

Minister Fandakova: "Investment in education is essentially a counter-crisis measure"

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"Investment in education is essentially a counter-crisis measure," argued Minister of Education Yordanka Fandakova who took part in the international conference on The New Reform Agenda of the New EU Member States. Ms Fandakova added that the government viewed investment in the area of education not as a social activity but rather as a direct investment in the economy of the country. The minister drew attention to the fact that the country was lagging behind in terms of professional education, hence the damaged connection between education and the business sector.



During the afternoon session of the conference, participants in the forum discussed investment in human capital. Krassimir Popov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy explained that the measures envisioned by the government for immediate application were aimed at citizens facing dismissal from work. Mr Popov observed that over the past year and a half the structure of unemployment in Bulgaria had undergone change. The decisive factor in it, he argued, were no longer the permanently unemployed but those citizens who had lost their jobs since the beginning of the crisis.

Boryana Gotcheva, Senior Social Protection Specialist at the World Bank, affirmed that in the time of crisis the state needed to introduce more social policies. Such policies, however, had to rely on more limited funds or, at the most, on the same amount of funding. (The full presentation by Boryana Gotcheva is available [here](#)). In his contribution, Boyan Zahariev, Director of the Governance and Public Policies Program of the Open Society Institute, argued that, in view of their current structure, individual economies as well as the global economy required growth in order to survive. Without growth, unemployment, recession and poverty would necessarily increase. However, Mr Zahariev emphasized, there were already theories which suggested that welfare was possible without growth. (The full presentation by Boyan Zahariev is available [here](#)).

Ivan Krastev, Chairman of the Board of the Centre for Liberal Strategies, drew a parallel between the challenges experienced by Bulgaria during the crisis which occurred between the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, and those posed by the current global crisis. "If back in 1997 the government simply stated what had to be done in response to the crisis regardless of the opinion of the people, reforms in the present context are not possible without broad social consent," Krastev argued.



