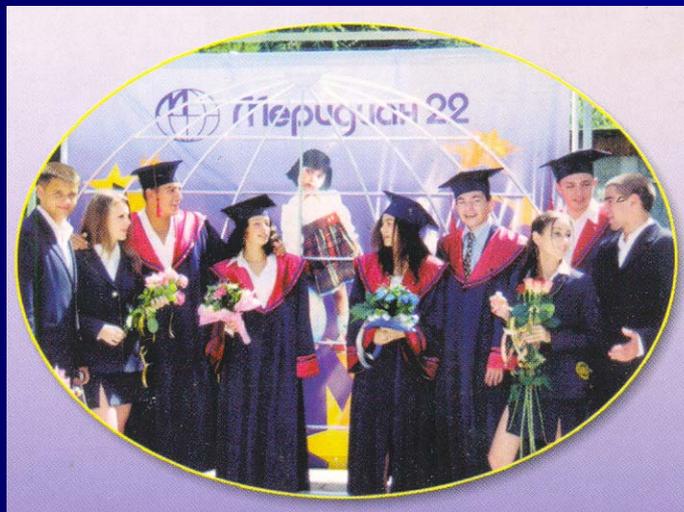


# **LIFELONG EDUCATION – CHALLENGE AND REALITY FOR WOMEN**



**RADKA STAMENOVA  
MERIDIAN 22 ltd  
MANAGER**

# Concept for lifelong education

- A new approach toward the problems of qualification, education and training inspired by the dimensions of the economic and social changes taking place in Europe, the fast economic development based on knowledge, and the demographic tension caused by the aging population.  
**Major goal:** improvement of labor force competitiveness and national economy' competitiveness by means of:
  - Increase of people's adaptation to the economic and social changes
  - Encouragement of equality and participation in all forms of professional and personal development.

# How should we understand the lifelong education”?

- European Definition of Lifelong Education-  
**“each action connected with lifelong education aiming at improvement of one’s knowledge, skills and competences within the personal, civil and social perspectives (including employment aptitude)”**
- All training activities from early childhood till old age in addition to the general basic store of competences, exceeding the basic skills such as reading, writing and counting.
- Not only acquiring of qualifications which are directly connected with the profession, but updating of basic skills and opportunities for advanced training, and permanent lifelong renovation of all abilities, interests, knowledge and views.
- Stimulation of an active civil conscience, enlargement of employment opportunities, encouragement of adaptability, social integration and personal development as well.



# Means for the carrying out of lifelong education



- Formal education and training – it is carried out by the institutions for education and training; it leads to an acknowledged diploma and qualifications.
- Informal training – usually it does not result with the issuance of an officially acknowledged document. It is realized in parallel with the formal educational and qualification systems and it brings to an increase of the personal, professional and civil competences. It is carried out at the working place or through organizations and services created for a supplement of the formal education.
- Independent training – it is not compulsory nor organized; it is carried out permanently through the daily activities and contacts with colleagues, clients and partners, or through an individual search of information.



# European Dimension of the Lifelong Education

In October 2000 the European Commission worked out a **Memorandum on Lifelong Education**. It gave a start to the process of consultations in the whole European Union, which promoted the development of coordinated strategies and practical steps for the creation of opportunities for lifelong education for everyone.

Investments in the people's knowledge and skills are considered a necessary condition for the increased employment suitability, the increase of level of participation in the labor market, and facilitation of the process of adaptation to technological changes.

Till 2010 the average level of participation in lifelong education in EU should be at least 12.5% of the elderly population aged 25-64 years. (Education and Training Program 2010)

# Key Messages of the Memorandum

- Comprehensive and permanent access to education aiming at mastering and updating the skills necessary for the active participation in a knowledge-based society;
  - Increase of human resources' investments;
  - Efficient methods of teaching;
  - Participation in informal and self-education
  - High quality of the information and consultancy services;
  - Bringing education most closely to the trainees' home.
- **Lifelong education is based on two groups of competences:**
- Professional knowledge, skills and abilities;
  - Conveyable – basic skills for communication, team work, self-training, etc. which can be treated as a level of the individual adaptability as per the needs of the labor market



# Policy of Lifelong Education in Bulgaria

The key messages formulated in the Memorandum correspond to a great extent to the priorities included in the major national documents related to the economic and social development of the country and the human resources development.

As per the general European tendencies, the major priorities of lifelong education in Bulgaria can be defined as follows::

- Access to lifelong education
- Opportunities for acquisition and improvement of key competences;
- Validation of knowledge acquired by informal and self education;
- High quality of education and training and access to information;
- Support for social integration
- Training of trainers.



# Realization of Priorities

## Steps:

- Working out of a relevant legal framework;
- Improvement of the resources – methodological, organizational, financial, human;
- Adaptation of the good practice example

## **Instruments:**

- Definition of the needs of adult training;
- Guarantees of the quality of education;
- Applicability of the education results.

# European Union (EU) – 2007 year of the equal opportunities for all



## Conferences in Bulgaria

- National Conference “Bulgarian Women in the European Union” – July 3, 2007
- Gender Budgeting in Practice – November 2, 2007



# WOMEN IN EU



Gender equality – in the focus of attention of the European Commission as of the beginning of the 90-ies.

- **Goal** – elimination of differences and encouragement of the equal gender opportunities in compliance with the conceptions set in the EU Contract.
- **Approach** – legislation, integration, positive actions.
- **Basic challenges** – increase of women's employment, improvement of their status at the labor market, elimination of the gender social distance.



# Achievements

- Women's employment increases – as of year 2000 up till now, 8 million working places have been opened , of which 6 million are the employed women.
- 59% of the university graduates in EU are women.
- Employment coefficient of women in 2006 is 57.1%, as compared to 51.4% in 1997 – a positive fact in connection with the achievement of the Lisboa goals for development and growth which set a 60% coefficient in 2010.



# Problems



- The horizontal and vertical segregation of the labor market continues. There are still sectors which are strongly feminine - 40% of the women work in the social sector, education, health and public sector. 50% of the employed women are office workers, merchants, low-qualified and unqualified workers.
- The difference in the employment coefficient of men and women in the EU is approximately 15% in favor of men in 2007.
- Women are still very often forced to choose between their children and their career.

# The Woman in Bulgaria

- **Women in Bulgaria at the end of 2005 are 3 975 423 and represent 51.5% of Bulgaria's population.**
- **As per employment coefficient, Bulgaria is far behind the average levels of the EU countries.**
- **A smaller number of women have a part-time job - low payment and insufficient demand.**
- **Bulgarian women comprise some 70% of the unpaid family workers, 36.7% of the self-employed and only 23% of the employers.**
- **Bulgaria has similar levels of gender professional and sector segregation with the rest of the European countries.**
- **Inequality in the payment of women.**
- **Bulgarian women are more educated than men and take much more active part in the lifelong education.**
- **Unemployment among women is much higher than unemployment of men.**
- **Exposure to a bigger risk of poverty, especially with old women and single mothers.**
- **A difficult concordance of professional with personal and family life.**



# Women's Rights in Bulgaria

- Gender equality is a recognized value in the Bulgarian society regulated by the national legislation in compliance with the European legislation and the requirements of the international agreements signed by the Republic of Bulgaria.
- Gender equality at the labor market is the objective of the Employment Strategy for the period of 2004-2010, based on the priorities of the European Employment Strategy and the national strategy for continuous vocational training for the period 2005-2010.
- The Employment Strategy defines women as a risk group at the labor market. It points out the necessity for working out and applying of steps and programs for the combination of work and family life thus encouraging the economic activity of women.



# Women- Entrepreneurs in Bulgaria



- The number of women–entrepreneurs and managers in the small and medium business is steadily growing. According to the data of the National Statistics Institute, in Bulgaria as of 2003 the relative share of women-entrepreneurs is approximately 1/3 of the investigated small and medium enterprises. In 2006 the percentage of women-entrepreneurs among the self-employed is 37.7 %, according to syndicate experts. women-entrepreneurs in Bulgaria manage mainly small companies in the field of trade and services. The number of consultant companies managed by women significantly increases.
- A positive tendency is the use of computers and internet services by women-entrepreneurs.
- The German Union of women-entrepreneurs points out a more serious participation of women in the business management. 42.85% of the small and medium entrepreneurs in the country are women.
- The English Agency for Sociological Researches also indicates a slow but stable increase of the share of women managers of companies – some 23%, mainly small and medium companies.

- With regards to the problem Women and Entrepreneurship, Bulgaria is getting closer to the figures characteristic for a number of European countries.
- Women developing their own business in Bulgaria and in the EU countries have a common problem – access to financing, especially of the newly-established companies. More than 62% of the Bulgarian women-entrepreneurs specify that they have started their business with their own funds.
- The lack of a credit history and the sufficient degree of trust to women are an obstacle for a follow-up crediting of the companies owned by women in the EU countries. This causes the necessity of establishing organizations supporting the women's business, as well as a special support of the branch organizations.
- In Bulgaria the number of companies in which the women-owners and managers can work on-line at home, is insignificant, while in the other European countries it is widely spread and it offers full-time or part-time jobs to millions of employees.

# Education and Training in Entrepreneurship



A key element of the policy for encouragement of the establishment and development of small and medium enterprises in EU is the education and training in entrepreneurship.

The European Chart of small and medium enterprises recommends:

- The cultivation of entrepreneur spirit and the development of entrepreneur skills should start early in life.
- Encouragement and support of the entrepreneur undertakings of the young people
- Working out of adequate schemes for training of managers of small enterprises.

# Major Priorities of Bulgaria in the Field of Education, Training and Science

- Providing for quality education
- Conditions for access to education
- Encouragement of lifelong education
- Introduction of information and communication technologies in the field of education
- Optimization of extra-curricular and out-of-school activities



# Major Conclusions

- The legislation framework formally guarantees gender equality and non-admission of discrimination but practically a number of disbalances and discrimination practices in employment exist, as well as a lower payment of women's labor, etc. In spite of their higher education, the chances of women in finding a job in their major specialty are smaller. Also smaller are their opportunities for rising in their profession and career, as well as for participation in taking political and economic decisions.
- Lifelong education, the continuous increase of qualification and the accumulation of new knowledge and skills, are a necessary condition for the successful realization of women at the labor market.

- Adequate opportunities for lifelong education of women are necessary to secure economic growth and competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy, in compliance with the Lisboa strategy for human resources development.
- Recommendations related to the future policy of the country in view of the providing of efficient application of the EU legislation framework regarding gender equality, development of a set of policies focused on the reasonable combination of the professional, personal and family life, offering schemes for a part-time job, self-employment, outwork, etc.