

Some Remarks on Legal Education in Bulgaria

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Abstract: This paper aims to provide in-depth analysis of legal education in Bulgaria since it is of paramount significance for the creation of well-trained lawyers for the state, local authorities, as well as the judicial system. The historical method was used to examine the system of the Bulgarian legal education that has been developing for about 130 years and has gone through numerous difficulties.

The comparative and juxtaposition approach were utilised in the research to help in making inferences about the present situation regarding legal education in Bulgaria. Now there are nine law schools that deepen international co-operation and adapt their curricula to respond to the changes in national and European legislation.

It takes five years to receive a legal education in Bulgaria and the process ends with a Master's degree in Law (LLM). There is no Bachelor degree in Law (LLB in other European countries) in our country.

All in all, the main objective of this article is to look at the Bulgarian legal education in the past and nowadays. The paper attempts to show that legal education in Bulgaria is faced with diverse challenges of the new millennium. The process of globalization as well as the recent situation with COVID-19 make it necessary to add information technologies and distant learning forms to legal education.

Keywords: Bulgaria; legal education; Bologna process; learning forms

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Contents

I. Introduction	714
II. Early Legal Education in Bulgaria	715
III. Bulgarian Legal Education after 1989 and Nowadays	722
IV. Challenges of Legal Education in Bulgaria	726
V. Conclusion	727
References.....	728

I. Introduction

Legal education in Bulgaria began about 130 years ago. Four years after the establishment of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (then Higher School in Sofia) the first Faculty of Law was founded and it was the third one after the Historical-Philological and Physics and Mathematics faculties. First lectures were held on November 2, 1892, in front of 22 students, but by the end of the academic year, the number of the students became 94, which was almost half of the students in the whole University. The educational process started with 14 legal subjects for a three-year period, but soon the duration was extended to four years and the number of courses was increased (Paev, 2009, p. 203). The first dean of the Faculty was the great Bulgarian public statesman and one of the first jurists Marko Balabanov.¹ It is important to note that the beginning of legal education occurred when the Tarnovo Constitution had already been adopted, which reflected the ideas and opinions of the Bulgarian Renaissance society. As a first Minister of Justice in Bulgaria’s first government of the newly-liberated country was appointed Dimitar Grekov — a prominent lawyer and a politician from a Conservative party, who completed the first Bulgarian Secondary School in the town of Bolgrad, Bessarabia and later graduated in Law and became a Doctor of Law at the University of Aix-en-Provence, France.

¹ 130 Years Ministry of Justice 1879–2009, Jubilee Almanac, Sibi publishing house, p. 31 (In Bulgarian).

Marko Dimitriev Balabanov was a Bulgarian lawyer and politician, the first Foreign Minister of Bulgaria (in 1879 and from 1883 to 1884) and chairman of the XI Ordinary National Assembly in 1901. He taught Roman, Byzantine and canonical law (1892–1902) at the newly established Higher School.

The first students graduated from the Faculty of Law in the summer of 1895 (Kitanov, 2020, p. 235). The support they received from the first Rector of the Sofia University Prof. Ivan Shishmanov should also be mentioned. His dedication to the academic idea was also evident in early 1907 when he resigned after the government's decision to close the University and to fire all lecturers following the student booing of Prince Ferdinand Sax-Coburg-Gotta. Later on, in the 1920s, he became the founder and the first president of the Bulgarian Department of the Pan-European Union (Koneva, 2017, p. 645).

It could be said that the history of the Faculty of Law is closely linked to the history of the Bulgarian state. It is divided into several distinct periods — from the Liberation of Bulgaria during the Tarnovo Constitution to 1944, the next period is connected with the socialist/communist state and the subsequent period — from 1991 to this day. The main periods are divided into sub-periods that mostly followed the adoption of the different Bulgarian constitutions: Tarnovo Constitution, two main laws of the socialist period of 1947, 1971 and the last 1991 Constitution. It should be noted that until the unification between the Eastern Rumelia and the Kingdom of Bulgaria that happened in 1885, there was an Organic Statute that was functioning on the Eastern Rumelia's territories.

It is essential to use comparative and juxtaposition approaches later on in this research, which will help us make a distinction between the past and present situation in Bulgaria. Various challenges before legal education in Bulgaria have been discussed as a major goal of the paper along with the overall analysis of this type of education so that relevant conclusions could be drawn.

II. Early Legal Education in Bulgaria

The impossibility to answer the needs of professionally educated jurists, administrators and judges, who at those early years of the newly-liberated Bulgarian state obtained their legal education in Russian and West European universities, provoked one of the first Ministers of Justice Petko Karavelov to propose the idea of opening a law school with a two-year period of study in Sofia “to answer the tremendous need of judges,

lawyers and administrators with university education.”² In answer to this idea Konstantin Irechek — Secretary of the Ministry of National Enlightenment made a note to the Art. 69 of the draft on the Basic Law on Schools in the Principality of Bulgaria,³ which passed on the first reading on November 25, 1880. The note stipulated that a Bulgarian Higher School (University) should be opened and it would include legal sciences. Later on, he tabled the question for constituting a Bulgarian Higher School to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, emphasizing that “a faculty of Law is required to answer the country’s need for an adequate amount of legalists to engage in judicial and administrative service.”⁴

In the first decade after the opening of the Faculty of Law, its teaching staff included a number of prominent lawyers — Stefan Kirov, Stefan Bobchev, Georgi Danailov, Todor Kulev, Simeon Angelov, Venelin Ganev, establishing the academic image of the faculty permanently. The well-known Bulgarian writer Aleko Konstantinov, elected in 1897 as an associate professor in criminal proceedings, died tragically.⁵

At the same time in May 1885, the urgent need for professionally educated judges and lawyers in Eastern Rumelia provoked the publication of the Preliminary Public Administrative Statute for Constituting a Law School in “Maritsa” state newspaper. According to this project, which was elaborated by judges from the town of Plovdiv, by the Director of Justice Stefan S. Bobchev and the famous Bulgarian writer Konstantin Velichkov, the school had to start in the autumn of the same year, but due to a number of reasons, it did not happen.⁶

² 130 Years Ministry of Justice 1879–2009, Jubilee Almanac, Sibi publishing house, pp. 29–30 (In Bulgarian).

³ The Principality of Bulgaria (1878–1908) was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. The Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia was governed with the principality, with the prince of Bulgaria as its governor, and both became parts of the Kingdom of Bulgaria in 1908.

⁴ 130 Years Ministry of Justice 1879–2009, Jubilee Almanac, Sibi publishing house, pp. 30–31 (In Bulgarian).

⁵ Almanac of the Faculty of Law at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” 1892–2017, p. 8, ISBN 978-954-07-4413-1 (In Bulgarian).

⁶ 130 Years Ministry of Justice 1879–2009, Jubilee Almanac, Sibi publishing house, p. 31 (In Bulgarian).

The education in the faculty was then increased to four years and, as it was mentioned above, fourteen subjects were taught. On October 21, 1902, the Academic Council of the Higher School, at the suggestion of the Dean of the Faculty of Law, decided to establish 11 departments: Roman Law, History of Bulgarian and Slavic Law, State and Administrative Law, Political Economy, Financial Science, Public and Private International Law, Philosophy and Encyclopedia of Law, Civil Law and Civil Procedure, Commercial Law, Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure, and Statistics. The curriculum, along with the extended study of legal sciences, also includes courses of general educational importance such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, Bulgarian history, basic economical, financial knowledge and statistics, and university education. Subsequently, the number of departments increased to 15 all of which provided compulsory or optional courses. The largest number of students studied at Sofia University in the academic year of 1905–1906. The first women also graduated during this academic year which is an early date compared to other European countries. To facilitate the preparation of students in 1913 there began the publication of a special series entitled “University Library”. Until the end of the First World War, many intellectuals, famous Bulgarian writers, poets and journalists Yosif Herbst, Dimcho Debelyanov, Kiril Hristov, Stefan Runevski, Nikola Ginev, Yordan Yovkov, Elin Pelin, *etc.* stood out among the graduates of the faculty.⁷

As stated above, due to fast developments, in 1909 there were already fifteen departments in the Faculty. The new legislation and procedure for awarding academic titles and habilitation was established as well as the order for incorporating a new generation of scholars who received a sound education in prestigious European universities and who had a deep patriotic feeling and ambition to become a part of the young academic community. Among this group of scholars could be mentioned Petar Abrashev, Stefan Kirov, Mihail Popoviliev, Angel Angelov, Petar Danchov, Stefan Bobchev, Yosif Fadenheht.

⁷ Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, History. Available at: https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/universitet_t/fakulteti/yuridicheski_fakultet/istoriya [Accessed 18.10.2021] (In Bulgarian).

It is a curious fact that after the 1917 revolution representatives of the Russian intellectual elite came to Bulgaria as political emigrants. Among them, there were law professors who stayed and worked in our country, such as I.A. Bazanov and P.M. Bogaevskii (Starodubtsev, 2000, p. 44). Prof. Bogaevskii delivered lectures in Public International Law and had numerous publications in this field. Soon Prof. Petr Bogaevskii became the head of the Public and Private International Law Department at the Law Faculty of Sofia University. Prof. I.A. Bazanov's work in the field of Private International Law was also significant and his prediction for the unification of certain legal institutes subsequently came true. When in October 1920 the Free University (Balkan Middle East Institute) was founded as the second higher school and the first economic university, both Russian professors contributed a lot to the development of this second center of legal education in Bulgaria. Very significant is the fact that the idea of opening a Russian Higher School for Immigrants in Bulgaria was discussed and the initial project envisaged it to include two faculties — legal and philological, established in Bulgaria and Turkey, in which about 1200 students could be trained (Belova, 2007, p. 238). The Bulgarian Ministry of National Enlightenment approved its opening, but the lack of sufficient financial resources led to the failure of the project.

The time between the beginning of the First and the end of the Second World War can be considered as a second period in the development of the faculty. The severe economic situation after the Treaty of Neuilly affected the students and in the academic years 1920–1921 and 1921–1922 the number of graduates of the faculty was 479 and 489, respectively, or about 1/10 of the enrolled ones. The teaching staff of the Faculty of Law included Lyuben Dikov, Nikola Dolapchiev, Petko Staynov, Stefan Balamezov, Konstantin Katsarov, Petko Venedikov, Ivan Apostolov, Zhivko Stalev, Anastas Totev as well as the professors Ivan Bazanov and Konstantin Sokolov who emigrated to Bulgaria after the October Revolution in Russia. For the first 50 years of its existence, the Faculty of Law established itself as a center of full-blooded academic life. The teaching staff was expanded and renewed. During the period between the two world wars, graduates of the faculty were Yordan

Stratiev, Dimitar Sprostranov, Asen Raztsvetnikov, Sergei Rumyantsev, Hristo Smirnenski.⁸

The academic Bulgarian tradition in the Middle Ages is associated with the first modern university and the School of voters. The university chapel of the University of Bologna and the square in front of it have been dedicated to the *Bulgarus de Bulgariis* since the 16th century, which revived the tradition of ancient orators and rhetoric and earned it the nickname “*golden mouth*” – “*Bulgarus os aureum*”. The legacy of *Bulgarus* was such that for four centuries until the beginning of modern times, the academic historical tradition of the oldest modern university was identified with his name. For this reason, in 1930, Tsar Boris III was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bologna, and on June 11, 2002, his son Simeon Sax-Coburg-Gotta was awarded the title of “member of the Academy of Sciences of the University of Bologna,” i.e., with the highest honorary academic degree of the first modern university, which marked the beginning of the Bologna process with the European Higher Education Area.

After the Liberation of Bulgaria, it turned out that out of 627 people with higher education from the entire Bulgarian diaspora, the jurists are the second largest group. A total of 55 Bulgarians studied law, half of them in the Russian Empire; 11 in France; 7 in the German lands and the rest in other European and Balkan countries.

As it was revealed, the idea for a Bulgarian Higher School made its way at the end of 1880 with the above-mentioned Art. 69 of the unaccepted bill for the Basic Law for the schools in the Principality of Bulgaria. Among its biggest defenders was Petko Karavelov, who graduated in Law from Moscow University.

The need for codification of private laws was in the first generation Bulgarian lawyers’ range of vision and they had a significant contribution to the codification of the Bulgarian legislature. By Decree No 674 of August 8, 1881, a Commission comprised of competent persons was founded with the aim to amend, to add and to align and unify “issued over various periods until now and in different fields of judicature

⁸ Almanac of the Faculty of Law at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” 1892–2017, p. 11, ISBN 978-954-07-4413-1 (In Bulgarian).

and judicial proceedings: rules, standing orders, statutes, acts and instructions.”⁹

It can be pointed out that during the several decades until World War II the legal education and research in Bulgaria were comparable with the European legal scientific achievements (Paev, 2009, p. 203).

Outside Sofia University, legal education was developed at the Free University thanks to the greatest merits of its founder and first Rector Stefan S. Bobchev — politician, statesman, publicist, a scientist with encyclopedic knowledge, who made significant contributions in various scientific fields. He was the author of many monographic works, textbooks, articles in various fields of law. Stefan Bobchev created a special series of articles in which he presented the first Bulgarian lawyers. The initial series was called “Faces of the First Bulgarian Lawyers” and consisted of twelve articles.¹⁰ Another famous person at the Free University was Dr. Stoyan Danev, a law graduate from Zurich, Prime Minister in 1902–1903, professor at the Free University, chairman of the Bulgarian Red Cross, member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

As early as 1938, a second department for state and economic sciences was established at the faculty. This department with the Faculty of Economics are the two structures produced at the Higher Institute of Economics in 1952 (HIE, today University of National and World Economy — UNWE).¹¹ Since 1954, legal education there has been established in the Department of Legal Sciences at the Faculty of International Economic Relations.

Regretfully, during the first decade after World War II, legal education in Bulgaria experienced dramatic changes: a lot of lecturers

⁹ 130 Years Ministry of Justice 1879–2009, Jubilee Almanac, Sibi publishing house, p. 56 (In Bulgarian).

¹⁰ The texts were published in the Legal Review in 1930–1931. In them, the author presents biographies of the first Bulgarians with legal education. Then the scientist expands his articles and presents persons who, by coincidence, without having a special legal education, have worked in the Bulgarian judicial system and thus contribute to the formation of the Bulgarian justice.

¹¹ Almanac of the Faculty of Law at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” 1892–2017, p. 11, ISBN 978-954-07-4413-1 (In Bulgarian).

were fired,¹² academic autonomy was completely abolished, and legal education and legal science were dominated by Communist ideology. The country belonged to the sphere of influence of the former Soviet Union.

The period of the 1950s was especially difficult. In the early 1950s, the admission of students was limited, with sixty people admitted in the 1954–1955 academic year and only forty – two in the 1955–1956 academic year. The reasons were the ideological notions that offenses and crime automatically decrease with the change of the socio-economic system, as remnants of the bourgeois past, and that the state dies and the law is a remnant of the past. This was a time of legal nihilism.

In spite of these abovementioned changes in Bulgaria, during the 1960s the situation in the universities was normalized step-by-step and this made it possible for next generation scientists to give their contribution to the improvement of the legal education in the country. It was related to the broadened contacts with foreign universities as well as to the possibilities for some lecturers and assistants to have a legal specialization in foreign universities not only in Eastern but also in Western Europe (Penchev, 2012, p. 53).

In 1971, the Unified Center for the Sciences of the State and Law was established, which included the Faculty of Law and the Institute of State and Law at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Despite the fact that for many scholars the established decision-making mechanism violated the academic principles and traditions and subordinated the faculty to an external body, nevertheless the Unified Center for the Sciences of the State and Law was an example of fruitful cooperation in the field of judicial science.

Despite these unfavorable conditions that remained until the 1970s and 1980s, the Faculty of Law retained much of its importance as a center of academic science and teaching, largely because of the

¹² Contrary to the norms of academic life, a number of established and authoritative members of the academic community were removed from the Faculty of Law or were forced to leave it, including Nikola Saranov, Venelin Ganev, Svetoslav Luchnikov and many others. Academic autonomy was removed. Legal education and legal science were ideologized. The centralized validation of students and their political selection were introduced.

professors who graduated before 1944. Students at the Faculty of Law during this period were Ran Bosilek, Georgi Stamatov, Anton Donchev, Dimitar Mantov, Ana Kamenova, Radoy Ralin, Leda Mileva, Konstantin Pavlov, Dragan Tenev, Ivan Radoev, Konstantin Kisimov, Konstantin Kotsev, Boris Hristov, Kevork Kevorkyan, other public figures, cultural and artistic figures, statesmen and, in general, prominent figures from the whole spectrum of public life and government. However, until 1991, there was only one law faculty in Bulgaria – at Sofia University “Kliment Ohridski”.

III. Bulgarian Legal Education after 1989 and Nowadays

After 1989 in Bulgaria a big change of political and economic system influenced by the similar changes in the rest East European countries was carried out. It was related to the transition to a free-market economy and the adoption of the principles of democracy and the rule of law. In 1991 the new (and the last one) Bulgarian Constitution was promulgated and it gave guidelines and a proper legal basis for the forthcoming significant changes in society and legislation. The principle of academic autonomy was restated and further development of juridical education in Bulgaria took place.

Now in Bulgaria, there are nine law schools. Along with the Faculty of Law at Sofia University, there are other eight faculties of law at, as follows: the University of National and World Economy – Sofia; the New Bulgarian University – Sofia (a private one); the South-West University – Blagoevgrad; the University of Plovdiv; the Free University – Burgas (a private one); the Free University – Varna (a private one); the University of Veliko Tarnovo; and the University of Ruse. All of them deepen international co-operation with partner universities in Europe and worldwide and adapt their curricula to respond to the dynamic national, European and international legislation.

With the democratic changes after 1989, the independence of the higher education institutions was restored and the principles of university academic autonomy were reaffirmed. Existing international contacts have been expanded and developed. With the introduction of new curricula, the teaching at all law faculties in the country meets

more fully the requirements of the changes in the Bulgarian legislation and the process of legal European integration. The optional courses and practical trainings of the students provided in it allow them to deepen their knowledge in those areas that are most important for their chosen field of professional realization. A specific form for connecting theoretical knowledge with practical experience are the Legal Clinics that have been introduced in the nine faculties in three areas — Civil law studies, Penal/Criminal law studies and Administrative law studies.¹³ Students from all nine faculties participate in different European and international competitions and moot courts.

The result of more than a decade of international cooperation with the University of Hamburg, which began with joint scientific events in the 1980s and is largely credited to Prof. Peter Erlinghagen, was the establishment of the Institute of German and European Law at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 1991. The first directors of the institute were Prof. P. Erlinghagen and Prof. P. Popov. The institute offers students educational seminars in the field of German Law and European Law, organizes scientific and practice-oriented forums for researchers, students and legal practitioners from both countries, facilitates academic exchanges and short-term student stays at the University of Hamburg.¹⁴

Despite the beginning process of academic competition in legal education, it can be pointed that the main task of the Bulgarian legal educational system has been to react to a very important process of participating in the Council of Europe since 1992 and in the European Union (EU) since January 1, 2007. This was followed by the 2018 Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU during which the importance of the integration of the Western Balkans was highlighted (Belova and Kochev, 2018, p. 267). In this context the jurisprudence of both courts — the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg — has become extremely important. This explains the inclusion of a special discipline —

¹³ Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, History. Available at: https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/universitet_t/fakulteti/yuridicheski_fakultet/istoriya [Accessed 18.10.2021] (In Bulgarian).

¹⁴ Ibid.

EU Law — as a compulsory subject in the curricula of the abovementioned faculties. Some other subjects, such as Institutions of the EU, Internal Market and Fundamental Freedoms, EU Competition Law, Human Rights Protection, the European Court of Human Rights, *etc.* were added to the list of optional courses in all law faculties. Human rights and the activity of the national, regional and European ombudspersons are also observed and included within the content of legal disciplines (Marin and Kovacheva, 2019, p. 229).

It should be specified that the Bulgarian system of higher education in Law (and also in Architecture and Medicine, or so-called specialities regulated by the state) slightly differs from the Bologna model for higher education. There is no differentiation between Bachelor and Master's degrees in Law in Bulgaria. Legal education can be received in five years and is completed with a Master's degree in Law (LLM). There is no Bachelor degree in Law (LLB in other European countries) in our country.

It is important to note again that the training for acquiring a higher education in the Law specialty to the educational degree of *Master* has a duration of not less than 10 semesters in Bulgaria. Full-time and part-time education is possible. The part-time form usually lasts for 5 or 6 years. The training ends with three state exams (Public Law, Civil Law and Criminal Law Sciences) that consist of a written and an oral part, and obtaining a diploma for a completed higher legal education and a person becomes a *jurist*. Work capacity is acquired after an internship and passing a new exam. The additional exam after a 6-month practical training is organized and held before the Ministry of Justice. After successfully going through this step, a person obtains the capability to practice the legal profession. They then have the opportunity to decide what type of legal profession they would like to practise. All accredited higher education institutions in Bulgaria adhere to these rules, which makes the conditions for admission, application and training processes almost identical in all of them. In Bulgaria, a law degree from a foreign university is recognized by a national authority only as a period of education in case it is a Bachelor's degree and as a Master's degree if there is almost a complete coincidence of the studied disciplines and state exams. In other words, usually in the

majority of cases after the recognition of a legal education obtained abroad by the Bulgarian national authority there are several semester exams and three state exams to be passed. A person is able to choose any law faculty to do this and to complete his/her education according to the Bulgarian legislation. For a number of younger Bulgarians who live and work in other EU states diplomas for legal education from two different EU Member States is an advantage, especially in multinational consulting law firms/companies.

In order to start practising as a lawyer in Bulgaria, one needs to be a part of a Bar Association. Each lawyer has to meet several requirements which are the same for everyone and what follows is passing the Bar Association's exams. That is significant since every Bulgarian lawyer who desires to practise this prestigious profession must be a member of a Bar Association. The examinations before the Bar Association to acquire legal capacity are very complicated and demand a high level of legal knowledge. There is a reason for doing so and it is aimed at restricting jurists that are not so well-prepared to do this type of job. A similar procedure is also applied for becoming a magistrate (judge or prosecutor) and for other legal professions. Thus, becoming a fully-fledged lawyer requires another one or two years.

The possible continuation of studying Law is either in a PhD program or in another specialized Master's program in a specific field of Law. Each faculty separately accredits its own PhD program and the quality control is carried out by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency along with the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, aiming at the enhancement of the institutions' teaching and research, including their development as scientific, cultural, and innovative organizations.

The other major innovation is the increased number of teaching hours for such disciplines as Public International Law and EU Law. This approach is connected with the debate whether EU Law, for example, should be treated only independently or should be included in all branches of national law that are recently taught in the law faculties. Another moment that has been discussed was whether or not the Human Rights course should be obligatory or optional. It is obvious that issues related to human rights overlap with some other courses

taught in the Law major — General Theory of Law, Constitutional Law, Public International Law, European Union Law, Criminal Procedure Law, *etc.* The situation is the same in other Bulgarian universities where legal protection of human rights is more or less represented when teaching Theory of Law, Constitutional or Public International Law. In some of the syllabuses, the emphasis is placed on the constitutional status of a person and a citizen of Bulgaria, while in others — on the international and regional protection of human rights and the focus of syllabuses covers mainly the history and the classification of human rights.

IV. Challenges of Legal Education in Bulgaria

An important task of Bulgarian education, in our view, has been to overcome conservatism and perception according to which law was viewed as strictly national and/or particularly local. We all live in an interconnected world and the process of internationalization encompasses every part of life and education, including the legal one. For example, nowadays the ecological issues have also become of great importance and need serious attention to be paid during the legal education process (Hristova and Chankova, 2020, p. 195).

It was absolutely necessary to include English and other foreign languages in the Bulgarian juridical education especially in the view of the multilingual European Union (Kostadinova, 2017, p. 207). Not only has the communication between lecturers become easier, but their publications have become more visible and reflected by respected international databases. There was a huge selection of specialized foreign language and translated literature (Kostadinova, 2019, p. 87).

Foreign language education has enabled students and lecturers to participate fully in the Erasmus and Erasmus+ programs realizing outgoing mobilities or to host incoming professors, students and PhD researchers. The Erasmus+ European Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport was launched in 2014 and had a period of operation until 2020. It was based on an integrated approach that ensures effective interaction between all sectors in education, training, youth and sport.

Under the Erasmus+ program, our Faculty of Law co-operates with universities in Germany, France, Spain, Russian Federation, Austria, Poland, Greece, Romania, Cyprus, Turkey, Kirgizstan, Morocco, *etc.* Throughout the years the development has undoubtedly been an ascending one. There have been a number of successfully used tools under the same program such as the development of common study programs and intensive summer schools.

Nevertheless, it might be concluded that as a whole the Bologna model for higher education has helped a lot in the development of juridical education in Bulgaria. As a part of European education, it becomes more attractive for young people from non-EU countries, it makes degrees easily comparable, it encourages credit transfer, *etc.* Lastly, the Bologna process stimulates the diversity of PhD programs in Bulgaria. For example, ten years ago there were only strictly formulated according to the specific areas of knowledge PhD programs, identical in all law faculties. Now, we have more modern and diverse PhD programs in our University and in our country and they are more attractive for young researchers.

Due to the recent coronavirus situation, a lot of experts insist that strict standards introduced for obtaining a higher legal education and entering a legal profession should continue to be applied in order to keep its quality and prestige (Yanev, 2020).

V. Conclusion

Legal education in Bulgaria needs to continue to meet the challenges of the new millennium. It is subject to further improvement and refinement to ensure its application in the national and European cultural space. The possible and necessary methods that are basic for this education and some of which are set out above are not difficult to apply.

The recognition of qualifications in the EU framework has a long history. The development in this area has involved not only the development of the EU secondary legislation but also the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (for example, *Vlassopoulou*

case¹⁵). The Bologna Process can be seen as an instrument aimed at optimizing the basis for recognition considering that it tackles the structure of higher education degrees in Europe. The Bologna process is strongly related to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.¹⁶ According to both instruments Member States' national authorities dealing with these recognition cases should be encouraged not to defend the nationally developed educational and professional standards jealously but to take into account the different knowledge acquired by the person in the educational system of another Member State as well as professional experience gained abroad including the qualifications and experiences acquired in non-EU countries. In the light of the Lisbon strategy and the urgent need for increased professional mobility, a positive attitude towards the recognition of qualifications is of vital importance in the general economic and societal interest of the European Union. The basic philosophy of the established CJEU case-law, the EU secondary legislation, mutual trust in the quality of education and training of all Member States should be the guideline for taking these decisions.

The process of globalization, the recent situation with COVID-19 and outsourcing of legal services implies further inclusion of new information technologies in legal education as well as distant learning forms. Bulgarian legal educational institutions need to adapt to new and diverse challenges (Georgieva, 2021, p. 102) through involving more case simulations, moot court competitions, legal clinics for the development of students' practical skills which they will need for their future work in the international environment.

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