in Light of Benchmarks and Indicators in Relation to "Education and Training 2010"*, was published in June 2009 by the FOSIM. The paper analyzes education policies in Macedonia, especially with regard to the Lisbon Agenda and the EC document Education and Training 2010 and how the goals can be achieved. This report through the prism of Education and Training 2010 notes the shortcomings in Macedonian education, also previously noted in other reports, and it calls for taking concrete actions and measures by the Government in order to overcome some of the weaknesses. It also calls for a revision of the manner in which policies are adopted in the public sector, as those policies should support the transformation of education in accordance with European practices, priorities and perspectives.

#### *4.3. Legislative context*

The legal framework on formal education in Macedonia has been largely completed and harmonized, but it is still insufficient. The newer solutions due to their large media coverage are well known to the larger audience: the introduction of a 9 year elementary school, mandatory secondary education, introduction of new curricula, the Bologna process/declaration, the credit transfer system, graduation, etc. The harmonization with the legislature, or better said, with EU recommendations and policies, is also being covered by the media. The novelty in this sphere is the adoption and enforcement of many strategic documents and laws: The National Strategy for Development and Education in Macedonia 2005-2015, the National Employment Strategy, Strategy for the Youth, Information Society Strategy, other sector strategies, the Law on Volunteering, the Law on Establishing a National Agency for European Youth Programs and Mobility, the Law on Adult Education, the Initiative and Action Plan for the Decade of the Roma Inclusion, the Law on Equal Opportunities and the National Action Plan on Equal Opportunities, as well as policies on inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and the last document before its adoption – the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The same legal framework implicitly and indirectly regulates the sphere of non-formal education. The non-governmental sector has initiated an active debate on policies, but it has not been widely publicized.

The Law that most explicitly deals with the non-formal and the informal education is the Law on Adult Education (January 2008), which automatically excludes the primary and pre-primary education. This Law faced many difficulties in its enforcement. As an illustration, at the end of almost a one-year period of its validity, only one measure was taken - the Director of the Adult Education Center was appointed. Until the present, the Law essentially is in a phase of establishing the institutional arrangement for its implementation, and within the last 6 months there have been efforts to pass the acts for the center's registration and operation. There also have been some employments and exchange of experiences with the countries in the region where this process is in its advanced phase.

The cooperation with the NGO sector as one of the most affected sides in the NFE is partial and insufficiently developed, which is a result both of the slow start of the law enforcement and the conditions in the NGO sector. At the present there is a deficiency in the active dialogue about accreditations, the way how to regulate space and the model in the future, the process of validation and monitoring of the NFE deliverers, and a wide knowledge and transparency in work (such a dialogue, however, exists on NGO and individual level).

The Law on Adult Education aims at: initiating and sustaining a positive approach to education of all age groups during a lifetime period; creating conditions for educational mobility; creating a dynamic cooperation between educational institutions with the public, private and nongovernmental sector; strengthening the cooperation among institutions of formal and non-formal education and creating an efficient cooperation with the NGO sector; and last but not least assisting in creating a wide network of NFE providers.

The Law should also encourage activities that would contribute to:

- Lowering the percentage of illiterate population
- Expanding the primary education in adults
- Creating possibilities in expanding knowledge, learning skills and a system of values for a better quality of life
- Raising potentials and education options
- Improving social cohesion
- Creating possibilities for education and training for the needs of the labor market
- Educating and training adult population in accordance with modern flows

In essence, the obligations arising from the Law are indeed large and complex. From the NGO perspective as a partner and a deliverer of NFE, all activities arising from the Law are important, but most important at the moment are two issues: when and how the dialogue with the NGO deliverers of NFE



programs as partners and stakeholders will be established, and the manner in which the accreditations for deliverers will be issued, how certifications will be acquired, what the approach and the process of validation would be and what its capabilities in adapting to those processes will be.

The Law on Adult Education entails and regulates a segment of lifelong learning and is not a solution for a comprehensive and coherent policy on lifelong learning. For instance, this Law does not entail the NFE in pre-school age or in primary education. This Law has not been intended to recognize previous education and training of workforce (such data, despite the digitalization of employment agencies, is not recorded as there is no legal basis for such recording yet). The Law on Adult Education does not provide for organizing a system and developing a methodology on data collection and their statistical processing. However, this Law may enable the Center for Adult Education to initiate a resolution of all previously mentioned issues, in cooperation with the appropriate ministry and relevant institutions. It may revitalize the Strategy for Lifelong Learning project which will define the state's policies and approaches in creating, nurturing and investing in its own human and intellectual capital.

With the adoption of the Law on Establishing a National Strategy for European Youth Programs and Mobility and with the establishment of the institution itself, the Republic of Macedonia has gained access to financial instruments provided by the EU for a full implementation of the lifelong learning concept. Namely, the National Agency has the role to enable citizens, legal entities and NGOs in Macedonia to take active participation in the community programs on lifelong learning for the period until 2013 (Gruntvig, Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Jean Monet and the Transversal Program), as well as in the Youth in Action program. In that sense, viewed from the perspective of the NGOs active in NFE, the work of the National Agency and the secured access to community programs on lifelong learning and Youth in Action will provide possibilities for sustainable operations, and above all accepting experiences and good practices from other countries that have been participating in those programs.

#### *4.4. Strategy for lifelong learning*

There is no strategy for lifelong learning or another strategic or legal document in Macedonia. Lifelong learning, understood as all-applicable learning activity in a period of a lifetime with the purpose of improving an individual's knowledge, skills and competences within personal, civil, social and/or employment perspective (EC's definition), is equally understood in the Republic of Macedonia. There is an initiative for a Strategy, however the competent ministry apart from its acceptance and its affirmative attitude, has not undertaken any activities that would mean an active, participatory and inclusive work on it. The national strategy on lifelong learning is essentially a document that would secure an integral relation of institutions



and a full coverage of all educational processes in the Republic of Macedonia, in a span of a lifetime. In classical sense, the strategy would entail primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education, albeit all those segments have already been encompassed with individual laws and national plans that have been harmonized with the EU *acquis* and European practices. However, all these individual policies, legal and institutional bases ought to be connected to a strategy on lifelong learning that would unite, connect and direct the European perspective, and would include all the domains that have not yet been included or have been omitted. It would also provide a unique and unified approach, especially toward non-formal and informal education.

What is most expected from such an approach is to adapt current systems to a sustainable strategy for lifelong learning; to connect the education process with labor market with a special emphasis on skills, lifelong learning and population mobility; to connect with the scientific development; to enable different forms of lifelong learning to be provided by the education sector and other deliverers in education. In other words this approach should provide possibilities for education and lifelong learning out of the current forms of education, by which every individual would be offered various options for individual education, upgrading and growth. Such a strategy would envisage legal and administrative solutions, institutions and appropriate mechanisms for its creation, implementation and monitoring. All this should be placed in a viable timeframe that would be appropriately and realistically funded.

As regards the non-formal education, the Strategy shall provide a coherent approach from the earliest periods of the individual's life and shall offer coverage of spheres and possibilities that have not yet been covered or explicitly noted by current laws and plans.

#### *4.5. European Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Framework*

Another European document that should be covered in this analysis and is directly related to the NFE is the Unique Qualifications Framework and its counterpart in Macedonia, the National Qualifications Framework. Albeit this document is among the newest in EU on policies and trends in education, in essence it completes the picture both in education and in its real and relevant connection to the labor market in order to secure a unification in understanding of qualifications among all employers in EU member-states and in all educational systems that produce human capital for the labor market. It also encourages mobility of labor, flexibility and its education in the current context, i.e. it secures the embodiment of the principle of lifelong learning.

The initial work on the National Qualifications Framework has already commenced in the Republic of Macedonia. A national council/body that should work on creating a NQF has been established in 2009.

On national level the deadline (2012) that is applicable for member-states on harmonization with the UQF by applying the NQF has been accepted. In such conditions and until present it appears to be almost impossible to meet this deadline, bearing in mind the experiences of member-states and the fact that the process itself can be completed in approximately 5 years. We are emphasizing this fact in order to note the risk of adopting a document that is non-applicable. Having in mind the practices in the 21st century there is a danger that this document would engage the public with delay in the process of creating the NQF, in the transparency and the will to take on participants from all three sectors of society.

The policy on lifelong learning that completely covers the non-formal education, the NQF and the application of current legislation and action plans, requires a realistic and yet a speedy definition of measures and activities, and above all this means an appropriate and realistic funding. There are parameters regarding the triangle of knowledge (education, research, innovations) within the EU directly related to the Lisbon Strategy/Declaration and more concretely, "Education and Training 2010". Given the Macedonian economic condition and the current economic and financial world crisis, the achievement of those goals would be difficult within the current budgetary projections. Nevertheless, the progress in the process of European integration on lifelong learning and the focus on implementing the activities must not be lost.

The implementation of the concept on lifelong learning as well as the recognition, affirmation and validation of the NFE will be largely financially supported through pre-accession instruments such as IPA, the Community's programs, but also through individual projects of multilateral and bilateral donors.

This research collected documents and reports, as well as the analysis on products and projects implemented by NGOs in Macedonia regarding the NFE and the education reforms. However, the research also brought insight into the conditions of the NFE in Macedonia through field research. For that purpose we have created a questionnaire that gathered information on the conditions, capacities, perceptions and the readiness and expectations of NGO representatives active in the NFE sphere. A certain number of economic operators and public institutions were also included. Apart from the survey, there were a series of interviews with representatives of state institutions in charge of the development, implementation, promotion and validation of the NFE, with representatives of the private sector and with NGO representatives. Part of the insight that had been previously acquired through the survey was also confirmed through the interviews. However, the interviews acquired new information on the establishment and the functioning of the Center for Secondary Vocational Education, for the National Agency for European Youth Programs and Mobility, for the usefulness of training and how it is organized, and for the use of individual resources and deliverers of NFE by state administration. There were discussions on the European perspective, on

the genesis of the Law on Adult Education, on models for issuing accreditations for NFE deliverers, and on the validation process, conditions and criteria. Some discussions also pointed out that certain institutions cannot contribute or give their own perspective on the NFE i.e. knowledge on lifelong learning and NFE as its part in some of the relevant institutions, as well as on other information that add to the picture on the conditions in Macedonia in the NFE sphere.

## 5. Non-governmental organizations: players and stakeholders in NFE

The main focus of this analysis is the recognition and affirmation of the NFE through the perspective of NGOs in Macedonia as players, stakeholders and deliverers of NFE. At the same time the analysis does not lose the focus from the current processes in the country, i.e. the process known as integration, approximation and accession to the European Union.

Macedonia is in an extended period of transition, and the NGO sector had a key role in the field of non-formal education. This sector had and still has the experience of both sides – receiver and giver of services, but also as a third sector it has the role and responsibility of an active player in the life, policies and practices in the country.

Despite the legal framework that regulates the work and functioning of civil associations in Macedonia and the current laws on education, until recently there was no law or provision in the domestic legislation that regulates the role and work of the NGOs in NFE. The Law on Adult Education has been intended to cover those issues to a certain extent, but not fully.

The non-governmental sector in the last two decades has actively been developing and growing precisely due to its exposure and openness to training and learning in different spheres and subjects, and found itself in a situation to also be a deliverer of training services for all three sectors of society. The situation until the beginning of the new millennium was almost absurd regarding the “soft skills” for management and creating policies, where the NGO sector was far more ready and more trained than the state/public sector. That is how the public administration began actively cooperating with the NGO sector and started using its services in acquiring knowledge on creating policies, strategic planning or managing the project cycle. This was one of the ways to strengthen the trust between the two sectors, but also to improve cooperation.

On the other hand, it should be noted that current legal provisions do not recognize the input, knowledge and/or the acquired skills when it comes to employment in public administration or promotions in the service. The situation is slightly better when it comes to the private sector, and it is significantly better when it comes to trainings that have an international standard for certain professions.

Until today as regards the role and place of the NGOs in the non-formal education, there have been very few researches, analyses and situation assessments, and even fewer attempts to commence a dialogue and to create a platform or principles that would unite the NGOs on the non-formal education.

Namely, apart from occasional analyses carried out by a few non-governmental organizations at various regional events, and one analysis carried out by the NGO Triangle – Center for Non-Formal Education as

an addition to CONFITEA VI, there are not any more concrete information on the conditions and trends in the NGO sector regarding the non-formal education.

Hence, such a project and analysis by carrying out a survey is certainly welcome. This project contributes to the expansion and sharing of information among the NGOs and wider. It also raises the awareness on the need for acting and uniting, and encouraging a dialogue on where and how to direct future efforts of NGOs active in NFE. At the same time, the analysis should encourage NGOs to take a proactive role in creating national policies in the European context. Here we should note that there is a legal and institutional framework that gives room and possibilities for direct intervention: The Law on Secondary Vocational Training, the Law on Adult Education, the Law on Establishing a National Agency for European Youth Programs and Mobility, the Law on Volunteering, the Strategy for Youth, the Strategy for Education in the Republic of Macedonia, the Strategy for Integration into the European Union and other acts and documents that are either valid or are in preparation, such as for instance the still inactive initiative on National Strategy for Lifelong Learning.

Youth organizations play a special role within the NGO sector on the affirmation, recognition and the active observation of European and regional scene regarding the non-formal education. This comes as a result of their intensive linkage to the processes on European level, as well as from the need for active creation of policies in this field in the country that are almost always linked to the European context. These youth organizations can be bearers and initiators of the processes of accepting positive and good experiences from other countries, initiators for networking and participations in platforms, formal and informal ways of functioning, uniting around the principles of securing quality and validation of the NFE.

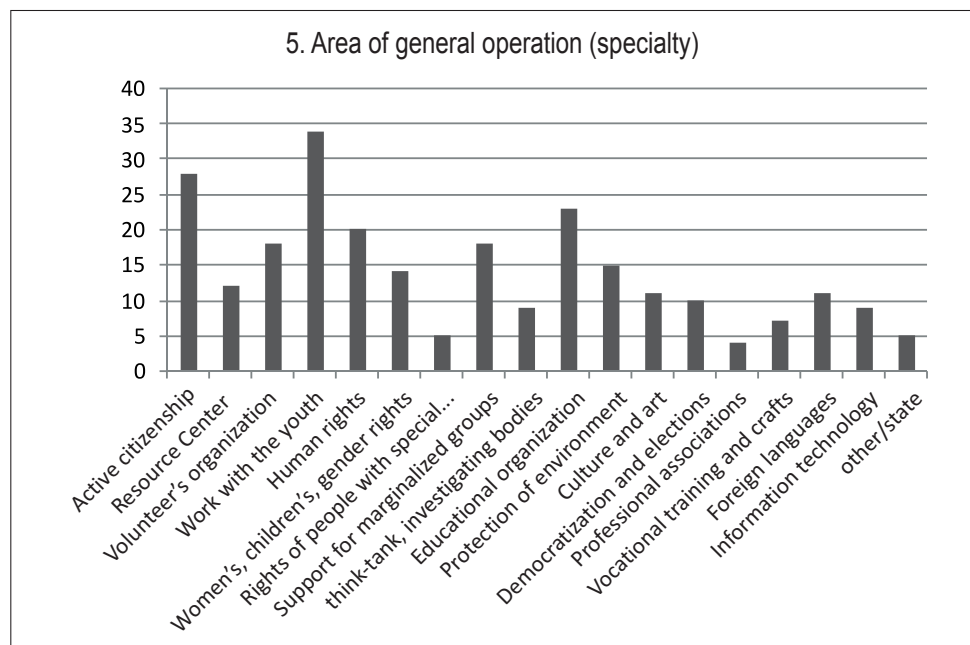
## 6. Research results

*“By visiting seminars and trainings abroad,  
I will complete my post-graduate studies in Macedonia.  
Hence, I pay here for the knowledge that I informally  
acquire abroad in order to verify it.”*  
A statement by an NGO representative

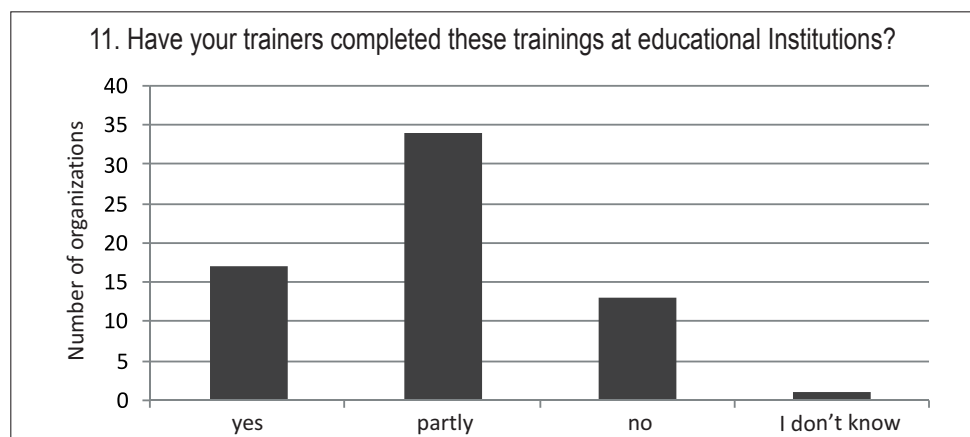
The key component of the research was the survey, i.e. the questionnaires which would provide for an analysis on the current conditions with the stakeholders/players in the NFE regarding the information, validation, accreditation, knowledge of EU policies and domestic conditions, etc. The research itself was carried out with the help of an extensive questionnaire containing over 70 questions and numerous sub-questions, and it was distributed to 120 organizations/institutions. Sixty-three of the questionnaires were completed and returned. Given that the non-governmental sector comprises 6000 associations of citizens, half of which are active, the number of the NGOs that work in the NFE sphere is significantly smaller, but their role in society is undoubtedly important. It should be emphasized that the questionnaire was sent to the organizations and they had sufficient time to respond.

The questionnaire was organized in 7 batteries questions that contained questions on internal organization and questions on human resources management. Those questions are always sensitive, and the largest part of the questionnaire was aimed at perceptions on the NFE, on the NGO sector and on their own readiness to go through a process of accreditation.

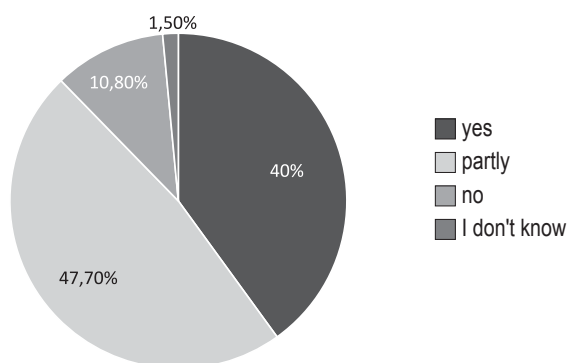
It is not surprising that most of the NGOs operate in the two largest cities in the country, Skopje and Bitola, which on the other hand is telling of the unequal development of the NGO sector in Macedonia. It is a surprising fact that the dominant part of the organizations was formed in the last 6-8 years. Most of the organizations act in the field of active citizenship, work with youth and education/training, and more than half of the organizations are small and have a few staff.



As regards the trainers in these organizations, we have come to the information that most have acquired appropriate training through education institutions, courses and seminars. The length of training varies from 1 day to 1 year (the latter is over 30%).

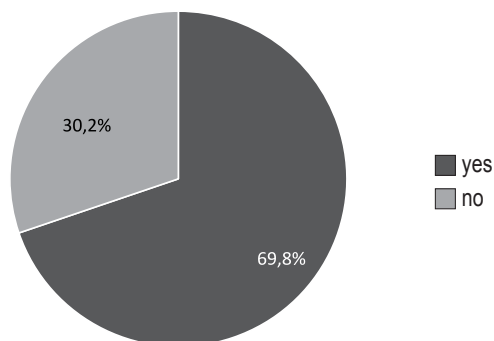


## 12. Have your trainers completed trainings through courses and seminars?



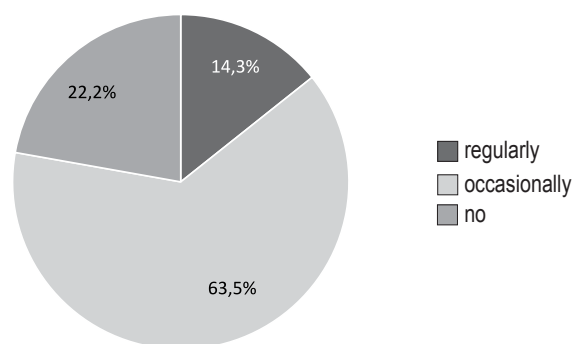
It is interesting that over 90 percent of interviewees still go to training for upgrading in the same or in a related field, and that a larger part of the organizations provide funds for training, which talks about a developed culture and awareness on the need for investing in their own human capital. The fact that almost 70% require new training staff talks about the demand on the market and the quality of training that is being offered. Over 60% of organizations occasionally provide funds for new staff.

## 16. Do you need new training staff?



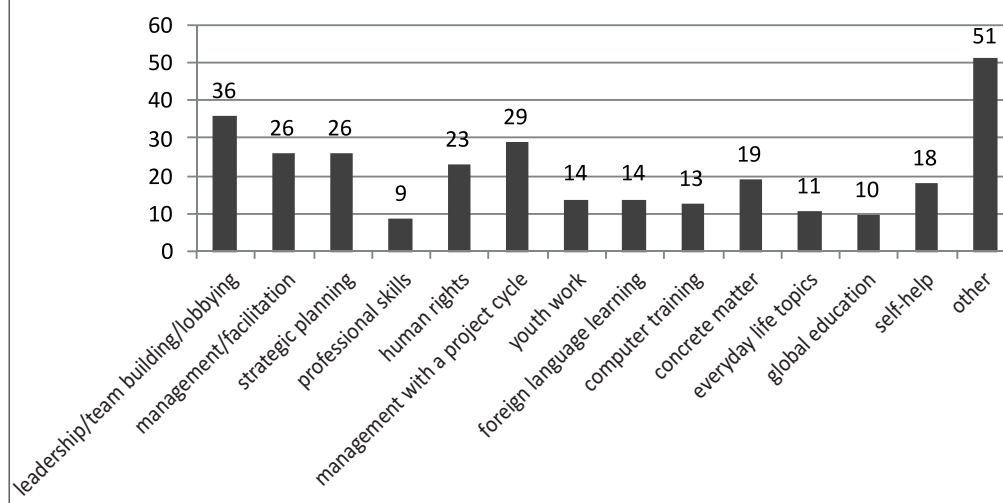


17. Do you provide funds for new staff within your regular planning and operation?

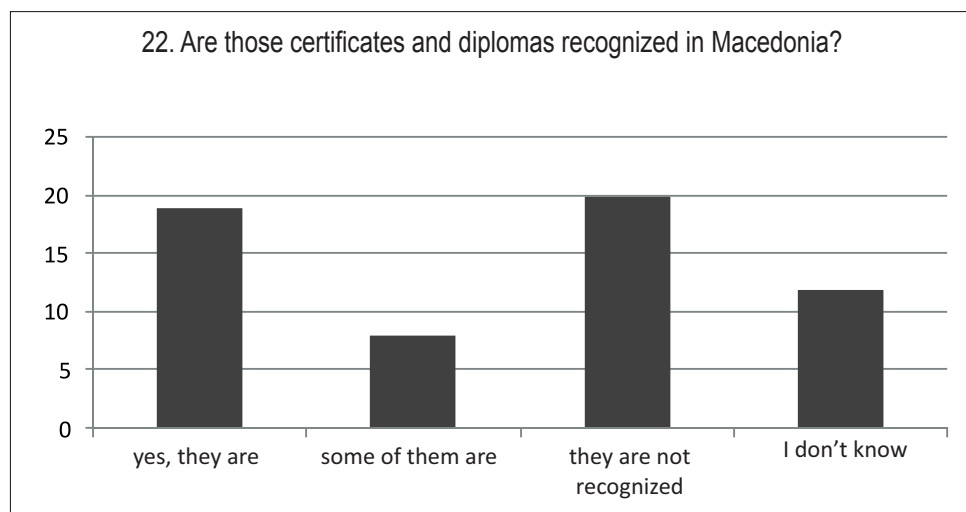
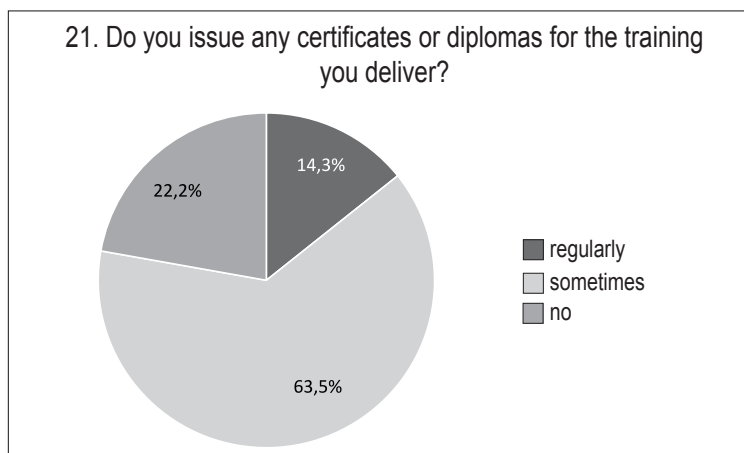


Regarding the questions on the perceptions for themselves and for the NFE, 76.2% answered that they are not part of formal education, and as many as 11% are not sure, whereas over 90% from the organizations answered that come or work in the domain of the NFE.

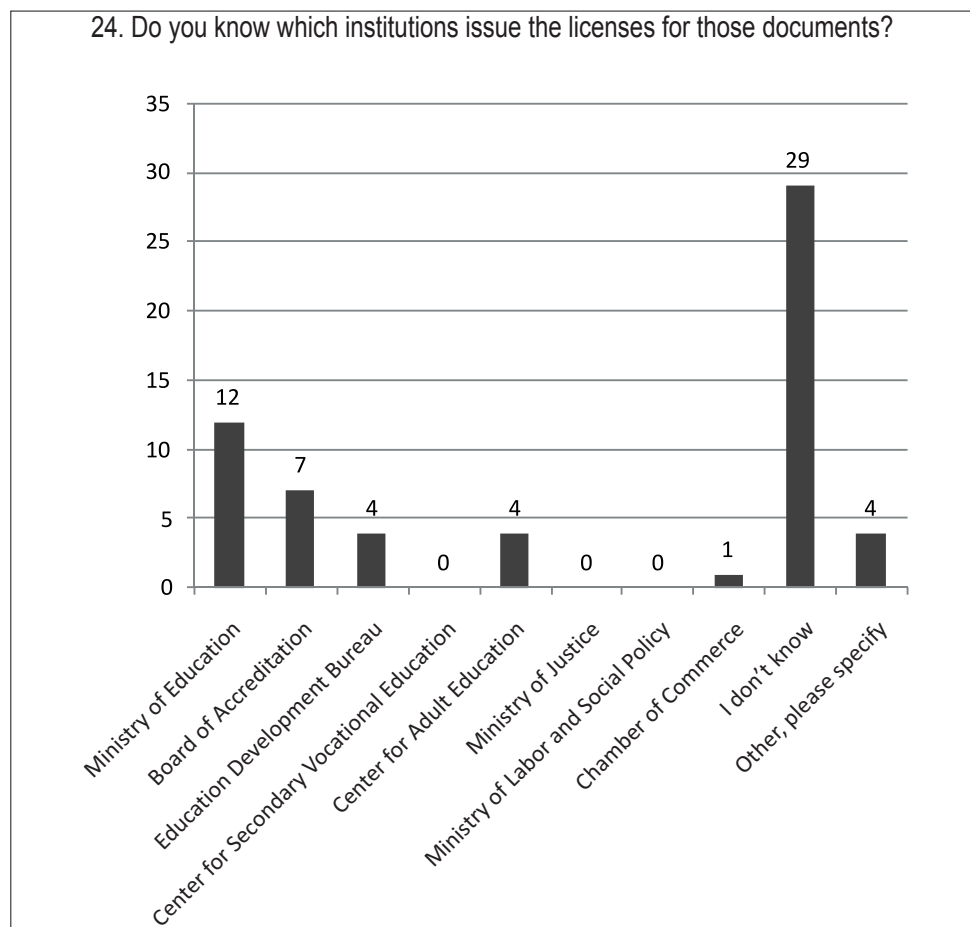
18. What kind of training does your organization deliver?



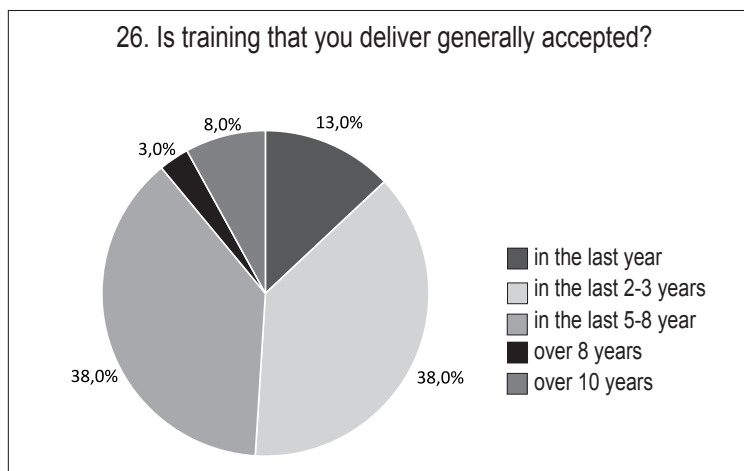
Almost 43% of the organizations grant diplomas for the completed training, and 46% do that occasionally. On the other hand, answering the question whether the granted certificates and diplomas have been recognized in the Republic of Macedonia, the percentage of positive and negative answers is approximate. Most of the interviewees believe that the diplomas and certificates that they grant are not recognized in the formal education system.



Asked whether they know which institution issues licenses for granting certificates and diplomas, most interviewees answered negatively, and a part believed that such licenses are issued by the Ministry of Education and Science. This leads to a conclusion that most organizations are not acquainted with the current laws that regulate this question.



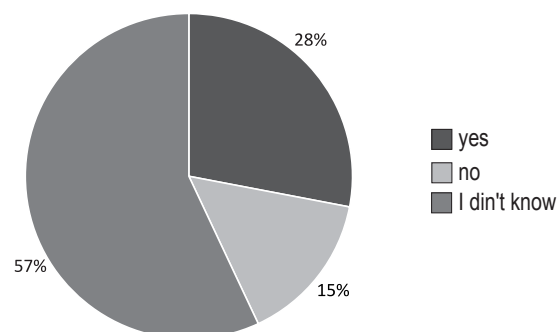
Asked when the NFE was accepted in the country, most of the interviewees said that it had occurred in the last 2-3, or 5-8 years. When this fact would be put in correlation with how old the organizations are, i.e. with how long they have been operating, it becomes evident that there is a growing need for training, but also for a higher awareness in those that need such training. In other words, the acceptance of NFE by the wide public and professionals has had a positive trend in the last decade.



Most of the organizations deem that the trainings they deliver are either recognized or partially recognized in the society, but more than 50% do not have knowledge about the situation in the region or in EU, which speaks about these organizations' interest for the conditions outside the borders of Macedonia, and also about the limitation of their vision. On the other hand, the question whether such trainings are accepted in the EU was answered positively by 70%.

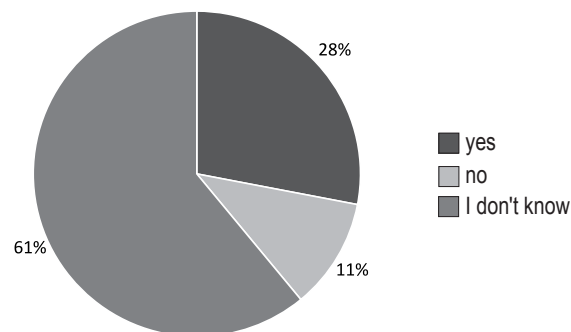


25b. Is training you provide recognized in EU member-states?

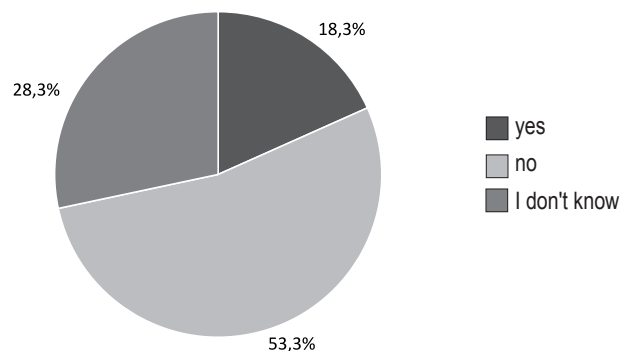


Sixty-one percent said that they have no knowledge whether there is a unified framework for the recognition of NFE in Europe. Asked whether they work in accordance with European instruments - the EU Portfolio, Youth Pass, Euro Pass, ECR, and the Bologna Declaration - as many as 53.3% answered negatively, while a high percentage – 28.3% is unaware. The 18.3% that work in accordance with some of the tools, usually use the EU Portfolio and Euro Pass. When it comes to the previous questions it is interesting to note that the large gap and lack of information within the NGOs on current policies and EU instruments is being continuously confirmed.

27. Is there a unified framework for the recognition of the non-formal education in Europe?

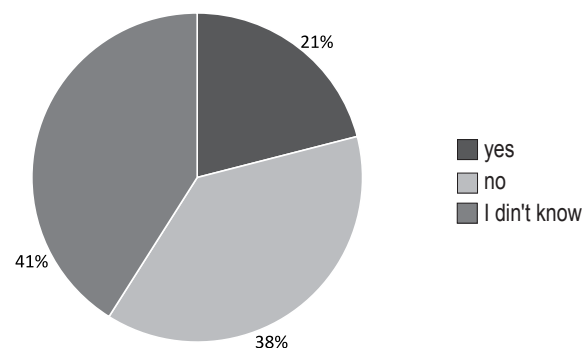


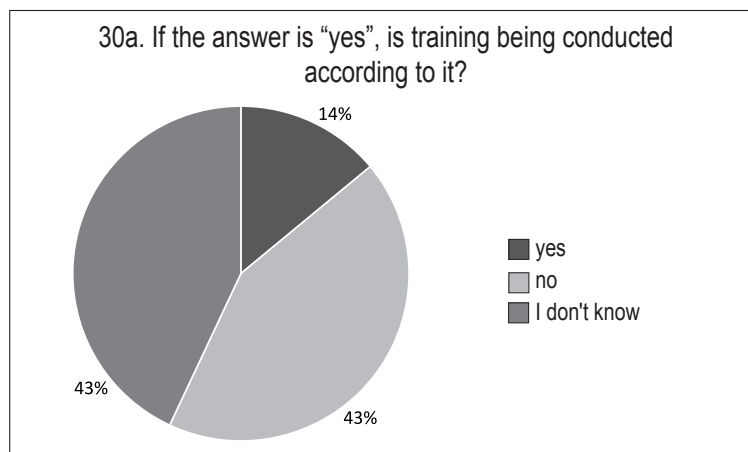
28. Do you work according to European instruments: EU Portfolio, Youthpass, Europass, EQF, Bologna Declaration, and other?



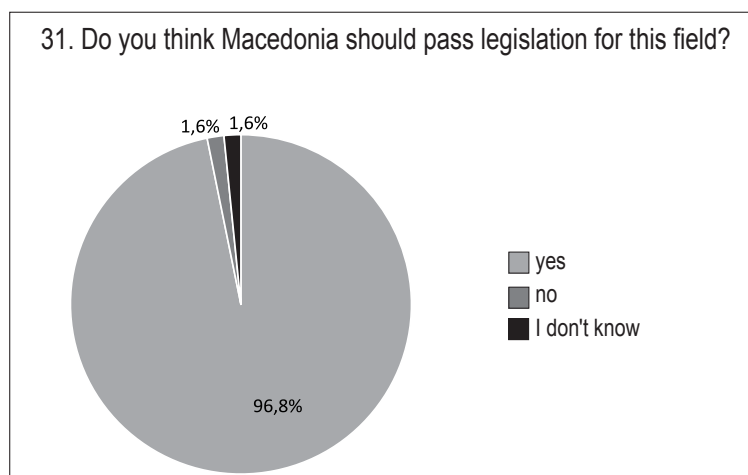
The questions on the conditions in Macedonia received some very interesting answers. As many as 74.2% believe that Macedonia should accept and recognize European instruments. Asked whether there are legal regulations in Macedonia on the NFE, 38% answered negatively, while 41% do not know. The 21% answering positively believe that there is a law regulating the NFE in Macedonia, 43% answered negatively or are unaware whether such regulation is being implemented. Organizations working in the NFE sphere have a positive attitude on reaching European conditions, but on the other hand, there is a lack of knowledge of the domestic scene: most of them are unaware of the legislation and whether it exists, and an almost identical number do not know whether such legislation is implemented.

30. Is there legislation in Macedonia that regulates the NFE?



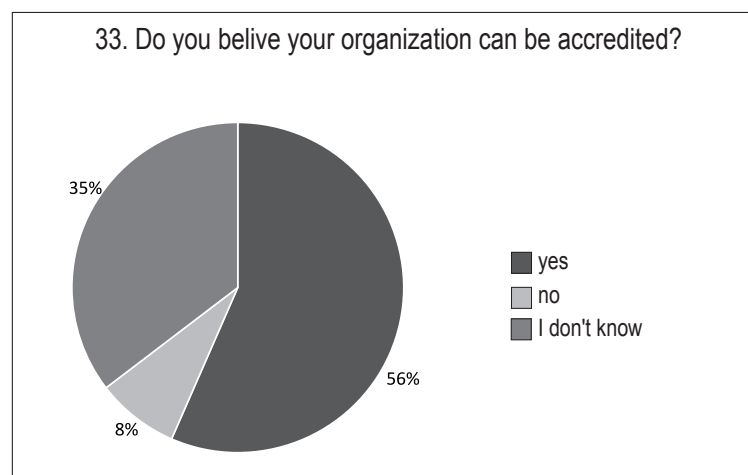


Hence, it is not surprising that there is a high percentage (96.8) that answered positively whether Macedonia should adopt legislation in the NFE sphere.

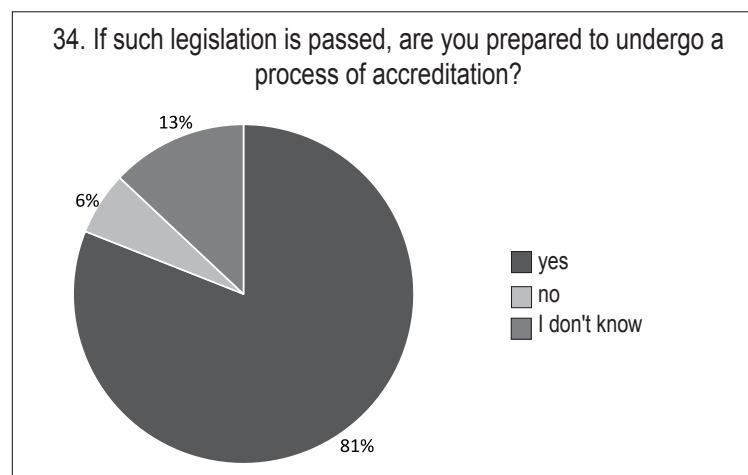


The question whether the organizations would need a license if such regulation is adopted received 66% positive answers, but there is also a high number (23%) of those who are either not informed or do not

know. Subsequently, asked whether their organization could be accredited, 56% answered positively, but as many as 35% do not know.

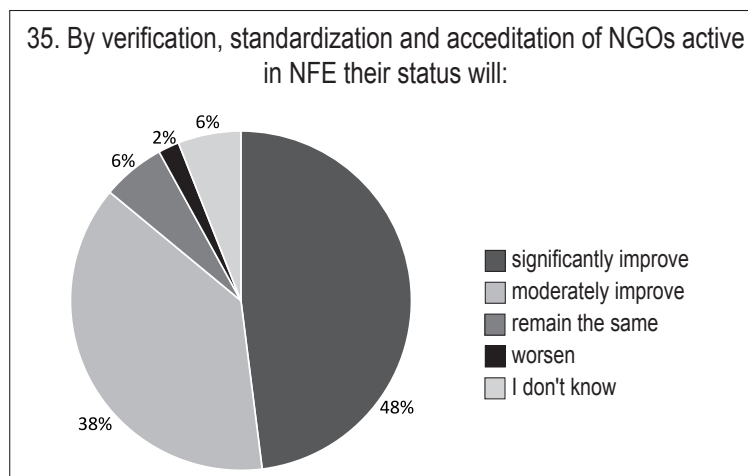


On the other hand, there is a positive attitude and readiness toward the question: "Are you ready to go through the process of accreditation", to which 81% answered positively.



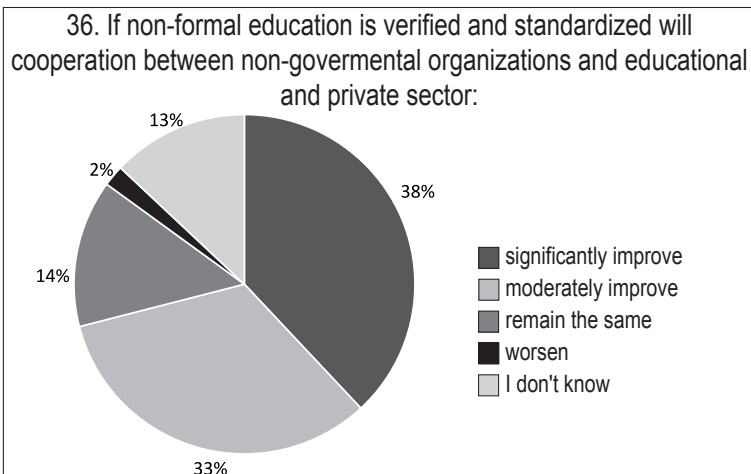


Asked whether by standardization and accreditation the status of the NGOs would improve, 48% believe that this would occur, while 38% believe that it would moderately improve.

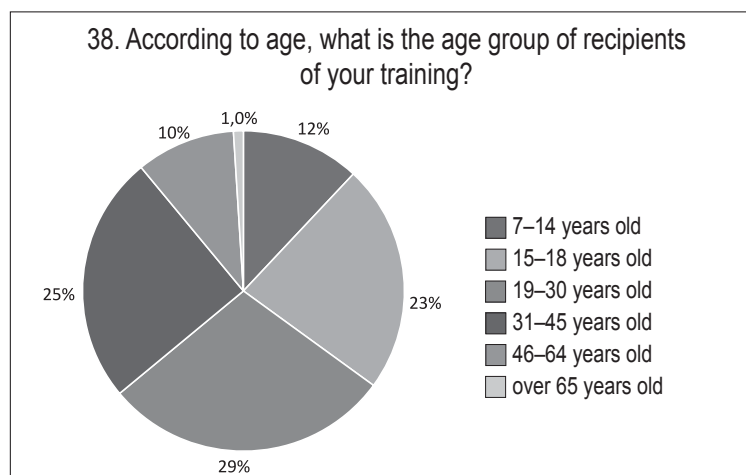


The questions on NGO perceptions on NFE may lead to a conclusion that there is a large percentage – over 40% of the total number of interviewed organizations that have no knowledge on the NFE, or on its recognition and acceptance in the region with regard to the conditions in the EU and in Macedonia respectively. At times the percentages of answers with “I do not know” are high (35%), which assumes even an indifferent attitude to the matter. This speaks about an urgent need for information, dissemination of information and raising the awareness, so as they would not only be informed regarding their own situation, but would act proactively on the need for upgrading and establishing practices and systems of accreditation.

Asked whether by the verification and standardization there would be a better cooperation among the NGOs, the educational institutions and the private sector, 38% answered positively and deemed that it would significantly improve, whereas 33% said that it would moderately improve. In the textual part the explanations vary from an improvement of how NFE is understood, to cooperation, networking, partnership, and exchange of experiences, teachers and styles, as well as a unity in achieving a standardized accreditation.

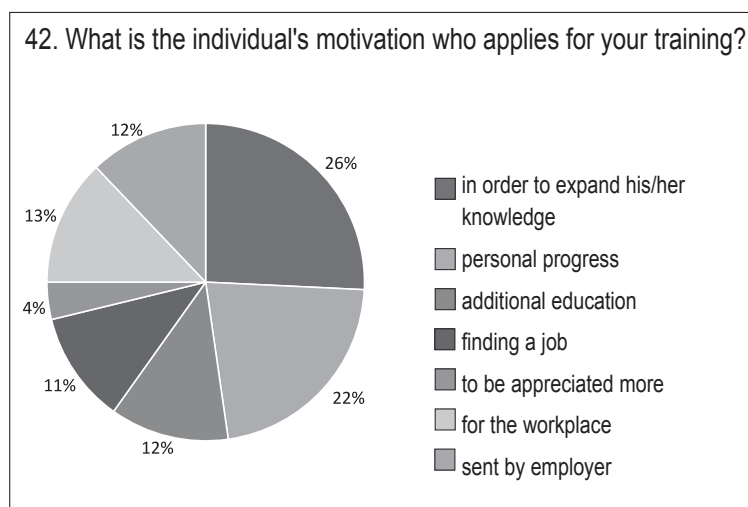


According to the age structure, most of the clients in the NFE range from 15 to 45 years of age, which speaks of the fact that this age group is highly interested in upgrading of its knowledge and skills. Also, the fact that the age group over 46 years shows little interest, and bearing in mind the fact that the unemployment in Macedonia is over 35%, most of whom are a long-term job seekers, speaks about the culture and age-based discrimination, and about the insufficient measures to include this population.

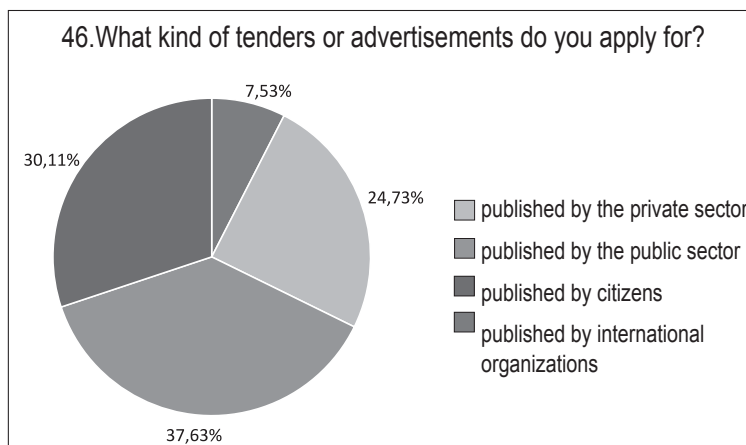


As regards the origin of the clients that seek training, the data points to an equal representation of the public, private and the non-governmental sector. On the other hand, the question on the social category gives results that coincide with those on the age categories: most of the trainees are employees, students, pupils or job-seekers, and the lowest percentage falls on housewives, retirees, farmers, persons with special needs, etc.

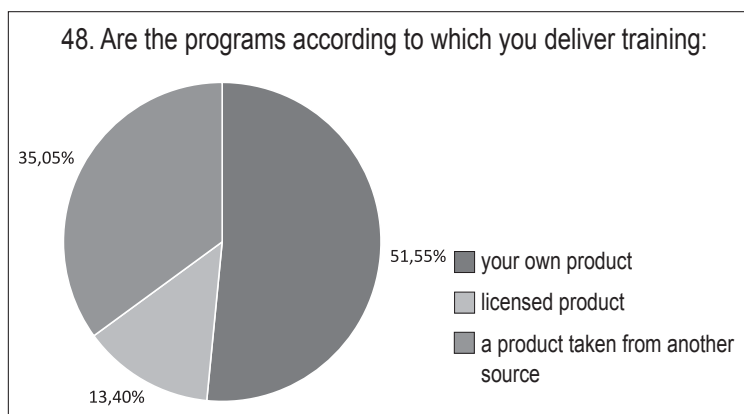
Most of the interviewees gave the following reasons why they attend training: expanding of own knowledge (26%) and finding a job (22%). Most of the trainees are individuals (43%), and then are the organizations (37%) which speaks about the organizations' interest to invest in their human potential.



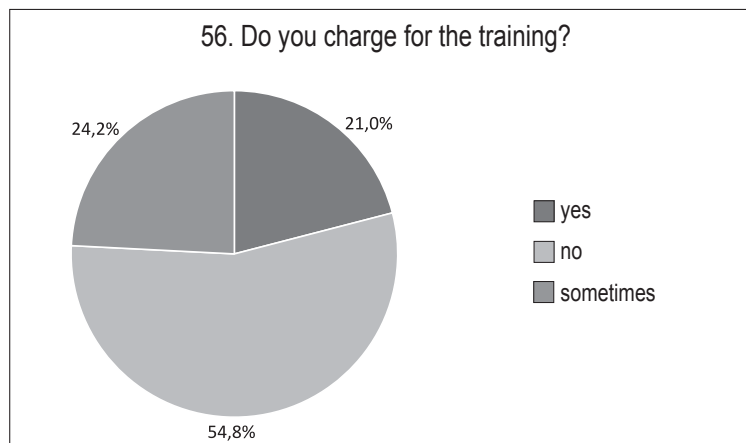
The NFE organizations that took participation in this survey sometimes publish their trainings (47%), while 31% do that regularly. The question whether they deliver their trainings on public tenders and advertisements, the answers yes, no and sometimes have an equal distribution. The organizations often apply for bids opened by other NGOs or by international organizations. This leads to the conclusion that very few of the bids/tenders are opened by the public or the private sector. (The public sector is still dependable on foreign donations and funds, which is in essence hidden information on whom the trainings are intended for).



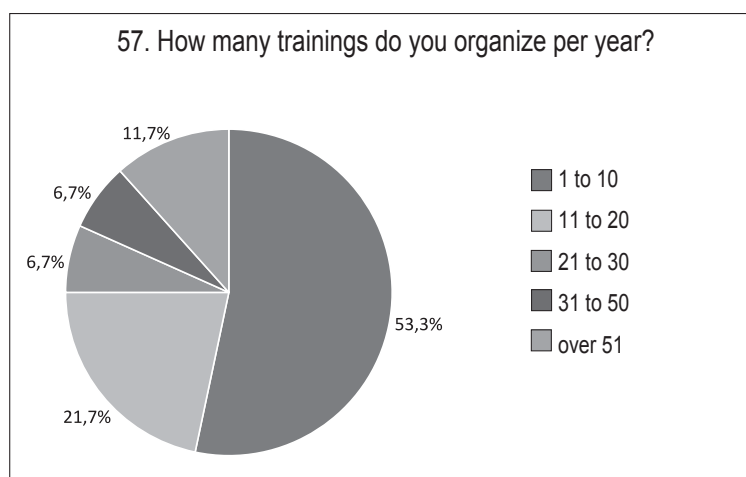
As regards the preparations for trainings, most of the interviewees (83.8%) said that they deliver training according to established programs, 51.55% claimed that they created the programs, and there is almost an equal number that answered that they used licensed programs. 55.6% claimed that they sometimes used internet resources, and 34.9% did that regularly. In this case they mostly used slide information, internet, databases, whereas only a few said they had used software. Almost 60% of the interviewees answered that they had delivered training according to specially designed programs for a specific target group, and around 30% had done so occasionally. Most of the interviewees deliver training in a period of several days, and it is interesting to note that there are deliverers that offer a year-long training.



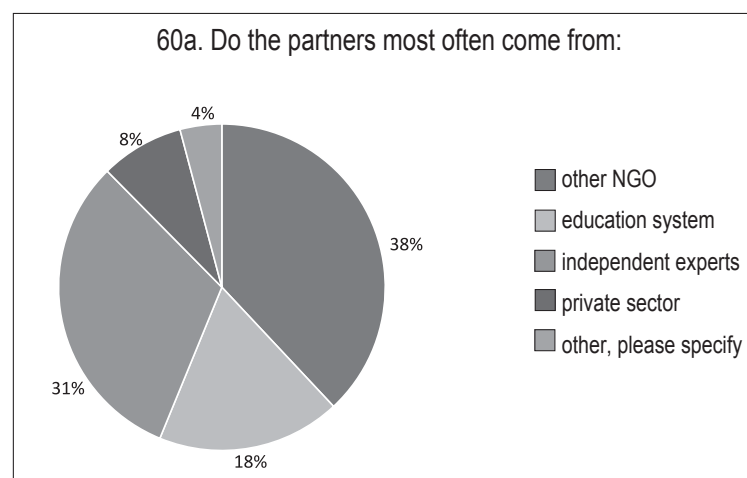
The question whether they had charged for delivered trainings was answered negatively by 54.8%, and positively by 21%. This leads to a conclusion that NFE deliverers are still to a large extent subsidized, i.e. work with funds they had received by projects.



From the collected data it is evident that over two-thirds of the interviewees deliver trainings with two or more trainers. Regarding the question on number of trainings they deliver, most answered they had delivered 1-10 (53.3%), while 21.7% gave a number of 11-20 annually. Only a few deliver over 51 trainings annually (and here we may assume that these are the worker's universities).



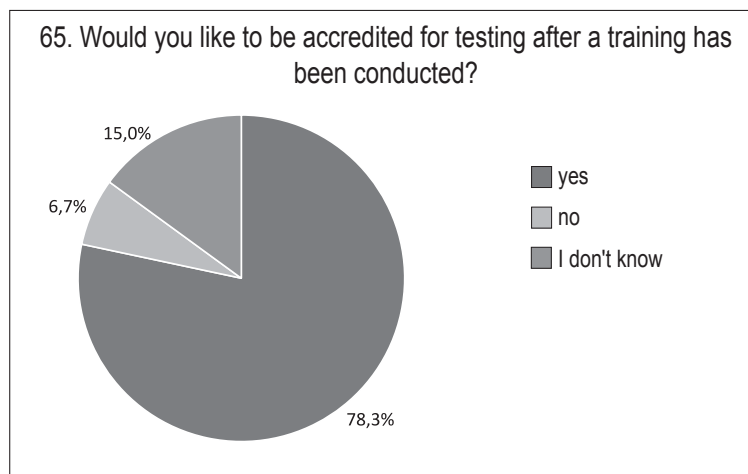
Considering partnerships and cooperation, 73% said they had an occasional cooperation with partners, and 22% did that regularly. At the same time, most of the partnerships were with other non-governmental organizations (38%) and with independent experts (31%). 52% claimed that their experiences with partners had been very good, and 25% said they were excellent. This suggests that a high percentage of NFE providers are willing to link with partners and cooperate with them. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the cooperation with the educational and private sector is very little represented. This is an indication that there is still work to be done in this field, especially bearing in mind the European perspective, the Lisbon Agenda, the investment in education and the mobility and flexibility of staffs.



As regards the data analysis on delivered training, most of the interviewees (90%) ask for participants' evaluations, while 10% do not do that regularly. With regard to the whole cluster of questions on evaluations, the analysis of feedback, practices of correcting the training, collecting statistics and publication of data, there is a positive practice and experience. The weakest point in practices is the reporting and the publication of information. This is directly related to the inexistence of methodology as well as a place and manner how the data is collected.

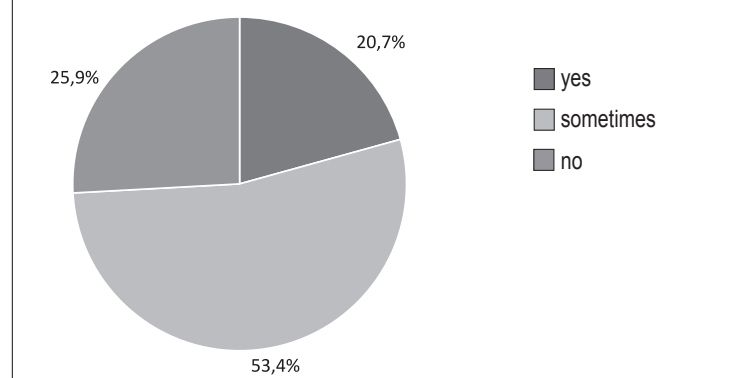
In terms of testing the acquired knowledge, most of the organizations carry out testing, of which 37.7% do that regularly, while 36.1% occasionally. The most frequent method of testing is the written test (29.1%),

then a computer testing, and finally the combined model. 80% of the interviewees answered that they have not been accredited to carry out testing, while 78.3% expressed readiness to be accredited. On the other hand, 15% do not know whether they would like to be accredited for testing, or do not have a stance on the issue. Such a relatively high percentage leaves an impression that there is a lack of knowledge on such possibilities, or simply a lack of interest. In addition, 65% said they were ready to ask for accreditation for testing, and 21.7% do not know.



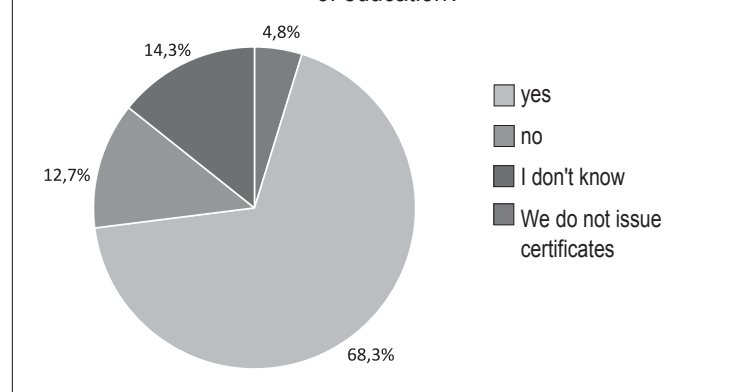
There are also interesting results from the question whether interviewees carry out activities for the promotion of NFE. Half of the interviewees (53.4%) claim that they do so regularly, while 20.7% do so occasionally. The percentage of 25.9% of those who do not carry out such activities is surprising. Such high number of organizations involved in the NFE, whose basic orientation is the NFE and do not work on its promotion or they do not have a position regarding the accreditation of testing, poses the question whether there is an appropriate work on the internal communication. Also, there may be a conclusion that there is not appropriate or sufficient information on the NFE. This on the other hand raises the question on the organizations' function itself.

67. Do you carry out other activities for the promotion and affirmation of the NFE?



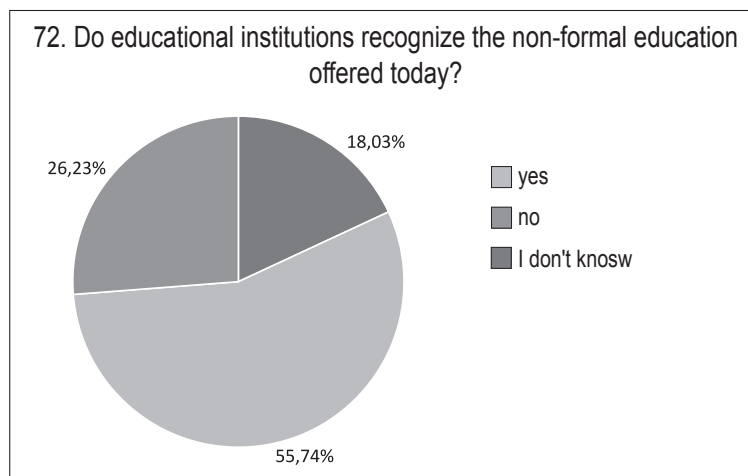
The last cluster of questions refers to the relationship between the NGOs and the educational institutions. Most of the interviewees (68.3%) believe that certificates they issue are not an officially recognized level of education, which is directly related to the recognition and acknowledgement of the NFE in society.

70. Is the certificate you issue an officially recognized level of education?



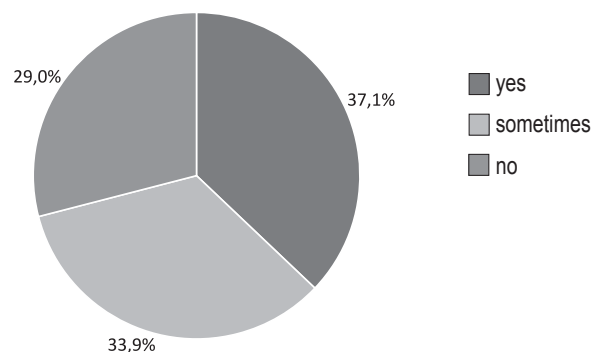
Also, most of the interviewees (39.7%) answered negatively to the question whether educational institutions accept the NFE. The rest of the answers are ambivalent. In all, a high percentage of the interviewees, 53.7%, believe that educational organizations still do not recognize the NFE.



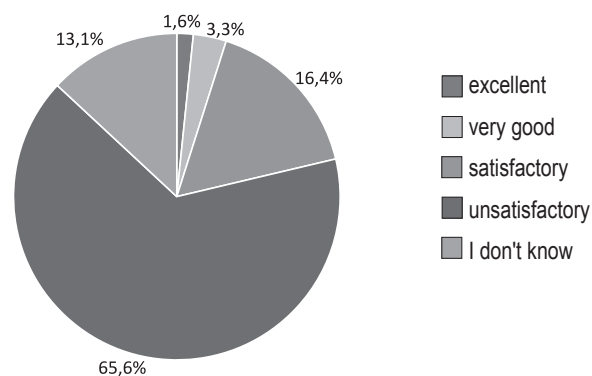


The relationship and type of communication between the NFE deliverers and the academic/education institution is apparent in the following question, to which as many as 63.5% do not know whether educational institutions are ready to incorporate the NFE programs in their regular curricula. At the same time, there are uncertainties in the understanding whether part of the NFE courses are being introduced in the regular curricula. On the other hand, the question whether they cooperate with educational institutions in the delivery of training, two-thirds claimed they did, of which 37.1% regularly and 33.9% occasionally. The textual answers suggest that the cooperation is present on all levels of education and with all educational institutions, which implies diversity in cooperation and a possibility to cooperate with every sphere of the formal education. Also, the cooperation with educational institutions is highly esteemed.

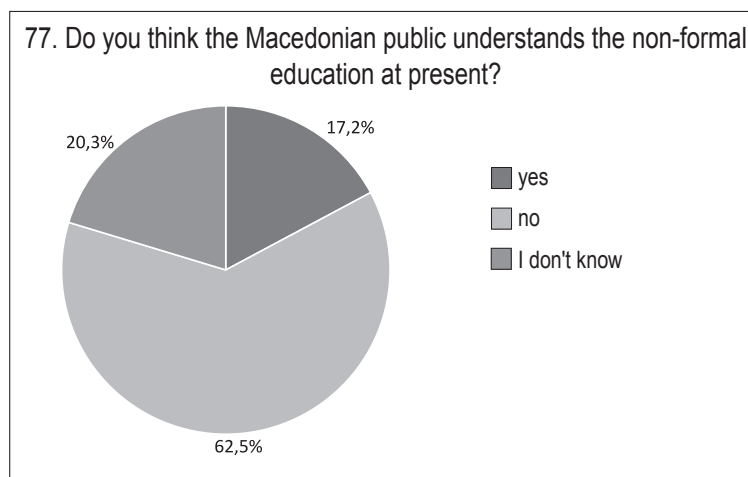
## 75. Do you cooperate with educational institutions in the delivery of training?



## 76. What is the condition with the non-formal education in Macedonia according to you?



At the end of the survey, 65.6% answered that the condition with the NFE in the Republic of Macedonia is very good. On the other hand, there is a controversial indicator on whether the public understands the NFE. Namely 62.5% deem that it is not the case. Those who deemed (17.2%) that the public understands the NFE have also answered that the public accepts the NFE.



As a conclusion, this survey indeed portrayed a picture on the conditions of perceptions of the NGO sector with the whole concept of the NFE; on the conditions with the legal framework and policies in Macedonia; on their own condition and on the lack of information and knowledge on concrete EU policies on the NFE that should be transposed in the Republic of Macedonia. There is a large space for work and consultation, animation, information and training of NFE deliverers and their coherent action. This is only a part, or better said, beginner's challenges of the NGOs regarding the NFE in the coming period.

## 7. The work of focus groups

After the completion of the survey and the data collection, there were two round tables with focus groups comprising representatives of various NFE deliverers. The round tables were attended by 29 organizations (non-governmental, economic operators and public institutions).

The topics of the two meetings were identical and related to assessing the market needs for NFE, the learning based outcomes, accreditations, validations i.e. standardization, and the competition as a positive or a negative occurrence.

The work with the focus groups enabled a productive dialogue and presentation of experiences of all partners in the NFE sphere, which encouraged a further exchange of experiences. Namely, there were talks on the functioning of NFE deliverers, their organization or disorganization, positive practices and partly on unsuccessful experiences. The Association of Doctors presented their experiences in the self-regulation, whereas the Association of Psychoanalysts presented their experience in developing standards and criteria. There was a discussion on the donors' role and the sustainability of some networking attempts, with an emphasis on the work of the EQUALS association that has succeeded in acquiring a level of self-regulation of the English language NFE deliverers, as well as on the current problems of its operations and unity.

The open discussions suggested that each sector – the private, public and non-governmental – has its own perspective and it became evident that they had not been in a situation to discuss the NFE as a common topic of mutual interest.

The discussion on determining the needs for a concrete training was also very diverse, with a brief mentioning of the topic on following new and subsequent trends. The presentations and discussions lead to a conclusion that each organization finds its ways to collect data for their needs, and in accordance with the data it orients its future work and offer. The information on demand is often collected through evaluations, methodologies, reports, or by the noted needs, mostly through the media.

The topic on the learning based outcomes was very little discussed, and it was mainly referred to whether certificates are issued or the knowledge is tested after the delivered training.

The topic on competition was imposed as a topic of disloyal competition, but after the discussion it became evident that most of the focus groups participants viewed it as healthy and normal.

The topic on accreditation, validation and standardization attracted many discussions and exchanges, and it was added to the topic on the Law on Adult Education, the cooperation among the NGOs and the cooperation with relevant institutions in the field. It was interesting to note that only a few organizations

gave their reactions to the Law during the first meeting, and those that accepted the discussion had a negative attitude. On the other hand, the discussion during the second meeting was significantly livelier, productive and left no dilemma in the conclusion by all participants that the NGOs active in the NFE must organize themselves; the information on the NFE must be expanded; and a dialogue must commence with appropriate institutions and players in adult education, but also in formal education.

The focus groups developed discussions which located the problems and shortcomings in several points: the awareness on the NFE and the whole concept; the information on the European context; the ambiguities regarding terminology; the lack of information within the NGOs on the possibilities to organize themselves; the cooperation and work on acknowledgement and recognition of the NFE, with an exception of actors that are active in this domain for a longer period. Namely, part of participants in focus groups especially differed in their knowledge of the matter and their real engagement in the recognition of the NFE. Also, it was obvious that some did not understand the NFE concept as inclusive; some were disunited and inert regarding the possibilities for mutual action as well as regarding the possibilities to address the need for recognition and validation of their own work. A large but not dominant part of the participants did not have any positions or attitudes. Namely, the findings from the survey have been confirmed, and on the other hand it was also interesting to confirm the current difference in opinions in a part of the organizations.

The focus groups reached their goal, but they also did much more than that. Not only did they participate in an event where they exchanged and acquired information, for the first time most of the NFE deliverers from the non-governmental, private and public sector succeeded in exchanging information for this topic, for their own problems and for positive experiences and practices. Most of the participants left with enough material to think about and were encouraged to further give or receive information.

## 8. Conclusions

*“However, the biggest task ahead of us is to change ourselves, in our own minds. No matter how EU policies challenge and shape our education and training, we need a reform of minds to be able to build a new reputation.”*  
Ondřej Liska, Minister of Education of the Czech Republic.

The analysis of the conditions in the EU and in Macedonia makes it evident that the conditions with the NFE in Macedonia are at the very beginning of their development. There is an obvious loss of linkage between the pre-transition period and the continued transition, which creates a vacuum. By the loss of the institutions in charge of this field, there is a loss of institutional memory for the part of the NFE.

The human capital in Macedonia is at a decline which is confirmed by studies of several international organizations (mostly from the UN family), statistical data, unemployment rate and the decline of quality in education of cadres in the period of their job-seeking. Introducing measures such as the mandatory secondary education and the strengthened focus on the development of the tertiary education funded by the public sector confirms this condition and the awareness about it. In the given moment there is no methodology according to which data is collected or processed on the NFE and on the investments in human and intellectual capital of the country as a complementary measure. Therefore, there are no databases or statistical data for this topic. One of the paramount measures that needs to be taken is to work on **developing a database and/or information systems and data collection methodology**, their statistical processing and relating it with other data on education, the living standard and the human capital in the country, in accordance to determined international methodologies.

With regard to the planning and strategies that arise from legislation, there is an obvious deficiency of open debate, a discussion or developing plans for **holistic approaches regarding lifelong learning**. Bearing in mind the high unemployment rate in the country and the stratification of the educational structure of the population, the aforementioned is an imperative. This means **developing a National Strategy on Lifelong Learning**, which would synergistically tackle demand, labor market, and modern and future trends in technologies and economic functions. It should be accompanied by appropriate reforms in primary, secondary and tertiary education, non-formal and informal education, and institutional capacity on implementing the adopted legislation. In other words, the Republic of Macedonia should develop a

holistic approach and an integral solution for lifelong learning as a newer concept, and should produce dynamics compatible with the present time and the European integrations. At present, there is an initiative for creating a National Strategy on Lifelong Learning, but it has been forgotten in the institutional labyrinths.

Another major project in light of the National Strategy on EU Integration and in light of all ongoing educational and reform processes, as well as the positive national legislation, is the urgent commitment of state structures to **creating a National Qualifications Framework** under the example and advice of the European Qualifications Framework. This would enable coordination, harmonization and acceleration of all reform processes in the field of formal, non-formal and informal education and the development of the economy in accordance with the Lisbon Agenda, the Stabilization and Association Process, and with the final Macedonian accession to the EU. Currently there is a strategic decision and the National Council has been formed, however its activities and functioning is still debatable, bearing in mind that the deadlines that have been given are unrealistically short (2011).

There is a need for an **active attitude and attention aimed at the development of newest policies and the modern discourse in the EU**, in order to achieve harmonization with trends and policies that ought to be accepted and adopted. The Lisbon Agenda, Education and Training 2010, Inventory of NFE Validation, the Bologna Process, etc, are only part of those trends and policies.

The Law on Adult education offers possibilities for **partnership and dialogue** with all three pillars of society, and also offers possibilities and room for productive solutions. All this should be implemented through a positive attitude of partners and a serious engagement of institutional arrangements that would enable the implementation of the Law. The Law on Adult Education, according to its title, treats the adult education, but does not tackle other categories of citizens. More precisely, it does not cover the work in elementary and secondary schools, or the educational process itself. It covers even less the sphere of pre-school (non-formal) education.

General conclusions:

- It is necessary to secure a **full implementation of the Law on Adult Education and securing an institutional structure** that would give the appropriate support in this process.
- Regarding current conditions with the NFE, it is necessary to strengthen and expand **activities on raising awareness on the NFE**, the need and possibilities that arise from active participation and its use. Here we absolutely refer to activities that would be aimed at the wider public, with a special emphasis on commercial-social partners. This means an ideal opportunity for cooperation and partnership among the governmental, non-governmental and the private sector.

- Dissemination of information and **defending the concept of lifelong learning and the concept of a knowledge-based society**, especially by the Government and the NGO sector. In that sense, it would not be ideal to go a step further – to cross from the concept of a knowledge-based society to the new dynamics and reality – a **learning society**, as a continuum and an accepted condition.
- **Raising awareness and fostering a proactive relationship among the NGOs** that deal with non-formal education, its sustainability, development, diversification, acknowledgement and recognition.
- **Informing the wider NGO public** with the concept on lifelong education and learning, the achievements from it and the possibility for active participation and contribution.
- **Informing the wider NGO public** about the concept of non-formal education, its positive acquisitions and its complementarities with the formal education, and the possibility for active participation and contribution.
- **Informing the wider NGO public** about the need for **equal approach and understanding**; about the need for building networks and partnerships, coalitions and alliances, in order to affirm, recognize and acknowledge the activities and contributions of the NFE.
- **Accepting, adjusting and implementation of European principles in the validation of the NFE** must be an imperative and a guide to creating the Macedonian NFE context.
- **Informing the wider public, the NFE and NGO public and a focus on results and learning outcomes.**
- Making efforts in creating **indicators on NFE** and placing appropriate **methodologies for collecting and processing statistical data** on non-formal education. These are part of the challenges that need to be addressed in the next several years.
- **Synergetic, coordinated and above all complementary acting by way of partnerships and productive cooperation with institutions in charge of non-formal education.** Such an approach will enable a rationalization of resources and efficacy, only if there are partnerships that would introduce a specific culture and practices which would guarantee professionalism and good quality in the NFE, as well as a possibility for a direct and active input in the NGO sector in creating policies. The establishment of such a relationship among **deliverers and actors in NFE and the public sector** would lead to a timely and appropriate familiarity, with a possibility for a **constructive dialogue and input**, without fear or black scenarios.
- In that sense, we should be cautious not to come to an idea, attitude or discourse that would be too formalized, which would lead to a serious hindrance regarding the criteria and conditions with an



imposed rigid standardization. The non-formal education is still non-formal and is complementary to the formal one.

- There is also a need for active and **productive attitude by the NGO sector with regard to the validation, accreditation and recognition of the NFE**, and in certain cases also a need for application of self-regulation as one of the more successful models of validation, affirmation and recognition.
- There is a need for speedier information, familiarity and an absolute inclusion of **local self-governments**, by opening the potentials for the development of NFE as a direct contribution to the economic and social development on the grassroots level.
- The **support by the state and donors** is necessary, as well as a proactive attitude toward using all **European programs** and instruments for the promotion, information, raising awareness on NFE, strengthening the coalitions and cooperation, and networking in the region and in EU.
- Also, it is necessary to introduce a culture of thinking that would accept experiences of all actors that have introduced **positive practices**, have recognized and acknowledged the impetus and value of the NFE and that may serve as multipliers or transferors of good practices.
- And finally, the ambition **to enter the EU** should not mean any type of accession, but **an informed and prepared, creatively oriented preparation**, that would enable Macedonia to give value and to draw ideas of already established autochthonous processes and successful projects, good practices and domestic solutions.

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<http://ec.europa.eu/education/>

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Ivan Dodovski, Ph.D

# **Recommendations on promoting the non-formal education in the Republic of Macedonia**







## Chapter 3: Recommendations on promoting the non-formal education in the Republic of Macedonia

### 1. Introduction

This document contains recommendations on promoting the non-formal education in the Republic of Macedonia. They are an addition to the results of the research carried out on this topic (please see report) within the project entitled “Recognition and Affirmation of the Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Macedonia.” The project is carried out by the Youth Culture Center – Bitola, and is also supported by the Institute for Sustainable Communities funded by USAID. These recommendations come out as a result of the review of relevant laws, by-laws and other documents, as well as of discussions of more than 50 stakeholders that participated at a seminar and three public debates organized within the aforementioned project in the period between June-October 2009.

Many of the recommendations have a general character and are mutually supplemental. Nevertheless, out of practical reasons they have been represented individually, bearing in mind the different aspects: the legal framework and strategic documents, the work of the Adult Education Center as a primary relevant institution, the work of service providers in the field of NFE, and the promotion of public awareness on NFE. We have sought to present these recommendations briefly and concisely, with short explanations or examples where necessary. We are convinced that many of the details can be found in the research report and in other documents, whereas this document in a form of summarized recommendations will have a practical dimension and could help in planning of future activities to promote the non-formal education in Macedonia.

Two general topics will be a basis for all other recommendations: the legal framework and raising the awareness on the NFE. There are divided opinions if and how much the NFE should be regulated by the state. On the one hand, there is a need to introduce order in this field through standardization and

verification of NFE programs. On the other hand, there is a fear of an extensive state regulation (which could lead to NFE losing its essence), as well as of a non-transparent process of verification, which would open a possibility for corruptive practices and political or other influences. In addition, it has been noted that the public awareness on the importance of the NFE in context of lifelong learning is at a low level. Therefore, we are recommending continued work on the NFE affirmation and its recognition by the community in the context of lifelong learning.

Here by the term “stakeholders” we generally mean associations of citizens, institutions and individuals participating in the above project, unless it has been otherwise stated. The term “NFE” means organized processes of learning aimed at enabling individuals for work, social activities or a personal development (as opposed to the “formal education” which means institutionalized learning in state or private institutions according to publicly recognized programs on the one hand, and the “informal education”, i.e. non-standardized learning which does not entail an organized process of acquiring competencies – for instance, skills acquired at the workplace through experience or in any other way, on the other hand).

## 2. Legal framework and strategic documents

- Law on Adult Education Albeit the provisions of the Law on Adult Education (adopted in January 2008) insufficiently regulate issues related to the NFE, it is not an insuperable hindrance to regulate the NFE by adopting secondary legislation or by promoting it through the development of appropriate programs. Even so, in the medium term there ought to be a review on the possibility to amend this law, or to pass a special Law on the Non-Formal Education, which would appropriately regulate this matter. At the same time, we should keep in mind that other laws (for instance, the Law on Secondary Vocational Education and the Law on Performing Artisananship) indirectly refer to some aspects of the NFE. Future legislation should clarify the following:
  - Associations of citizens (for instance those that develop programs for youth or marginalized groups) that have not been defined as social partners by the Law on Adult Education (such partners are the majority union and the chambers) ought to acquire an explicit status of providers of NFE services in the same manner as the social partners;
  - There ought to be a determination of conditions, standards and criteria for organizing and verifying programs on the NFE aimed at individuals below 15 years of age, i.e. for those that have not been encompassed by the current Law on Adult Education;
  - Providers of services should be considered to have a right to use public funds not only for programs verified in Macedonia, but also for implementing internationally verified programs without being forced to verify those programs in Macedonia;
  - Activities of workers' and people's universities should be regulated as the Constitutional Court of Macedonia has annulled a few articles of the Law on Adult Education that referred to their operations; the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has undertaken an initiative to regulate this matter with a special law.
  - The legal practice that had existed in the past and according to which a worker could not be laid off without him/her undergoing an appropriate career transition training (career transition unit), should be reintroduced.
- By-laws (secondary legislation). In accordance with the Law on Adult Education, the Adult Education Center has proposed five by-laws (rulebooks) that determine the conditions, standards, criteria and procedures for the organization, verification (licensing), certification, documentation and records of NFE programs, as well as the forms and modes of leading a Central Register of verified (licensed) service providers in the NFE field. These by-laws have been created by an AEC expert team, with

a technical aid by a foreign consultant (within the lifelong learning project of the Macedonian MES). There is an ongoing examination of these rulebooks by the legal department of the MES, after which the Minister is expected to adopt them by the end of 2009. Many of the stakeholders believe that the procedure for adopting these acts has only been formally fulfilled, while they have not been given an opportunity to speak out or give their own proposals. We recommend a greater transparency in adopting by-laws that directly relate to the stakeholders' interests.

- **National Qualifications Framework** The inter-ministerial expert group is preparing a NQF that should be adopted as a Law on NQF and harmonized with the European Qualifications Framework. We expect (according to some - unrealistically) that the NQF is adopted by 2012, which would enable a more explicit and clear definition of qualifications and their application. Also, there would be a facilitated recognition of competencies and the mobility of workers and students on national and international level, and the quality of education providers would level. It is especially important that the NQF encompasses the special aspects of lifelong learning through NFE's verification. Many of the stakeholders believe that there is a need of a greater transparency in the procedure on adopting the Law on NQF, especially through including associations of citizens and other service providers in the NFE field.
- **Strategy for the Development of Adult Education Pursuant to the Law on Adult Education**, the Government of Macedonia founded the Council of Adult Education in February 2009. The Council has proposed a Draft-Strategy for the Development of Adult Education, in the context of lifelong learning. The Ministry of Education and Science is expected to adopt this Strategy by the end of 2009, while the action plan for the implementation of this Strategy should be created at the beginning of 2010. Many of the stakeholders believe that the procedure for adopting this strategy has only been formally fulfilled, while they have not been given an opportunity to speak out or give their own proposals, especially concerning the NFE. We recommend a greater transparency in adopting this document and the action plan for its implementation. In that respect, there is a special concern about two issues. Would a strategy for adult education entail the problems in the NFE of individuals below the age of 15? And more importantly, what is the way to more thorough reforms in order to harmonize the standards of formal and non-formal education so as to enable a flexible path of a personal career and lifelong learning? In this sense, there is also a question: whether, in fact, it would be more appropriate and useful to adopt a National Strategy for the Promotion of NFE.
- A general recommendation is that the legal framework and strategic documents in the NFE field should be based on European experiences, with an obligatory harmonization with good practices in Macedonia.

### 3. Adult Education Center

The AEC is a public institution for adult education and operates as an individual legal entity. The AEC is the main institution in charge of creating adult education development policies and of harmonizing the public interest and the interests of stakeholders in the adult education field in Macedonia. Albeit the Law on Adult Education envisaged the establishment of this institution within three months after the adoption of the law, the AEC was established by the Government of Macedonia with a delay, in November 2008. As a new institution, the AEC is in the process of technical and spatial equipping (by the end of 2009). In the next several years it is to take on new staff (currently there are 7 employees, while the systematization envisages 47). Given that this institution was established with a delay, it can be understandable to a certain extent that there is urgency in adopting quick solutions that would enable it to function unhindered. Nonetheless, such an approach should not be to the detriment of the solutions' quality, nor should it lose sight of the need for transparent procedures in the process of adoption. The recommendations for the development of AEC stated above refer mainly to enabling a transparent work and developing appropriate policies and programs.

- We recommend that a selection methodology be created and that stakeholders be included (associations of citizens and other providers in the NFE field). This would enable the AEC to encompass more stakeholders than envisaged by the Law on Adult Education (which mentions state bodies and institutions, and social partners). In spite of the formal and legally determined representation of stakeholders in the AEC Managing Board, we recommend a participatory model that would enable more regular consultative contacts with more stakeholders which may give proposals for the improvement of AEC's work.
- We recommend a transparent work of AEC when it proposes by-laws and strategic documents as well as when it creates annual plans and special programs. AEC's transparency during its operations may be achieved through different forms of stakeholders' inclusion and by better informing the public. This would contribute to easing the existing fear of uncontrolled state regulation and centralized decision-making which opens room for corruptive practices, political and other influences.
- Pursuant to the Law on Adult Education, the AEC opens a public competition, reviews programs submitted to service providers, and based on previously determined criteria and standards, it proposes a verification to the MES, while the Minister issues licenses. All licensed providers and their verified programs are kept in a Central Register of the MES (such a register may be kept in municipalities where providers operate). The AEC should enable clear, easily accessible and

appropriate information on licensing and verification procedure and criteria. The procedure itself should be as simple as possible, easy and relatively fast, in order to encourage service providers to publicly verify their programs.

- It is natural to expect a variety of service providers that work in different fields to apply to AEC's open competition with a variety of programs. The AEC is not sufficiently staffed to evaluate all possible programs, so we recommend a transparent selection of external experts that would evaluate submitted programs. Also, we recommend a creation of a standardized way to review submitted programs in order to enable clear and precise evaluation and a possibility to remove potential oversights in the programs. This would decrease the risk of arbitrary evaluations, corruptive practices or political and other influences in the procedure for verifying and licensing programs submitted by providers.
- Upon recommending certain programs to be verified, the AEC should take into account that some areas (particularly in some economic fields) advance quickly and require new knowledge and competencies. In such cases the issued license should have a shorter validity, i.e. a possibility for a new verification of the program after the validity has expired. This would result in a greater confidence (especially in the business sector) of programs verified by the AEC.
- The AEC gives MES a proposal to verify programs of state interest, in accordance with determined criteria and standards. This does not mean that the state forbids implementation of programs that have not been verified in such a manner. Yet, this causes a problem to some service providers that implement internationally verified programs and cannot use public funds to implement them if they have not been verified in Macedonia. For instance, there are service providers whose activity has a commercial character, whose users are commercial entities (companies), and whose programs have been internationally verified and follow some international standard (such as ISO, for instance). Such cases should be dealt with in a way to avoid "dual" verification. As mentioned earlier, we recommend an alteration (greater precision) of the Law on Adult Education or the by-laws which would allow for an exemption, or in a worse case, a simpler procedure for verification of internationally verified programs.
- The AEC should work on optimizing the offer of NFE programs and on increasing transparency in the process of their verification and implementation with public funds, in order to minimize public expenses and to achieve a better public benefit.
- The AEC should develop a greater cooperation with other ministries and public institutions in order to enforce the NFE as a possibility of achieving better results in any field. (In this sense, some European experiences can be revealing – namely farmers or other target groups cannot use state

subsidies without undergoing a publicly verified training, which would contribute to the achievement of planned goals of the subsidizing or of public interest.)

- The AEC should develop a greater cooperation with chambers of commerce and with the business sector in order to estimate their needs. On the other hand, it should encourage and help service providers to adapt their programs to those needs.
- As opposed to the Civil Servants Agency that deals with qualifying civil servants in order to improve services offered to citizens, we recommend that the AEC aims its activities toward other target groups (especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups, the elderly and the youth) and to encourage programs that take their needs into consideration.
- The AEC needs help in field research and quantitative analysis for the NFE needs, to determine target groups and to set priorities. Policies and programs developed by the AEC should be based on appropriate data collection, statistical indicators and on qualitative processing, i.e. evidence. In order to achieve this, we recommend a creation of methodology for collecting, processing and keeping data, and cooperation with relevant state institutions and with a wide range of service providers. Here we especially emphasize the possibility for partner projects with associations of citizens that already operate in various communities and that have a direct contact with certain target groups and know their needs.
- The AEC work program for 2010 should entail strengthened activities on informing the service providers, certain target groups and the public on its operation. There should be special attention to encourage the service providers' interest to verify their programs and cooperate with the AEC. This can be achieved through several ways, such as: opening an AEC internet page that would be abundant with clear, understandable and timely information; publishing a popular bulletin in a printed and electronic form with a possibility for free subscription for all interested; organizing public presentations, meetings and debates in different environments and for different target groups; implementing a public campaign, cooperation with media, etc).



#### 4. Service Providers in the NFE Field

According to some data there are around 600 entities in Macedonia that have been registered for carrying out educational activity. It is not easy to determine which of them offer services in the field of the NFE. However, regardless of their number, they can be divided in three groups: a/ those that mainly offer services for expert non-formal education (workers' and people's universities); b/ associations of citizens that mainly offer services for acquiring social and civil competences, cultural awareness and expression; and c/ business entities that offer services for acquiring linguistic, communicational, scientific, technological, information, entrepreneurial, expert and other competences. Each of these groups has special interests. It is not easy, but not impossible, to achieve a common contribution of all three groups in order to promote the NFE in Macedonia. Therefore, we should bear in mind the following observations and recommendations:

- The third group of service providers (business entities) demonstrates the greatest resistance to a centralized state verification of their programs. A part of them prefer a vocational self-regulation, or propose a special legal regulation of service providers in the business sector (as opposed to those of the non-governmental sector).
- Also, the third group of service providers deems that the programs of other service providers offered free of charge (i.e. they are organized based on funding by foreign donors) create false expectations and a weak motivation for the NFE, and encourage efforts in raising awareness for the NFE (the public administration as a target group is a special example).
- It is also emphasized that the NFE ideal should be the usefulness of delivered training and the participant's satisfaction of non-formal learning (the user, client), and not the non-formal verification. In other words, the aim should be quality, and not regulation.
- We recommend a greater cooperation among academic experts on the one hand, and practitioners (experienced trainers) on the other, in order to use their academic knowledge for practical needs i.e. to develop quality programs that meet the demands and changes in different fields.
- A part of the stakeholders propose an establishment of association of service providers in the field of NFE in order to achieve their interests easily and to coordinate their work. Also, we encourage the harmonization of efforts by current vocational and other associations, coalitions and networks of service providers. There is a need for a proactive attitude of associations of citizens, business entities and other service providers as well as their mutual action in order to increase public awareness on NFE.



## 5. Promoting Public Awareness on the NFE

The results of the aforementioned research carried out by the YCC – Bitola and the discussions with stakeholders imply a perturbing low public awareness in Macedonia with regard to the NFE. Competences and values acquired through NFE programs are not recognized enough in the community, but also in the business sector; they are often seen neutrally, or in more seldom cases, negatively. In addition, a huge number of service providers, even if not directly affected, state that they have not been informed about the regulation of this matter nor have they been given a chance to participate in the process with their own proposals. As a result, we propose the following ideas and recommendations:

- There is a need for a wide public promotion on the lifelong learning concept, and within that framework on the importance of the NFE. Such an effort should highlight the potentials offered through European NFE programs. Additionally, work should be done on building an educational culture that would overcome the conflict between the formal and the non-formal education, and will enable a flexible path for personal career and lifelong learning.
- The AEC should implement strengthened activities on informing service providers, certain target groups and the general public on the legal possibilities for the verification of NFE programs. Also, the AEC should assist the service providers in promoting their programs.
- Raising the awareness on the NFE may be successfully achieved only through cooperation with stakeholders. The AEC and service providers are encouraged (especially associations of citizens) to have a proactive attitude toward building partnerships. Real results can be achieved through harmonized action of the state, business and the non-governmental sector. The contribution that the local governments and media can give is also important. We encourage a mutual action of stakeholders on both local and national level in order to encompass as many target groups as possible (especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups, the elderly and the young).
- In order to stimulate the linkage between the formal and non-formal education, we recommend cooperation with career centers of educational institutions (above all, universities), which can disseminate information on the possibilities in the NFE sphere.
- We propose cooperation with current printed and electronic media, as well as special education of journalists on issues related to NFE.
- There are many ways and forms to strengthen awareness on the NFE. Part of the stakeholders especially emphasizes the potentials that the internet offers. For instance, we recommend a web

portal, specialized resource pages, distributive lists, a free e-bulletin and specialized magazines in the NFE field. We emphasize the need for publishing a glossary which would clarify the normative and other terms in the NFE field in an easy and accessible manner. Also, we recommend a proclamation of a Day of the NFE in Macedonia and organization of a NFE Fair, which would help in presenting programs to service providers and would publicly affirm the NFE in Macedonia.

## **6. Instead of a Conclusion**

Based on what was stated above, we can draw a general recommendation that all stakeholders, especially the state and its relevant institutions, should secure transparency of its work and raise awareness on the NFE, having in mind its importance for the development of a knowledge-based society. In the Macedonian case, this issue has an additional weight given the fact that the transparent and appropriate regulation and promotion of the NFE is also one of the conditions that the country should fulfill in the process of its integration into the EU.





