

State standards for teaching qualification

POLICY DEVELOPMENT **REGULATION/LEGISLATION**  BULGARIA

Timeline

2016 **Approved/Agreed** 2017 **Implementation** 2018 **Implementation**
2019 **Implementation** 2020 **Implementation** 2021 **Implementation**
2022 **Implementation** 2023 **Implementation** 2024 **Implementation**
2025 **Implementation**

ID number 28067

Background

In 2014, a national strategy for teacher development (2014–20) was adopted with the aim to create the necessary conditions for attracting young people to the teaching profession. In policy documents, the education ministry recognised the increasing shortage of teachers due to ageing. The teacher development strategy underlines that the recruitment, retention, and professional development of teachers is a priority. It also identifies strategic measures such as mentoring programmes, continuous professional development for novice teachers, and alternative models for obtaining a teaching qualification.

Description

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%. It introduces new areas of study (for example, conflict management, violence prevention, ICT in education and inclusive education) and training methods (such as distance learning). The teaching qualification is acquired after completing a relevant bachelor or master degree. A teacher’s position could be taken after completing initial training and acquiring an educational and qualification degree in the higher education system, as well as a professional teaching qualification. Under the Pre-school and School Education Act (PSEA), the education ministry develops and maintains an electronic register of approved teacher training programmes, many of which are focused on topics, teaching strategies and approaches, etc.

2016 Approved/Agreed

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, the Ordinance No.15 of 22 July 2019 on the status and professional

development of teachers, school principals and other pedagogical specialists was adopted by the Council of Ministers. The ordinance defined the State standard on teacher status, qualification requirements and professional development in all schools, including vocational schools.

The development of the professional competences of the pedagogical staff was carried out based on the fact that the pedagogical staff is constantly qualified; this is explicitly regulated by the Pre-school and School Education Act (PSEA) and Ordinance No15 of 22 July 2019.

The Ordinance regulated the introduction of an appraisal procedure for pedagogical specialists which aims at evaluating the effectiveness of teachers' work. It also sought to determine the results achieved, enhance teacher motivation and identify the needs in methodological and organisational support for pedagogical specialists.

2020 Implementation

The COVID-19 crisis in Bulgaria significantly changed the timetable and organisation of the appraisal procedure. For some pedagogical specialists (in the personal development centres and inclusive education centres) the procedure was postponed. It was allowed to conduct the appraisal online.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, changes to the Ordinance No15/22 July 2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, school principals and other pedagogical specialists were implemented. Some changes are related to the structure and content of the professional portfolio of teachers, which should include evidence of their education, qualifications obtained and professional development. This allowed to carry out the appraisal procedure in an online environment.

Other changes are related to the positions of senior teacher and head teacher. The results of the last appraisal procedure were added to the requirements for holding these positions.

Amendments to the same ordinance in 2021 regulate the establishment of an Information database for analyses and forecasts for staffing pre-schools and schools with pedagogical specialists. This database contains information about qualification requirements and professional development of the pedagogical specialists, information about teachers and looking for work.

In 2021, the Ordinance No18/9 September.2021 on the inspection of kindergartens and schools (applicable also to VET schools) was adopted with the aim to set a State education standard in this area. There are three domains of inspection, i.e. the education provision, management of the institution and institutional environment;(i.e. physical environment, information and library provision, organizational culture, inclusive and supporting environment for effective relationships, satisfaction of all participants in the educational process). The Ordinance stipulated the annual publication (by 31 August of each year) of the approved criteria and indicators for the appraisal procedure (31 August) on the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) website.

According to data from NEI, 65 schools were inspected in 2021. The appraisal procedure for the pedagogical specialists in institutions that were inspected should be carried out within a year (following the inspection).

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the programme *Education 2021–27* was adopted. This programme is one of the main tools for implementing priority 1 Education and skills of the *National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030* and envisages activities related to the revision of State education standards development and VET curricula design.

The programme also focusses on the qualifications and on increasing the capacity of

pedagogical specialists, non-pedagogical staff and educational mediators.

For the effective implementation of the competence model regarding teachers' qualifications the main activities of the programme include:

- (a) training for updating knowledge, methodological, practical skills, enhancing the qualifications of teachers), school leaders and experts in the Regional Departments of Education-Territorial Administration Units (including leadership skills and developing a professional and value oriented code of conduct for the teaching profession);
- (b) setting up professional learning communities.

The third priority of the programme *Education 2021 -27* - Relevance of the education with the labour market – provides for the development and implementation of competency profiles of the VET teachers as part of the process of adapting VET provision to labour market needs.

In 2022, another National programme entitled *Motivated teachers and qualification* was adopted. This programme was developed in alignment with the activities of priority 3- Motivated and creative teachers stipulated in the *Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-30)* which was adopted in 2021.

The programme aims to increase the quality and effectiveness of training, to improve the civic competences of learners in all education levels by improving and enriching the key competences of pedagogical specialists and by implementing a system for evaluating the effect of training on teachers CPD. The programme aims to recruit motivated specialists with diverse backgrounds into the teaching profession.

The programme consists of four modules:

- (a) module one: training of specialists new to the school education system to acquire the professional qualification 'teacher' and preparation for their inclusion in the educational process;
- (b) module two: training of pedagogical specialists employed in the preschool and school education system to acquire additional professional qualifications;
- (c) module three: training of pedagogical specialists without previous, actual professional experience as teachers;
- (d) module four: continuous improvement of teachers', principals' and other pedagogical staff qualifications; conducting research; conferences, etc.

In 2022, the implementation of the teacher appraisal policy (as specified by Ordinance No 18/9 September 2021 which states that teachers, principals, and other pedagogical specialists must undergo an attestation appraisal every four years) continued. The appraisal procedure was carried out in two stages - self-assessment of the attested person and assessment by the attestation commission.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, a National programme (NP) entitled *Qualifications of the pedagogical specialists* was adopted. The NP was developed in alignment with the *Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-30)*. The programme is oriented towards newly appointed teachers (their adaptation in the school educational environment) and experienced teachers (updating and acquiring new competences). The NP aims to increase the quality of education especially in schools with small numbers of classes, to increase the teachers' qualifications, etc. The scope of the NP includes activities to support newly appointed teachers and principals, training for improving the competencies of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists, organisation of professional forums and conferences for the motivation and exchange of pedagogical experience, methodical support and building professional communities; participation in teacher programmes, etc. According to the Ministry of Education and Science's report on the implementation of national programs, 7,032 pedagogical specialists participated in

various forms of qualification activities, with a total expenditure of 1,114,725 BGN.

In 2023, in accordance with the Ordinance No 18 of 9 September 2021 on the inspection of kindergartens and schools and the data from the National Education Inspectorate, 121 schools, mostly in Sofia were inspected.

At the same time the appraisal procedure for the pedagogical specialists in institutions that were already inspected continued. However, the number of schools inspected was negligibly small compared to the total number of schools in Bulgaria. According to the education ministry, about 15% of pedagogical specialists were included in the appraisal procedure in 2023.

2024 Implementation

In April 2024 a new version of the National programme (NP) *Qualifications of the pedagogical specialists* was adopted. This new version is structured in three modules aimed at continuous professional development (CPD) (module 1), at acquiring additional professional qualifications (module 2) and in increasing international cooperation and training, i.e. to increase the participation of pedagogical specialists in programmes and training falling under international agreements (module 3). At the same time, the programme meets the priorities of the education ministry to support and motivate newly appointed teachers and principals, to update their existing skill set, to foster the acquisition of new competencies by pedagogical specialists so that students have better results and to improve the overall quality of the educational process. As part of the implementation of module 1 of the programme, it is planned to hold a master class-i.e. specialised training led by an expert or professional in a particular field aimed at providing participants with an advanced skillset in the particular topics-for teachers and principals in several areas: formative assessment, students' reading literacy, improving the results and the quality of learning. As of September 2024, 19 masterclass projects have been approved for funding.

According to the annual report on the activity plan of the National Inspectorate of Education (NEI) for the academic year 2023/24 (September 2023 – September 2024) 63 schools were inspected and 63 reports were drafted covering this period. This was a breach of regulatory requirements as all schools had to be inspected by 2023.

Therefore, the education ministry proposed changes in the Ordinance No 15 of 22 July 2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, school principals and other pedagogical specialists, and more precisely that the interrelation between the appraisal procedure and the inspection of the schools should be abolished. The education ministry also suggested to postpone the appraisal procedure for 2025.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, the National programme (NP) 'Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists' continued with a budget of EUR 818 496 (BGN 1 600 000), aligned with Priority Area 3 'Motivated and Creative Teachers' from the *Strategic framework for the development of education, training, and learning in Bulgaria (2021-30)*. The programme is structured into three modules: continuing qualification (Module 1), acquiring additional professional qualifications for subject teachers (Module 2), and participation of pedagogical specialists in programmes and training under international agreements (Module 3). New activities have been proposed for training school psychologists and pedagogical advisors to work on programmes for the prevention of vaping and substance abuse, the use of new technologies and artificial intelligence in education, as well as qualification activities for self-assessment and quality management in institutions.

In 2025, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) introduced a new national programme for the development of education, focused on teacher qualification: 'Future for talents.'. The programme is aimed at preparing a new generation of motivated and creative teachers, through whom a network of national and regional schools for training talented students in the fields of mathematics, informatics, and natural sciences will be created and developed. The total budget of the program is EUR

767 340 (BGN 1 500 000). The programme is planned to be implemented over three calendar years – 2025, 2026, and 2027. In 2025, the first phase was implemented, during which training was conducted for teachers working with students in regional schools.

In 2025, regulatory changes were made regarding the appraisal of teachers. According to the amendments adopted in August 2025 to Ordinance No.15 of 22 July 2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, school principals, and other pedagogical specialists, the first appraisal for teachers, principals, and others who have not been appraised so far is postponed to the 2026-27 school year. The requirement for a minimum rating from the last appraisal as a condition for career advancement (e.g., for senior teacher, chief teacher, etc.) is postponed until January, 2027, for those who have not been appraised. This meant that during this transitional period, teachers/specialists will not be deprived of career advancement opportunities solely due to the lack of an appraisal rating.

On 23 May, 2025, the MES published a *Draft amendment to the preschool and school education Act (PSEA)*. One of the key proposals is related to the appraisal of teachers. It proposes an annual evaluation of pedagogical specialists' performance instead of the current system of appraising every 4 years. The results will be used not only for career development but also to determine additional compensation, guide participation in qualification activities, and promote best practices. Additionally, the teachers will be required to enhance their qualifications annually by earning a minimum of 3 qualification credits for each evaluation period.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science
- National Education Inspectorate (NEI)

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

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

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

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Ordinance No 18/9 September 2021 on the inspection of kindergartens and schools](#)

[Ordinance No15/ 22 July 2019 on the status and professional development of teachers, school principals and other pedagogical specialists](#)

[Programme Education 2021-27](#)

[National programme \(NP\) Motivated teachers and qualifications \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

[Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria \(2021-30\) \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

[National programme \(NP\) Business teaches \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

[Summary of evaluation and guidelines for improvement by inspection areas \(based on the inspections during the academic year 2022/23\) \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

[National programme \(NP\) Qualifications of pedagogical specialists \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

Related policy developments

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

Teacher continuous professional development (CPD) framework

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.

 BULGARIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

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.

 BULGARIA**Type of development**Practical
measure/Initiative**Subsystem**

IVET

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.

 BULGARIA**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). State standards for teaching qualification: 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/28067>

