

The Development of digital skills initiative

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BULGARIA

Timeline

2021 Implementation

2022 Implementation

2023 Completed

ID number 41899

Background

Bulgaria aligned national initiatives with those taken by the European Commission in 2018 aimed at improving the key competences and digital skills of European citizens.

Objectives

To support the national labour market policy by providing analysis and data on the skills needed for key professions/occupations in all economic sectors.

Description

The initiative is funded by the ESF under the operational programme (OP): Human resource development 2014-20, and is implemented through two components.

Component one has been implemented by the labour ministry and component two by the national employer organisations. A unified toolkit has been developed in component 1, including methodologies and requirements for job research and identification of the digital skills required for the development of digital skills profiles in key positions and occupations, and for tools to assess specific digital skills. The unified toolkit ensures a common approach and the quality of the identification of digital skills and the development of profiles of digital skills. This initiative aims to increase digital literacy and to promote the formation of special professional digital skills in the workforce. It targets employees, including the self-employed, in all age groups, and employers so that they adapt to changes in human resource management. This initiative supports the labour ministry and the labour market institutions, through the joint actions of the social partners, to support companies and the workforce to adapt to change better by providing them with effective models and tools tested in a real environment. In this way, the impact of Industry 4.0 on the labour market will be anticipated and actively managed, and a smooth transition and adaptation of the workforce to new skills needs will be ensured.

To support the initiative a National Advisory Council has been set up, whose main task is to discuss and coordinate activities in component two. The Council includes representatives of the main institutions related to the labour market and education and training - the education ministry, the labour ministry, the Employment Agency, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), and the national employer organisations.

The profiles of digital skills that will be developed can be used free of charge by all stakeholders (employers, employees, careers counsellors and trainers) on a voluntary basis., Human resources managers and careers counsellors will receive support for the introduction of new systems, practices and tools for human resource development and work management in companies.

Employees, including the self-employed, as well as older people (and adult learners) will have the opportunity to test the level of their current digital skills, and to be trained in specially developed programmes to upgrade their digital skills according to the needs of an identified profession/job position so they can exercise it properly and achieve sustainable employment.

NAVET experts will help to further develop the curricula and upgrade State education standards with the digital skills identified. The unified profiles that will be developed within the initiative will be used by teachers for further development of education content, and part of the funds in the new programming period will be directed to training programmes that have been developed on the basis of these profiles.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, under component one, the labour ministry developed a methodology for determining the status and needs for the development of digital skills of the workforce in Bulgaria.

Under component two, the nationally represented organisations of employers and employees started seven projects for analysing the key professions/occupations in each economic activity/sector that require digital skills.

The implemented activities were the following:

- (a) research and analysis of the needs of economic sectors and economic activity sections) for digital skills based on the developed methodology;
- (b) the development, testing and validation (in the project's context validation is considered the consensus amongst the relevant stakeholders about the 'accuracy') of the developed unified profiles for digital skills in key job posts and/or professions, according to the National Standard Classification of Occupations (NSCO) 2011, that contain the knowledge, skills and behaviour employees should possess to perform their duties within a profession and/or job. The description of the levels of required digital competences (basic, intermediate, advanced and highly specialised) for the respective position and profession was based on the European Competence Framework DigComp2.1 and included a description of actions taken and results achieved. According to the project's- co-agreed with the European Commission- provisions these profiles should be referenced to the Bulgarian qualifications framework (BQF);
- (c) testing the current skills of the workforce of each sector using the tools developed for assessing digital competences;
- (d) designing curricula and non-formal learning programmes for the development of specific digital skills, according to the requirements of the specific position/ profession, in addition to the basic digital skills (according to DigComp2.1);
- (e) pilot testing/adapting/identifying education content/material for the development of specific digital skills in key positions and professions;
- (f) developing and adopting sectoral qualification frameworks for the development of digital skills and adapting and updating the frameworks if necessary;
- (g) developing methodological guidelines aimed at maintaining and upgrading the digital skills needed by workers in all economic sectors to exercise their profession/occupation, thereby ensuring their continuing education and training and better professional realisation;
- (h) raising the awareness of employers and employees about the need for developing their digital skills/competences;
- (i) developing suitable models of social partnership and collective bargaining in enterprises for the technological changes and the digitalisation of work to ensure active change management and the successful adaptation of enterprises and employees to change.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the seven projects for the development of digital skills implemented by the social partners were implemented and in this context a total of 565 unified profiles for digital skills were developed and validated/accepted by the respective industry stakeholders.

At the beginning of 2022, over 560 key vocations/occupations were identified for a total of 99 sections of economic activity (between two and seven vocations/occupations per section). On this basis, 565 unified profiles were developed for the needs of these professions/positions. Each of the profiles contains identified general and specific digital skills and the corresponding recommended level of proficiency for each skill.

At the same time, 15 tools were developed to test the digital skills of employees, of which one was an online tool. The developed instruments were used to test 3 680 employed persons in the identified key vocations/occupations. Based on the testing, their level of digital skills was defined, alongside with the recommended level.

The studies served to develop unified sectoral qualifications frameworks for digital skills. By the end of 2022, a total of 99 such frameworks were developed, which are yet to be adopted/accepted (the term adoption here, doesn't involve a formal acceptance, however NAVET signed specific agreements whereby these frameworks will be applicable at sectoral level and will be taken into account for the future development of training programmes) by the interested parties - employers, trade unions, branch organizations, social partners, civil organizations, educational By the end of 2022, based on the collected empirical information, 240 sectoral curricula/study programmes were developed for each respective section of economic activity. Each study programme was structured using a modular approach, and each of the modules presents the level and projects the future technological trends in the relevant economic section.

2023 Completed

At the end of June 2023, all seven projects of the social partners for the development of digital profiles for key identified professions and positions under Component 2 of the initiative were completed. Simultaneously, to consolidate the achieved results, the implementation period for Component 1 of the initiative, carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), was extended until 30 September 2023. During this period, all unified profiles for digital skills were finalised and uploaded to a centralised database managed by the MLSP for internal use.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy(MLSP)
- National employer organisations
- National employee organisations
- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers
Adult educators
Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET
Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses
Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation
Developing and updating learning resources and materials
Acquiring key competences
Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Osnabrück Declaration

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

CVET

Further reading

[Development of a workforce competence assessment system by sectors and regions \(CASSY\)](#)

[DigComp 2.1: the Digital competence framework for citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

National employment action plans

According to the requirements of the Employment Promotion Act, the national employment plans are prepared every year by a working group with the participation of experts from the responsible institutions, the social partners and the non-governmental sector.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

The Bulgarian National qualifications framework for lifelong learning (BQF)

Since the academic year 2017/18, the EQF/NQF level of the occupation in which the qualification is acquired is stated in the completion documents: the 'vocational qualifications certificate' and the 'vocational training certificate for part of the profession'.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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