


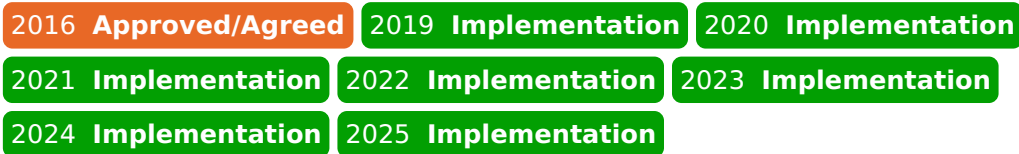
Teacher continuous professional development (CPD) framework

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 BULGARIA

Timeline



ID number 28070

Description

The 2016 pre-school and school education Law regulates the career development of teaching staff, identifies continuous professional development (CPD) as a significant factor for career advancement, and introduces a qualification-credits approach that may lead to certified CPD.

Ordinance No 12 of 27 September 2016 on the status and professional development of teachers, directors and other pedagogical specialists introduced obligatory continuous professional development and teacher appraisal procedures. It requires that teachers' continuing training is provided by specialised units, universities and scientific organisations and/or training providers offering training programmes that have been approved by the education minister. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) created a register of higher education institutions and training institutions that offer training programmes approved by the education ministry. Planning, coordination, governance and monitoring of teacher training activities are carried out at national level by the education ministry, at regional level by the regional education management units (REMU), at local level by the municipality administration, and at school level by the school principal. School-level qualification could be provided internally or by a subcontracted training provider/university.

Teachers are required to undertake at least 48 academic hours of CPD in any appraisal period (4 years) to upgrade their qualifications, and 16 academic hours annually within school-level training. One qualification credit is awarded for 16 academic hours of CPD: at least eight of these are carried out in the classroom. This credit system guarantees opportunities for the accumulation, recognition and transfer of credits. The 2016 regulation sets the conditions for continuing teacher qualification on the basis of credit points.

It is important to distinguish the funding for CPD programmes provided by the universities from State subsidies for the acquisition of the teaching certificate, which relate to the provision of initial teacher training. If the universities deliver training under CPD, they receive funding outside the framework of these State subsidies and have to be registered in the teacher training programmes information system of the education ministry.

This CPD framework relates only to teachers and other pedagogical staff in pre-school and school education and does not apply to trainers in continuing vocational education and training (CVET).

2016 Approved/Agreed

Ordinance No 12/ 27 September 2016 was approved.

2019 Implementation

In 2019, an updated education standard for the status and professional development of teachers, school principals and pedagogical specialists was introduced. It replaced Ordinance No 12 of 27 September 2016 with Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, school principals and other pedagogical specialists. However, the overall framework regulating teacher CPD remained unchanged. According to Ordinance 15, the education ministry defines the annual priority areas for CPD, and the Regional Education Management Units, (REMU) (or otherwise known as Regional Educational Directorates (REDs)- are the regional structures under the auspice of the education ministry, managing the regional school system and providing methodological support to local schools. They are also responsible for the organisation of CPD for teachers at local level together with school principals) and school principals should organise the annual CPD according to these priority areas. An electronic version of the register of approved CPD programmes was introduced. The updated standard also introduced an electronic format of the teacher portfolio and other documents that are used in the appraisal procedure, thus reducing its administrative burden.

With the amendments to the collective labour agreement, school principals were required to invest a minimum of half of the annual funding of teachers' CPD in specific training activities, including seminars, lectures, discussion forums, open lessons, presentations, and other forms of mutual learning.

2020 Implementation

Ordinance №15 of 22 July 2019 for the statute educational standard for the statute and professional development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists was amended to regulate the provision of remote synchronous online teacher training in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of 2018, Bulgaria launched an EU-funded project BG05M2OP001-2.010-0001 Qualification for professional development of pedagogical specialists. Up to 30 June 2020, this project provided CPD training for 5 347 pedagogical specialists up to 34 years of age, 24 563 pedagogical specialists between the ages of 35 and 54, and 4 895 pedagogical specialists were involved in training for application of modern evaluation methods. In 2020, 4 882 additional teachers received training in application of competence approaches under the national programme Qualification for professional development of pedagogical specialists.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, the education ministry launched targeted measures to support the CPD of VET teachers under the framework of the EU-funded project: BG05M2OP001 2.014 *Support of the dual training system*, and in the annual national programmes for the development of education. This is the first time in recent years that CPD was specially designed to meet the needs of teachers in VET-specific subjects. In previous years neither national qualification programmes nor the EU-funded project: Qualification for the professional development of pedagogical specialists, had set specific targets for VET teachers. Under the above-mentioned programmes, VET teachers were provided with CPD opportunities similar to those of general school teachers.

According to the education ministry's working programme for 2021, the supported CPD activities for VET teachers shall include:

- (a) targeted VET teacher training in business and the real working environment;
- (b) targeted qualification activities aiming at the motivation and encouragement of VET teachers and updating their knowledge, skills and competences.

578 VET teachers received training for the application of the new VET qualification exams under the national qualification programme in 2021.

2022 Implementation

Support and development of pedagogical staff remained an important policy objective in 2022. This involved implementation of policies to encourage the acquisition of teacher qualifications by other sector professionals and their integration into the education system; implementation of policies to bring back into the education system professionals with teaching qualifications who were not currently working as teachers and to support teachers who had started their service to successfully start their career in school education,

In 2022, Bulgaria introduced the National programme Motivated teachers and qualifications aiming at improving the quality of school education through attracting new teachers, improving and enriching the key competences of the pedagogical specialists and implementing a system for monitoring the impact of training on professional development of teachers.

The programme's activities are organized in 4 modules, involving:

- (a) provision of training in higher education institutions for the acquisition of the professional qualifications of 'teacher' in a subject and of resource teachers (resource teachers are teachers that provide instruction for students with special needs, including remedial services to students with language/visual/sensory impairments and learning disabilities); mentoring for newly appointed teachers new to the programme without professional experience;
- (b) provision of training of pedagogical specialists for the acquisition of additional professional qualification 'teacher of...', 'teacher of religion' and 'resource teacher';
- (c) provision of advanced training of specialists with higher education who have a teacher qualification but don't have previous professional experience as teachers to appoint them teachers in schools with concentration of students from vulnerable groups;
- (d) provision of CPD for teachers aiming at developing their competences for the implementation of the competency-based approach, teamwork competences, project-based teaching, maintaining of an educational environment that support improved outcomes for children and students, improving educational management skills, etc. This module also supports the international cooperation for teacher CPD. None of the supported CPD activities are specifically tailored for VET teachers and trainers, but they are eligible to be involved.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, the Bulgarian government adopted the National programme (NP) *Qualifications of pedagogical specialists* aligned with Priority Area 3, *Motivated and creative teachers*, of the *Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-30)*. The programme *Qualifications of pedagogical specialists* addresses the professional development needs of both newly appointed teachers and experienced educators who need to update their skills and acquire new competencies in response to the evolving educational landscape.

The programme's primary goals are to ensure that schools, particularly those with fewer classes, have qualified teachers in all subjects and to enhance the key competencies of pedagogical specialists. Continuous professional development is a key focus, providing training to improve the competencies of teachers, school principals, and other educational professionals.

The programme is structured in three main modules:

- (a) the first module focuses on supporting newly appointed teachers and principals through mentoring and professional development. This includes updating

curricula, developing learning assessment skills, and introducing modern teaching methods aimed at enhancing students' logical, creative, and critical thinking skills. It also covers financial and economic literacy, project-based learning, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence;

- (b) the second module is dedicated to improving educational leadership and management skills. It includes strategic planning, implementing competency-based approaches, developing leadership and conflict resolution skills, and managing educational institutions during crises. Practical training for new directors and tracking the progress of graduates are also part of this module;
- (c) the third module addresses values and inclusion, focusing on creating inclusive environments in early education and providing support for students with language difficulties and those from vulnerable groups, including Roma, refugees, and migrants. It also emphasizes building effective teaching teams within schools.

In 2023, within the framework of the project BG05M2OP001-2.014-0001 *Support for the dual training system*, 4 400 training sessions were conducted to enhance the qualifications of 735 VET teachers.

In addition, the ESF-funded project BG05SFPR001-3.001, *Modernisation of vocational education and training (VET)*, also launched in 2023, aims to enhance the continuous professional development of VET teachers by:

- (a) developing detailed competency profiles for VET teachers, specifying the necessary skills and knowledge required for effective teaching in line with updated VET curricula.
- (b) providing VET teachers with real-world insights and practical skills to better prepare students for the labour market by integrating practical training sessions led by experts from business, science, and other sectors.
- (c) short-term modular courses designed to help VET teachers acquire sector-specific skills and improve their teaching effectiveness. These courses will be conducted in small groups and focus on competencies outlined in the competency profiles.
- (d) providing VET teachers with specialised training to enhance their digital skills and adapt to technological developments in digital and green economies, Industry 5.0, etc.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the Government adopted a new version of the National programme *Qualifications of pedagogical specialists* which builds on measures introduced by previous national programmes for teacher CPD and is structured into three modules:

- (a) module 1: continuous professional development (CPD) is designed to support newly appointed teachers and principals through training and mentoring, providing them with the skills and support needed to thrive in their roles. It includes activities such as mentoring programmes to ensure a smooth transition into their roles and developing key professional competencies, masterclasses focusing on key pedagogical skills like formative assessment, literacy, and teaching strategies that foster student achievement. Finally the module includes crisis management training for school psychologists and counsellors;
- (b) module 2: additional professional qualifications are aimed at teachers working in schools where they must teach subjects outside their specialty field. This module provides opportunities for these teachers to gain new qualifications, focusing on subjects where there is a shortage of qualified teachers, such as mathematics, biology, Bulgarian language and literature, history, physical education, and religion. The programme prioritises small and schools in rural areas to ensure these institutions have access to fully qualified teachers across all subjects taught;
- (c) module 3: international cooperation and training, is focusing on enabling Bulgarian teachers to participate in international educational programmes and exchanges. It includes partnerships under international agreements, providing opportunities for teachers to learn from global best practices, enhance their skills, and bring innovative approaches back to their classrooms.

2025 Implementation

A significant transitional provision was introduced with amendments to *Ordinance No. 15/2019 on the Status and professional development of teachers, directors and other pedagogical specialists* (State Gazette No. 67/15 August 2025) which postponed the application of mandatory appraisal ratings as prerequisites for career advancement until January 1, 2027. This extension allows educational institutions additional time to prepare for and conduct initial appraisals. The first systematic appraisal of teachers, directors and other pedagogical specialists in institutions that have not yet conducted such evaluations is scheduled for the 2026-27 academic year.

The National programme *Qualifications of pedagogical specialists* represents Bulgaria's systematic approach to teacher professional development. Operating with a budget of BGN 1600000 (EUR 818067), the 2025 programme introduced significant thematic innovations that reflect both emerging educational challenges and evolving pedagogical priorities.

Over 56 master classes address formative assessment aligned with national external evaluation requirements, reading literacy emphasising information extraction and analytical thinking, and locally developed models for improving student outcomes. Induction support for newly appointed teachers and principals represents another sustained thematic priority, addressing retention challenges through structured programmes combining skills training with mentorship. The modular principal training programme emphasises instructional leadership, quality assurance systems, and stakeholder engagement, recognises that effective school leadership requires distinct competencies beyond classroom teaching expertise.

Training on competency-based education, educational and social inclusion, and development of creative and critical thinking emphasise the programme's focus on contemporary pedagogical approaches that develop transferable skills rather than solely content knowledge, address diverse learning needs, and foster higher-order thinking. A significant new thematic area addresses artificial intelligence integration in education, equipping teachers with competencies to critically evaluate AI tools, understand their pedagogical applications and limitations, and develop strategies for responsible implementation in teaching practice. This training responds to rapid AI adoption in educational contexts and aims to position teachers as informed decision-makers rather than passive technology consumers.

Module 2 maintains strategic focus on addressing subject-specific teacher shortages through acquisition of additional teaching qualifications. Priority areas of computer science and electrical engineering in vocational education reflect persistent workforce gaps in technical fields, where the education system struggles to recruit qualified teachers who can command significantly higher salaries in industry. The programme enables teachers with appropriate technical backgrounds but lacking formal teaching qualifications to acquire pedagogical credentials while continuing practice, and supports teachers qualified in adjacent subjects to add high-demand specialisations to their teaching portfolios.

The programme also expands training on emerging technologies, providing educators with dedicated courses on new technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), reflecting the growing importance of digital skills in both general and vocational education.

Alongside the national programme, Bulgaria's broader modernisation agenda for vocational education and training (VET) expands opportunities for practical, sector-specific qualification. Under the EU-funded project BG05elopSFPR001-3.001 'Modernisation of VET,' new competency profiles are being developed for vocational teachers. These profiles identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to teach updated curricula and integrate cross-cutting themes such as digital and green economies, blue growth and Industry 5.0, as well as the application of virtual reality and artificial intelligence in instruction. The modernisation project also seeks to widen the pool of vocational instructors by bringing in specialists from business, academia, the public sector and NGOs. To prepare them for teaching, the project includes mentoring courses that impart pedagogical and methodological skills, and it offers

modular training opportunities for existing and newly appointed vocational teachers to master new techniques and sector-specific competencies. Teachers can participate in multiple modules and will receive certificates upon completion. Complementing these initiatives, specialised courses on digital and green economy topics, blue growth and Industry 5.0 build digital competencies and award qualification credits, promote continuous professional development within the VET system.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science

Target group

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders

Thematic categories

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

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

Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Register of teacher training programmes](#)

[Objectives of the administration of the Ministry of Education and Science and annual reports](#)

[Project BG05M2OP001 2.014: Support of the dual training system](#)

[National programmes for the development of education](#)

[National programme Motivated teachers and qualifications](#)

[Project BG05SFPR001-3.001, Modernisation of vocational education and training\(VET\) 2021-27](#)

[National programme \(NP\) Qualifications of pedagogical specialists for 2023](#)

[Ordinance No. 15 of 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Directors and Other Pedagogical Specialists](#)

[Ordinance Amending the Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 15 of 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Directors and Other Pedagogical Specialists](#)

[National Programme Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists for 2025](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

The modernisation of vocational education and training project, European Social Fund (ESF)

The Modernisation of vocational education and training (VET) (hereinafter Modernisation of VET) project is co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) through the operational programme *Education 2021 -27* with direct beneficiary the education ministry.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Training programme for mentors in the dual training system

The education minister approved a training programme for acquiring basic pedagogical and psychological knowledge and skills aimed at mentors involved in on-the-job training (dual training system). The changes in Art.

 BULGARIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

State subsidies to acquire teaching certificate

Acquisition of a teaching certificate is funded, as a priority, by the State budget through subsidies to State universities. These subsidies cover teachers' initial training, but do not include their continuing professional development (CPD) which is funded under a separate framework.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

State standards for teaching qualification

In November 2016, the Council of Ministers adopted the ordinance for State education standards (SES) for obtaining a professional teaching qualification. The ordinance increases the number of learning hours for teacher initial training by 30% to 50%.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Curriculum update

In 2018, updated curricula were adopted for upper secondary education (grades 11 and 12). The learning objectives are set for both general education and VET learners, including a learning module on 'civil education' aimed at the acquisition of social and civic competences.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Key competences framework for active citizenship and for the labour market (2015 Pre-school and School Education Act)

The 2015 Pre-school and School Education Act (PSEA) emphasises the important role of key competences for active citizenship and for successful integration into the labour market.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2020 Completed

The 2015-20 VET development strategy

The 2015-20 VET development strategy addressed the acquisition of key competences in secondary VET for personal and professional needs.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Amendments to the VET Act

The VET Act of 1999 was amended in August 2016 (entered into force in August 2017), confirming that apprenticeships should offer the possibility to acquire professional qualifications through practical training, organised in cooperation with enterprises.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Teacher continuous professional development (CPD) framework: Bulgaria. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28070>