

Learner STEM and vocational competences competitions

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BULGARIA

Timeline



ID number 28065

Description

To stimulate the acquisition of competences in STEM and languages, the education ministry and/or affiliated bodies [e.g. the Bulgarian Centre for Training Firms (BCTF)] organise many competitions for learners in secondary education, including VET, and for young people. These competitions are organised at local, national and international level in subjects such as maths, information technology, foreign languages and science (physics, chemistry, biology, environmental protection).

2018 Implementation

In 2018, more than 73 national competitions in different fields were conducted.

2019 Implementation

In 2019, with financial support from the State budget, over 16 500 extracurricular activities took place in 2 249 schools in the country and 60% of learners chose activities in STEM fields such as digital creativity, mathematics, technology and natural sciences.

A total of 22 national VET competitions were organised in cooperation with representatives of the enterprises.

2020 Implementation

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, most competitions were organised online, but they could not be held in an online environment and did not take place.

2021 Implementation

18 national VET competitions took place in 2021, organised by schools in partnership with enterprises and companies under the coordination of the education ministry. Other bodies also organise competitions: the Bulgarian Centre for Training Firms (BCTF), which is an affiliated body to the Ministry of Education and Science, has

organised 15 competitions on presentation skills, responsible business, web design, advertising materials and design. In April 2021, BCTF also organised an international online fair of training firms. Over 1 600 participants, 144 training firms, 44 schools, 3 universities and representatives from 8 countries participated in the event.

2022 Implementation

24 national VET competitions took place in 2022, organised by VET schools in partnership with companies and universities, and under the coordination of Ministry of Education and Science.

Detailed information on the organisation, partnerships and rules for competitions is published at the education ministry (MES) website. The identified good practices were shared through the 'Good news' section of the MES website.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, the 26th Fair of training firms engaged nearly 1 000 VET and university students. The fest was international and combined physical and online participation. Students' teams received awards in different categories under the broad domain of *young entrepreneur*.

Along with the above fair, 25 VET competitions took place, organised by VET schools in partnership with companies and universities, and under the coordination of the education ministry.

Regarding STEM, 18 competitions took place with the approval of the education ministry. In addition, nine Olympiads covering a wide range of sciences took place.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the usual VET competitions were organised by the education ministry along with one VET Olympiad in technical drawing. A total of 24 competitions in 24 professions from the List of professions for VET(LPvet) took place with the participation of a total of 3 256 students who took part in the regional and national stages.

2025 Implementation

Between January and April 2025, 24 national vocational competitions were organised in three stages – school, regional and national – with the participation of around 2 400 students from vocational and secondary schools nationwide. The events were held in partnership with employers' organisations, companies, trade unions, higher education institutions, NGOs and local authorities. These competitions strengthened cooperation between education and business, enhanced the prestige of vocational education and promoted excellence and practical skills among learners.

Following the establishment of the Institute of Education (IoE) in November 2024, the Bulgarian Centre for Training Firms (BCTF) became part of the Directorate 'Information support of education and training firms'(ISETF) within the IoE.

The Directorate supports the compulsory training process in the subject *Training firm* in 74 schools, encompassing 335 training firms (TFs).

The ISETF maintains eight training services (Registration Agency, Bank, National Revenue Agency, Wholesale Exchange, Patent Office, Financial Supervision Commission, Commission for Personal Data Protection, Agricultural Service) — four of which operate online — and nine electronic registers (Commercial Register, BULSTAT Register, National Business Communication Directory, registry of institutions with training firms, registry of certified enterprises and trained students, registry of trained teachers, TF FEST registration, and PEN Worldwide database registration).

The Directorate ensures comparability of students' skills and competences from

different schools and regions during preparation for participation in international fairs under the PEN Worldwide network and the national fair 'Young entrepreneur'. In 2025, 122 training enterprises from Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro registered, with 116 participating, including 100 Bulgarian firms funded by the education ministry. The 28th Fair of training enterprises 'Young entrepreneur' was held in Plovdiv on 23-25 April 2025.

The ISETF performs quality assessments of training firm activities based on PEN Worldwide criteria - a set of quality assurance criteria developed as a standard by the worldwide Practice Enterprise Network (PEN). PEN Worldwide criteria, promotes the use of European models of entrepreneurship education, and organises continuing qualification seminars for TF teachers and managers.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science
- Bulgarian Centre for Training Firms (BCTF)

Target group

Learners

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

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[National programme Building a school STEM environment](#)

[Bulgarian Centre for Training Firms \(BCTF\) website](#)

[International trade fair - Plovdiv, 2023, the 26th international fair of training firms](#)

[Ministry of Education and Science - Information on Olympiads and national competitions](#)

[Pen worldwide network](#)

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Learner STEM and vocational competences competitions: 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/28065>