


Legislative basis for the validation of prior learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 BULGARIA

Timeline



ID number 28058

Description

Following the 2015-20 VET development strategy adopted in October 2014 (and the updated VET strategy in Bulgaria for the period 2019-21), the VET Act was amended, introducing the legislative basis for validation of prior learning in VET. Validation, using the State education standards (SES), can be carried out by VET providers for professions included in the national list of VET professions (LPVET), and could lead to qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 5. The procedures for partial validation of knowledge and skills were also supported by the changes in the VET Act in 2016, related to the description of the SES in terms of units of learning outcomes. The organisation of the validation process, as well as the obligations and responsibilities of the participants in the validation process are described in a detailed procedure issued by each training institution. The candidates for validation, as well as the validation consultants and VET teachers, are more likely to understand to which profession each candidate's knowledge and skills acquired by informal or non-formal learning are related, and what evidence is required for these skills and knowledge to be identified and recognised. The validation of professional competences is done by presenting evidence and through comparison with the state educational standards or the state educational requirements for acquiring a qualification in a certain profession. Individuals (i.e. adult learners, young people, employed people at any age, NEETs, the low qualified, unemployed and jobseekers, learners from disadvantaged groups etc) can validate competences in the whole profession or in part of the profession. They sit a state exam divided in two parts: the first part consists of a theoretical examination and the candidate is examined in the theory of the respective profession for which he/she wish to acquire a certification and a practical part (in either the whole or part of the profession depending on the type of certification/qualification the candidate seeks to acquire). Upon successful completion the certified person received a certificate (either for the whole qualification or for part of it, depending on the type of the exam). The certificates issued this way are equally recognised by the educational authorities and the labour market compared to the certificates issued for learners of mainstream educational pathways. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) records the validation procedures carried out by the VET centres and provides the centres with methodological assistance.

2015 Approved/Agreed

A special ordinance on the conditions for validation came into force in 2015. It set out

A special ordinance on the conditions for validation came into force in 2015. It set out the validation framework for knowledge, skills and competences, acquired in a non-formal or informal setting, for gaining a VET qualification. Quality assurance for validation procedures was provided by the 2015 ordinance for quality assurance in VET.

2018 Implementation

Ordinance No 2 of 22 June 2018 on the documents for the vocational training of persons over the age of 16 specified the applicable documents/certificates.

2019 Implementation

In the amendments of the Higher Education Act as of 25 February 2020, the additional provisions section contained specific articles on the vocational schools established by the technical university of Sofia as a model of good practice of university-VET school cooperation.

It was explicitly mentioned that the two vocational high schools are parts of the structure of a higher education institution created to ensure better transition from secondary to higher education, with the participation of professors from the higher education institution in the preparation of secondary education students. These professors also participate in the development of curricula and study programmes and provide a methodological basis for practical training. In this capacity, they can carry out validation of professional competences under Art. 167, para. 1, items 2 and 5 of the Pre-school and School Education Act. Cooperation between organisations from secondary and higher education became a prerequisite for considering the official validation of professional competences in higher education.

2021 Implementation

In February 2021, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers adopted the *Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-30)*, developed by the education ministry in cooperation with the main stakeholders. Priority eight: *lifelong learning*, states that every individual's choice of strategies for education, training and learning will be encouraged, supported, and developed. The validation of non-formal or informal learning (also by taking into account professional experience) was considered one of the ways to expand lifelong learning opportunities.

In 2021, 725 validation procedures were completed in VET centres in Bulgaria. The vast majority who completed received a *certificate for validation of professional qualification by profession*, and a very small number of people were issued with a *certificate for validation of professional qualification for part of a profession*. The majority (621) were validated for the profession of *assistant educator* (for working with children).

It is clear, compared to 2020, that the number of people who passed the validation procedure increased significantly (in 2020, a total of 158 people were issued with certificates after successful completion of validation procedures).

2022 Implementation

The Act on Amendments and Supplements to the Employment Promotion Act in June 2022 changed VETA. The changes are relevant with the minimum education level requirements of individuals over the age of 16-years-old. This meant that conditions for including them in training to acquire a qualification in professions for the lowest - the first degree of vocational qualification- changed. The possibility of including persons without education in training to acquire a professional qualification was also regulated. Their inclusion in professional training must be combined with the development of literacy competence. These changes created the necessary conditions for increasing the employability and labour market integration of unemployed persons

from disadvantaged groups.

In June 2022, the Employment Promotion Act supplemented the list of activities eligible for funding under the active employment policies and for validating professional knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with the VETA.

2023 Implementation

Based on the ex-post impact assessment of the vocational education and training Act (VETA) carried out at the end of 2022 and the commitments set out in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and the Sustainability plan for school education and lifelong learning reform of 2023, legislative changes were prepared to improve the regulatory framework in the field of VET.

The proposed changes to the VETA included the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the formal education and training system and were relevant to the award of a partial or full qualification and to changes related to the information activities of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). More precisely the amendments were related to Articles 40 and 50 of VETA. In short, amendments to article 40 aim to facilitate the validation processes. The amendments in Article 50 of the VETA aim to create a mechanism for the regular collection of data by NAVET in relation to the procedures for validating professional knowledge, skills and competences carried out by vocational training centres (CVTs), thus contributing to effective monitoring and detailed analysis of the validation process.

As a national institution for the coordination of activities in the field of VET, NAVET has a key role in the design, establishment and implementation of the system for the identification and recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal education and informal learning. Central to the performance of this role are improving citizens' awareness and increasing interest in validation, as well as trust in non-formally acquired qualifications. The methodical support of CVTs by NAVET is a prerequisite that guarantees the effective functioning of the system for validating professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education and informal learning.

The professions for which in 2023 there was the highest interest in validating professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning were:

- (a) social assistant;
- (b) beautician;
- (c) welder;
- (d) cook;
- (e) waiter-bartender;
- (f) baker - pastry chef.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the changes in VETA were approved with the Law on amendment and supplement to the vocational education and training Act. These changes clarified the possibilities for the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences by regulating the process for obtaining a certificate for the validation of a partial or full professional qualification. They also specified that NAVET publishes information on the procedures for validating professional knowledge, skills and competences and determined that all relevant information should be uploaded by CVTs to NAVET's information system ten days after the validation takes place.

Bodies responsible

- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)

- Ministry of Education and Science

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons
Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full
Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[LPVET](#)

[Higher Education Act](#)

[Employment Promotion Act](#)

[Regulations for the implementation of the Employment Promotion Act](#)

[Information on the changes introduced with the Law on amendment and supplement to the vocational education and training Act on the website of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training\(NAVET\)](#)

Related policy developments

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

2024 Implementation

ECVET

The 2016 amendments of the VET Act regulate the structure of the State education standards for the acquisition of qualifications. The structuring of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes is the main principle of ECVET, providing flexible learning pathways.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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. (2025). Legislative basis for the validation of prior learning: Bulgaria. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28058>