

Amendments to the VET Act

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 BULGARIA

Timeline



ID number 28047

Background

Even before 2015, Bulgaria was in the phase of modernising its VET system. The VET Act, which defines the regulations for VET, had changed 22 times over the last decades, though this may have impeded consistency in VET development. Tripartite partnership was introduced with the VET Act and is at the heart of the Bulgarian VET system; social partners are even involved in defining the amendments to the VET Act. Through amendments to the Act in July 2014, the principles of dual training were introduced. The amendments aimed to adapt VET curricula to labour market needs and to introduce work-based learning in cooperation with employers, who were now also involved in the development and updating VET programme curricula. Amendments of the VET Act in August 2015 regulated the conditions and procedures for dual training and defined the specific obligations of all involved. The Labour code amendments in 2015 defined - among others - the place and duration of training.

Description

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. The amendment also intended to improve the quality of VET by increasing the practical training part offered in VET programmes.

2015 Legislative process

2016 Approved/Agreed

Amendments of the VET Act were approved in 2016.

2017 Implementation

From September 2017 onwards, all VET schools used the relevant legislative framework.

2018 Implementation

On 24 October 2018, an amendment and supplement to the VET Act was adopted. The main changes are related to:

- (a) updated requirements for employers and mentors to ensure quality in the dual system;
- (b) defining the functions and requirements for the preparation of teachers and mentors in the dual system;
- (c) introducing regular updating of school curricula to respond to business changes.

2019 Implementation

Implementation continued.

2020 Implementation

Amendments to the VET Act in 2020 were related to:

- (a) requirements for synchronisation of school admission plans with the integrated territorial strategies for the development of regions (NUTS II) and plans for integrated development of the respective municipalities where schools are situated;
- (b) opportunities for learners in programmes for the third degree of VET qualification. In the Bulgarian VET context, there are four degrees for qualifications, relevant to the complexity and the level of the competences that the learner acquires. There's an equivalence to EQF/BQF levels (e.g., first degree is equivalent to EQF level 2, second degree to EQF level 3, third degree to EQF level 4 and the fourth degree to EQF level 5. The third degree is the preferred choice of students at VET schools correspond to the highest- upper secondary-level of the 'school system). The amendments of VETA increased the opportunities that a learner has to take a VET exam for the acquisition of qualification(s) by supporting a diploma thesis/project. This is possible upon written expression of interest by the learner. The diploma project is prepared as an individual assignment and includes theoretical and practical experimentation parts.

2022 Implementation

An impact assessment of the VETA was carried out in 2022. Over the past 5 years key reforms were implemented in the VET system.

The system was reformed and improved both through changes in the legislative acts and through national, strategic and operational programmes in which goals and activities for their achievement were foreseen. With the ex-post impact assessment of VETA the actual achieved results were demonstrated and the weaknesses and challenges facing the system were highlighted. The analysis also helped to formulate recommendations.

The ex-post impact assessment of VETA aimed to:

- (a) demonstrate to what extent the processes regulated by the VETA satisfy the needs of a qualified, competitive in the labour market workforce;
- (b) assess if the provisions in force of VETA fully ensure the process of validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences;
- (c) evaluate the implementation of VETA in terms of providing the necessary conditions for vocational and civic education compatible with the personal needs and abilities of each individual.

After the data collection process, the analysis which followed concluded that the VETA as a whole fulfils its goals and creates a legislative basis for the favourable development and enhancement of VET attractiveness. The amendments of the VET Act achieved the expected results to a great extent. The VET system is developing at a

rapid pace and an indicator of this is the increasing number of vocational courses - including dual VET courses- and the increasing number of enrollments in VET and Dual VET.

Areas that need changes to improve their results were identified. There's a need for reform in the field of regulation of the validation of professional competences, updating the LPVET, the State Educational Standards for acquiring qualifications for professions, the introduction of a system for tracking the realisations of VET graduates, professional guidance and measures to increase the quality of VET.

The ex-post impact assessment of VETA was completed and the results were published in the education ministry website in December 2022.

2023 Legislative process

In 2023, after conducting several consultations with the broader public and inter-institutional expert meetings, the draft *Law on amendment and supplement to the vocational education and training (VET) Act (VETA)* was prepared. The new text largely reflected the areas that needed changes already identified in 2022 and it is aligned with the goals set in the large-scale project *Modernisation of vocational education and training (VET)* project implemented by the education ministry and the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET).

The main objective of the draft law was to modernise and improve the legal regulations of relations between VET stakeholders.

The major proposed changes contained in the draft Law were the following (presented by thematic areas):

A complete change of the List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET) should be realised in 2024 by removing the specialties which had been previously the main element. This will lead also to a reduction in the number of professions that should be reviewed and reformulated by the sectoral skills councils (under the *Modernisation of VET* project). The new LPVET will comprise of fields of education, professional fields, professions, degrees of professional qualifications, European qualifications framework (EQF) and National Qualifications framework (BQF) levels, and occupational posts according to the 2011 *National classification of occupations and occupational posts*.

A comprehensive update of the state educational standards (SES) was planned for 2025, requiring the SES to describe which parts of a profession can be defined, i.e. which combinations of units of learning outcomes could lead to the acquisition of a partial qualification. SES should contain competences more purposefully related to the protection of the environment and the use of information technologies and focus on the specificities of each profession.

A new legal definition of training for acquiring a partial qualification was defined. The requirement for training is that it should contain a minimum of three units of learning outcomes, with at least one of them deriving from specific professional training.

The concept of accumulation and transfer of units of learning outcomes was introduced replacing credits previously stipulated in the VETA (moreover credits were never regulated and implemented in the Bulgarian VET system).

The draft Law on amendment and supplement to the vocational education and training Act proposed a change in the legal requirements regarding a mentor's professional experience, and expanded the scope of a professional qualification (from a profession or specialty to a professional field). This should provide greater opportunities for employers, including for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to determine the employee responsible for conducting the practical training of students in a real working environment in the respective enterprise.

The possibility of e-learning for persons aged 16 and over was introduced. This possibility lies at the discretion of the principal of the institution and depends on the

existence of the appropriate technical infrastructure. Moreover, it allows for such training if due to extraordinary circumstances, the on-site training provision is suspended.

The draft Law granted new powers to the education minister regarding the maintenance of the public register of vocational colleges and control of their activities. In this way, the ability to monitor them is guaranteed, and at the same time there's an opportunity to monitor training provided for the acquisition of the highest degree of qualifications in the VET system.

The List of State-protected specialties of professions and the List of specialties of professions with expected shortage of specialists on the labour market were renamed in the draft law to List of State-protected professions and List of professions with expected shortage of specialists in the labour market. Moreover, the draft law aims to create conditions for optimising the processes for updating the specified lists, as due to perspective removal of specialties from LPVET updates will refer to professions. Another change concerned the timeframe for updating these lists - instead of updating the lists annually the update was set at a biannual basis.

The draft law contained a new definition of the quality of VET, creating a clear commitment to the nationally representative employers' organisations, as well as to the branch trade unions, for their participation in the process of assessing the quality of VET.

The draft Law explicitly regulated the validation process which should include at least one unit of learning outcomes. A mechanism for regular data collection by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) was also being created, in relation with the procedure for the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences carried out by VET centres aiming to the effective monitoring and analysis of the entire process.

The draft law introduced more favourable conditions for the implementation of the activities of VET centres by removing additional costs and fees for VET centres and by abolishing their obligation to submit documents already existing in another administrative register to NAVET.

The draft Law optimised the activity of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) as it enabled inter-register exchange within the state administration.

2024 Implementation

In issue No 27 of 29 March 2024 of the Bulgarian State Gazette the Law on amendment and supplement to the vocational education and training Act was promulgated.

The changes proposed in 2023 came into force.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)
- Social partners
- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Adult learners

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

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

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[VET Act \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

[VET Act \(NAVET site\)](#)

[Law on amendment and supplement to the vocational education and training Act \(in Bulgarian\)](#)

Related policy developments

2024 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

2024 Implementation

Analysis and proposals for optimising the List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET)

In June 2019, the Consultative Council for VET, an advisory body to the education minister, assigned the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) to prepare an analysis for the optimisation of the List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET).

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Register of employers who meet the requirements for establishing dual VET partnerships

Ordinance RD No 04-4 of 8 October 2019 of the economy minister sets the conditions for creating and maintaining a register of employers who meet the requirements for dual vocational education and training (DVET) partnerships.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2024 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

2024 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

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

Legislative basis for the validation of prior learning

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.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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

2017 **Approved/Agreed**

Framework VET programmes

VET programmes are designed based on framework programmes approved by the education minister. New framework programmes were adopted in March 2017, including:

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 **Implementation**

Mandatory self-assessment of vocational training centres

Since January 2017, all centres for vocational training (CVTs, providers of initial and continuing VET to employees and the unemployed, without acquisition of an education level) must provide the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) with self-assessment reports specifying

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 **Implementation**

Developing dual VET

Piloting started in the 2015/16 school year for seven professions in five secondary VET

schools in different regions of the country. In 2016/17, 12 professions and 17 schools in total were involved in the experiment. Dual VET(DVET) is supported by the municipalities and the social partners.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Legal framework for the implementation of dual VET

An Ordinance that regulates dual vocational education and training (DVET) came into force at the beginning of September 2015.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

VET provision financial incentives for qualifications in demand

The latest amendments in the Pre-school and School Education Act (into force since January 2018) envisage financial stimulus for schools which provide VET training for qualifications needed in the labour market.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

The consultative council for VET

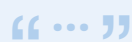
In 2018, a consultative council for vocational education and training (VET) was established by the education ministry with the participation of other ministries, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), organisations of employers and trade unions and other bodies and civ

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET



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