

National programmes supporting VET priorities

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BULGARIA

Timeline

2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation
2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation
2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation	2025 Implementation

ID number 41911

Background

In Bulgaria, the national priorities for general education and vocational education and training (VET) and VET are accompanied by specific national programmes to support their achievement.

The national programmes are regulated by article 286 of the Pre-school and School Education Act (PESA) and aim to support the achievement of the national priorities by complementing the funds initially allocated by the State budget by allocating additional financial resources.

The procedure for all national programmes (regardless of VET or profiled/general education focus) is the following:

The education ministry designs the national programmes for the respective year and submits them for approval to the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers approves the programmes, their goals, activities, eligible institutions, budget and administrative procedures. Following the approval (which, though formal and deriving from the Council of Ministers, is not considered part of the legislative framework), the education ministry initiates a call for proposals procedure. This is unique for each national programme and, depending on the specifics of the programme, sometimes several calls are initiated. The education institutions eligible for participation apply by proposing project(s) for financial support. Other institutions such as the social partners, higher education institutions are also eligible to participate but only in partnership (consortia or teams) with education institutions and always based on the criteria set by the programme. Such applications are on a project basis and nothing to do with procurement. All programmes are evaluated and reported: the report for each is included in the education ministry's activities report.

Objectives

The objectives of the national programmes focusing on VET priorities are:

- (a) to provide additional financial resources to VET institutions, and the social partners, to address specific aspects of their activities (for which initial allocated funding does not suffice) to achieve better results;

- (b) to address better the personal needs of the students (and/or other target groups depending on the specifics of each programme).

Description

There are three national programmes with VET as their focus, not all starting in the same period. All these programmes are managed by the VET Directorate of the education ministry:

National VET programme

The programme aims to support improvement in the quality of VET provision and the labour market relevance of VET by providing schools with state-of-the-art equipment, update and/or developing, for the first time, curricula and study programmes, e-learning material and VET teacher training.

The programme consists of four modules:

- (a) improving equipment in VET schools, according to the needs of the labour market, funded jointly by employers and the State;
- (b) development and update of VET curricula (according to the requirements set by the legal framework and the Framework VET Programmes for the professions included in the List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET)), training programmes and national examination programmes;
- (c) development of e-textbooks for VET;
- (d) VET teachers training.

National programme *IT career*

The aim of this programme is to stimulate the interest of learners in computer sciences and practical programming and eligible for participation are secondary VET (but also general education) learners. Secondary general education learners are specifically those learners that this programme aims to attract as they are given the opportunity to acquire, additional to their general education diploma, a VET qualification in programming. Learning methods combine e-learning with class-based learning during the weekends. The programme is implemented by the education ministry (VET Directorate), IT companies and universities. Training is provided in five dedicated training centres, based in VET schools. The programme's measures also include development of training materials, additional teacher training and opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal vocational competences.

Under the national programme *IT career*, the VET qualification *Applied programmer* was established for the first time (and was then included in the LPVET). Companies of the ICT sector (the leading Bulgarian Associations in the IT industry) played a leading role in curriculum development. They took the initiative for developing the curriculum (in collaboration with the education ministry) and their experts had a major role in ensuring that the curriculum was relevant to the needs of the sector (thus securing labour market relevance).

National programme *Business teaches*

The programme aims to improve the quality of training provision in STEM-related subjects to both profiled/general education and VET by:

- (a) establishing partnerships between schools and companies;
- (b) updating and expanding the knowledge and skills of teachers in accordance with the development of technologies and the requirements of the labour market, by acquiring the most up-to-date information on the development of technologies and their application in various professional fields;
- (c) inclusion of business representatives in the learning process and applying innovations in the teaching process.

Under the programme activities, business representatives deliver lessons in schools with duration of 12 to 18 hours, to learners of profiled/general or VET education in STEM-related qualifications. The companies also organise seminars for teachers to familiarise them with the latest technological developments or with a company's projects.

2017 Implementation

The national programme IT career started in September 2017 (academic year 2017/18). 224 learners were enrolled with a view to acquiring the VET qualification of *Applied programmer* (also established for the first time in 2017).

2018 Implementation

In the academic year 2018/19, the second year of implementation of the national programme IT career, 307 learners were enrolled.

2019 Implementation

In the academic year 2019/20, the third year of implementation of the national programme IT career, 509 learners enrolled. The total number of learners enrolled in the programme in the academic year 2019/20 reached 1 040 individuals.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, the first 218 learners graduated and obtained the VET qualification *Applied programmer*.

In the academic year 2020/21, 117 learners enrolled for the first time in the national programme IT career.

In 2020, the national programme *Business teaches* began its implementation. Representatives from companies in STEM-related sections of economic activity trained learners from six general education and VET schools, with a duration of 12 to 18 teaching hours. Business representatives delivered demonstration training (2 teaching hours, twice per year) to 231 schools. The demonstration training aimed to introduce learners to the technological developments of the respective economic section. Teachers from 11 schools participated in training in companies.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, the national VET programme began. From March to December 2021, modernisation of the infrastructure of 28 VET schools (equipment of VET laboratories, specialised software products, technological equipment) took place, with joint financing by enterprises. In the same period, 22 VET curricula were updated, 196 VET study programmes and 113 national VET examination programmes were elaborated and introduced for the school year 2021/22, eight e-textbooks for VET were developed and approved as free education resources and over 300 VET teachers were trained for the application of new VET examination programmes.

In 2021, the national programme IT career was renamed to National programme IT skills and career. Also in 2021, 191 learners obtained the VET qualification of *applied programmer*. In 2021, in its fourth year of implementation, the total number of learners enrolled in the programme was 748. Additional training was conducted for 50 teachers. The programme was expanded with an additional module entitled IT skills for the future, supporting the elaboration of training content and training materials for IT-related subjects in different VET specialties. The materials were developed by teams of professionals, including representatives of VET schools, companies from the IT sector, and from universities. Additional training for learners was conducted to pilot the newly developed materials and their compliance with the work environment.

In 2021, the national programme *Business teaches* continued its implementation. Representatives from companies in STEM-related sections of economic activity trained

learners (with a duration of 12 to 18 teaching hours) from 33 general education and VET schools. They also demonstrated the latest- specific to their economic activity- technological developments (two teaching hours, twice per year) in 122 schools. Teachers from 11 schools participated in trainings in companies. The total number of the companies participating in the programme increased to 40.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the national VET programme continued. Under the module Improvement of VET school equipment to match labour market needs, 21 schools acquired the necessary equipment with 10% joint financing by employers. Under the module Development and update of VET curricula, updated documentation for three State educational standards (SES) (full packages), 17 framework curricula, 98 training programmes for VET subjects, and 18 national examination programmes were developed. Sustainable partnerships were established between VET schools and local companies.

The national programme *IT skills and career* continued, expanding the number of students who enrolled in the programme and who obtained the VET qualification Applied programmer. This expansion also included students who continued their education at tertiary level (professional area *Informatics and computer science*). In 2022, 1 122 students were enrolled in the programme, and 164 graduates obtained the VET qualification Applied programmer.

Also in 2022, measures for graduate tracking started to be implemented, to monitor the next steps of those who graduated from the IT skills and career national programme (either at the workplace or in tertiary education). The tools used for this tracking were developed under the Erasmus+ project of the education ministry *Vision for revision (VIREO)*.

In 2022, the National programme *Business teaches* continued its implementation. Representatives from companies in STEM-related sections of economic activity trained learners from 100 (general or vocational) schools (with the duration of 12 to 18 teaching hours) from 33 schools. Teachers from 18 schools participated in training in companies, to familiarise themselves with the latest technological developments.

2023 Implementation

In the field of VET, the national programmes (NPs) implemented in 2023 were:

The national programme (NP) *Vocational education and training* with two modules, module one, *Modernisation of the material and technical infrastructure* and module two, *Modernisation of the educational content*.

During the reporting period under the NP *Vocational education and training*, under module one, *Modernisation of the material and technical infrastructure*, 36 project proposals were submitted, of which 20 were approved.

Under module two, *Modernisation of the educational content*, the following were developed and approved:

- (a) 16 standard curricula;
- (b) 77 VET study programmes;
- (c) nine national examination programmes;
- (d) one complete package of learning documentation.

The national programme (NP) *IT Skills and Career* with two modules: module one, *IT career training*, and module two, *IT skills for the future*.

Under module one, IT career training, for the academic year 2022-23 the following took place:

For the three-year study course:

- (a) 380 students completed the first year of the NP (X class);
- (b) 219 students completed the second year of the NP (XI grade);
- (c) 194 students graduated from the third year of the NP (XII grade);
- (d) 168 students graduated from secondary school and acquired the III degree of professional qualification.

For the one-year study course:

- (a) six students completed the first year of the NP (XII grade).

The five training centres which were established in 2017 continued upgrading and expanding their functionalities and capacities. Also, 52 teachers upgraded their competencies.

Under module two, *IT skills for the future*, for the academic year 2022-23:

- (a) eight partnerships between schools and IT companies were approved and funded;
- (b) 34 teachers were trained;
- (c) 387 students were trained;

2024 Implementation

In 2024 the national programmes (NPs) that were implemented were:

The NP *Vocational education and training* with two modules. Module one, *Modernisation of the material and technical infrastructure* and module two, *Modernisation of the educational content*.

During the reporting period, 25 project proposals were submitted under module one, *Modernisation of the material and technical infrastructure*, which were assessed and evaluated by a commission appointed by order of the education minister. Out of the 25 proposals, one project proposals received funding.

Under module *two, Modernisation of the educational content*, the following were developed and approved (for the academic year 2024/25):

- (a) 15 standard curricula;
- (b) 55 VET programmes;
- (c) four national examination programmes;

The National programme (NP) *IT skills and career*.

Under this NP the following took place (up to July 2024) for the academic year 2023/24.

For the three-year study course:

- (a) 359 students completed the first year of the NP (Class X) (Sofia: 30, Pravets: 36, Plovdiv: 133, Ruse: 58, Burgas: 102);
- (b) 274 students graduated from the II year of the NP (XI grade) (Sofia: 24, Pravets: 29, Plovdiv: 144, Ruse: 38, Burgas: 39);
- (c) 217 students graduated from the III year of the NP (XII grade) (Sofia: 17, Pravets: 41, Plovdiv: 133, Ruse: 6; Burgas: 20);
- (d) 205 students graduated from the NP and acquired the III degree of professional qualification (Sofia: 10; Pravets: 40, Plovdiv: 130, Ruse: 6; Burgas: 19)

For the one-year study course:

- (a) six students completed the first year of the NP (XII grade);
- (b) six students graduated from the NP and acquired the III SPK qualification.

2025 Implementation

In the field of vocational education and training (VET), the following National

in the field of vocational education and training (VET), and following National Programmes (NPs) were implemented in 2025: NP 'National VET Programme' and NP 'IT skills and career' and NP 'Vocational Education and Training'.

NP 'National VET Programme'

Module 1 - 'Modernisation of the material and technical infrastructure'. A total of 29 project proposals were submitted under Module 1. All proposals were reviewed and evaluated by a commission appointed by the Minister of Education and Science, with 18 project proposals approved for funding.

Module 2 - 'Modernisation of teaching and examination content'. Under Module 2, to ensure the necessary teaching documentation for the 2025/26 academic year, 24 curricula and four national examination programmes were elaborated and approved.

National Programme 'IT skills and career'

The implementation rate of indicators at the end of the 2024/25 school year was as follows:

For the 3-year training course:

- (a) number of students who completed Year I (Grade 10) - 287
- (b) number of students who completed Year II (Grade 11) - 27
- (c) number of students who completed Year III (Grade 12) - 233
- (d) number of students who completed the programme and obtained a third degree of vocational qualification - 227

For the 1-year training course:

- (a) number of students who completed Year I (Grade 12) - 6;
- (b) number of students who completed the programme and obtained a third degree of vocational qualification - 2

The five training centres, established in 2017, continued to upgrade and expand their functionality and capacity. The competences of 15 teachers have been further developed and enhanced.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Education professionals

Teachers

Entities providing VET

Companies
VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Acquiring key competences

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Education ministry webpage on annual strategic objectives and reports on their implementation](#)

[National programmes for 2020](#)

[National programmes for 2021](#)

[National programmes for 2022](#)

[Portal of the national IT skills and career programme](#)

[National programmes \(NPs\) for 2023](#)

[National programmes \(NPs\) for 2025](#)

Related policy developments

2021 Completed

VET graduate pilot tracking

The VET graduate pilot tracking project (No 609397-EPP-1-2019-1-BG-EPPKA3-EQAVET-NRP) is funded by the Erasmus+ programme. It is implemented by the education ministry in the period April 2019 to March 2021.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Analysis and proposals for optimising the List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET)

In June 2019, the Consultative Council for VET, an advisory body to the education minister, assigned the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) to prepare an analysis for the optimisation of the List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET).

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Framework VET programmes

VET programmes are designed based on framework programmes approved by the education minister. New framework programmes were adopted in March 2017, including:

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies->

