

# Developing dual VET

<b>POLICY DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE</b>	 BULGARIA
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## Timeline



ID number 28046

## Background

The principle of dual training was introduced by amendments to the VET Act in July 2014. In August 2015, Ordinance No 1 of 8 September 2015 of the education minister sets the rules and conditions for the organisation and implementation of dual training.

This clear focus on the dual vocational education and training (DVET) system is essential for its further development. All participants in the process are convinced that the DVET system is stable and in line with economic development. In this sense, dual vocational training in Bulgaria was developed strategically from the core to the (social) peripheries and not vice versa, as often happens due to divergent and diverse interests.

## Description

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. The piloting phase was planned to continue until 2019. In 2017/18, the total number of learners in dual VET has reached 1 742, and in 2018/19 their number more than doubled, reaching 3 884 learners. The most popular courses are related to computerised numerical control machine, electronic engineering, transport equipment, gas, wood-processing, milk and dairy production technician.

<b>2015 Pilot</b>
<b>2016 Pilot</b>
<b>2017 Pilot</b>
<b>2018 Pilot</b>
<b>2019 Implementation</b>

Two major steps were taken in 2019 regarding DVET, which aimed to develop further the legal framework based on Art. 17a, para. 1 of the Vocational Education and

Training Act (VETA) and the updated draft (draft suggests that it was not formally adopted but served as a guiding principle and methodological tool) VET development strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2019-21.

Art. 17a, para 1 of VETA, and in connection to the policy of the economy ministry to promote the implementation of dual training in Bulgaria, empowered the economy minister to create and maintain an information database for employers who meet the requirements for participating in partnerships for delivering on-the-job training (dual training system).

The database was established with special Ordinance № RD-04-4 of 8 November 2019. It aims to encourage employers' involvement in DVET and to reduce the shortage of staff in enterprises. The information database intends to support the process of linking education and business through a dual training system. The Ordinance specifies the terms and procedure for the inclusion of a single enterprise in the database of employers who meet requirements for work-based learning. The inclusion of employers in the database is intended to be voluntary and employers are not required to pay a State fee.

The information database with employers eligible to provide work-based learning was made publicly available on the website of the Ministry of Economy.

The database aims to encourage enterprises to invest in dual training. It provides information on the specialties that are most needed by the labour market as well as on opportunities for creating training classes on a regional/local level. The Ordinance facilitated the participation of the business world in the process of DVET and the unification of the information. It has two annexes which contain information for accessing the database by enterprises:

- (a) annex 1 provides a model of an application for the inclusion of employers who meet the requirements for delivery of on-the-job training in the information database. The application is a prerequisite for employer inclusion in the database;
- (b) annex 2 of the Ordinance contains a sample declaration in which employers prove that they fulfil the requirements for participating in a partnership for the implementation of DVET in accordance with Art. 17a, para 3. By completing this declaration, employers certify that they fulfil the requirements for participation in the dual training process and can contract educational institutions.

Another step forward was taken as the draft VET development strategy was updated, incorporating elements for DVET: the Bulgarian draft VET development strategy for the period 2019-21 was updated to reflect current VET developments, including dual education.

Additionally, the draft strategy covered the following aspects of DVET:

- (a) creating regulatory, organisational and administrative prerequisites for transforming DVET from a pilot project to a policy;
- (b) creating a database of companies involved in DVET;
- (c) capacity building for organisational development and for supporting local and national employer-school partnerships;
- (d) providing financial resources for the expansion of DVET on the basis of national funding, and joint financing from the European Structural Funds, including increasing publicity and raising awareness of the actions taken;
- (e) implementing the European instruments and participating in international cooperation formats, including quality frameworks and cooperation platforms.

The update of the VET strategy was further amended by including forward-looking VET priorities in the *Education 2030* strategy.

DVET, under the operational programme *Science and education for smart growth 2014-20*, assumed another operational model.

The executive agency of the operational programme (OP) *Science and education for smart growth*, initiated a discussion in June 2019 to design an updated, operational

project to support the dual training system. The operation/project reflected the latest changes in legislation and was named *Support for the dual training system*. The operation started being carried out as a partnership, with the education ministry being the main beneficiary and the nationally representative employers' organisations, being partners. Employers signed agreements with schools to participate in DVET and the social partners developed a partnership relationship with the applicant schools. The duration of the operation was set to three academic years.

One of the main goals of the *Support for the dual training system* project is to support the implementation of DVET by designing curricula, syllabi, national exam programmes for DVET, assessment tools, and teaching materials and methodologies at national level.

### 2020 Implementation

In 2020, the project *Support for the dual training system* continued, covering actions in five areas:

- (a) activities which support the schools providing dual training such as training that increases the qualifications and competences of teachers in vocational training, training of methodological teachers, purchase of equipment and materials for dual training purposes, development of teaching aids and materials);
- (b) activities to support the DVET system, such as development of curricula, national examination programmes for DVET, purchasing equipment and materials for VET classrooms, development of tools and support and methodological materials at national level- instructions and guidelines, including a summary of the main Acts, relevant to DVET;
- (c) activities to support learners participating in DVET through the participation in a trial internship in the partner companies and providing support through the conduct of additional training activities such as foreign language courses;
- (d) activities to support employers, such as training of mentors in pedagogical and methodological skills and information campaigns for attracting students and enterprises to participate in DVET;
- (e) activities to support parents to improve the student-school relationship and parent-employer relations.

### 2021 Implementation

In 2021, more than 130 VET schools started to implement the *Support for the dual training system* project, introducing the first trial internships and purchasing education materials for teaching VET subjects.

Also in 2021, trial internships began and education material for VET subjects was purchased.

Training of mentors began in 2021 (funded by the *Support for the dual training system* project) to support employers.

Finally, training activities for enhancing VET teachers' qualifications and skills were carried out.

### 2022 Implementation

In 2022, no systemic changes affecting DVET took place. The promotion of DVET and the increase of enrolment were the main priority, which was achieved through the most significant instrument available - the ESF project *Support for the dual training system*. In 2022, the scope of the VET system grew substantially, and the following actions were carried out:

- (a) 26 curricula were updated or developed;
- (b) 112 syllabi and 3 national examination programs updated;
- (c) 274 teachers were trained (in trade-related and pedagogical skills);
- (d) 5 780 students benefitted from trial internship in companies;

- (e) 1 245 students participated in additional training activities(vocational or training in literacy and/or foreign languages)
- (f) a toolkit for assessing the quality of DVET and for workplace training was developed by a tendered consortium of experts This is a practical guide for DVET, which summarises the experience gained from the Bulgarian-Swiss project, as well as from other DVET related pilot projects which were implemented in the country. The guide aims to support institutions, schools and companies in the organisation and quality assurance of DVET. The guide reflects the legislative changes that took place at the end of 2018 and were the result of a broad public consensus and support.

The total number of enrolments in DVET in Bulgaria exceeded the number of 11 000 students in September 2022 (2 106 enrolments only for the academic year 2022/23).

### **2023 Implementation**

During the academic year 2022/23, dual VET(DVET) was provided in 182 educational institutions, including vocational high schools, profiled high schools, and secondary schools, with 11 609 students enrolled in DVET.

For the development of the DVET system, BGN 86.7 million (approximately EUR 44.3 million) was allocated till 2027 under the operational programme *Education 2021-27* to fund projects. The programme will continue to support additional vocational training for students, teacher and mentors' training, internships for high school students, adult literacy, reintegration into the education system, and vocational guidance that encourages participation in dual VET, amongst other initiatives. Eligible applicants include vocational high schools and schools with vocational pathways, including private institutions. Regional Education Departments can be partners, with employers as associated partners with eligible expenses for a specific project proposal ranging from BGN 250 thousand (approximately EUR 127 thousand) to BGN 750 thousand(approximately EUR 383 thousand).

Also in 2023, the Consultative Council for VET supervised by the education ministry adopted a *Strategic vision for the development of dual VET (DVET) in Bulgaria*. This vision outlines a commitment to enhance the DVET system by 2030, focusing on flexible admissions, providing incentives for employers, and transforming them into pivotal players in the training process. These strategic objectives aim to strengthen the role of DVET in Bulgaria's educational landscape.

### **2024 Implementation**

During the academic year 2023/24, the preparation and initial implementation of activities, such as training for students in soft skills, internships, as well as training for teachers on new teaching methods under the operational programme *Education 2021-27* started, as well as the preparation of the second dual VET intervention funded by the Swiss Confederation under the Swiss- Bulgarian cooperation programme. The first Swiss-Bulgarian project for introducing dual VET in Bulgaria (2015-19) implemented the model in few VET schools and most importantly, based on its results the VET legislation changed to make dual VET part of the VET system in Bulgaria. The contract for the second Swiss-Bulgarian project in dual VET was signed in December 2024 with main activities concentrated in the areas of career counselling and fostering a stronger involvement of companies in the dual VET system. The project aims to further develop dual VET, responding to the large unmet needs of the Bulgarian economy for thousands of well-trained craftsmen and technicians in various fields. The education ministry will be implementing the project which will run till 2029. The main activities are focused in increasing the attractiveness of DVET, engaging the companies in DVET promotional events and other awareness activities.

### **2025 Implementation**

In 2025 the DOMINO 2 project (2025-29) was launched under the Swiss-Bulgarian cooperation programme with a budget of CHF 5.8 million ( $\approx$  BGN 10.4 million,

approximately EUR 5.3 million). Building on the achievements of DOMINO 1 (2015–19), the programme aims to expand and systematise dual VET by reinforcing public–private collaboration and transferring Swiss expertise. Key measures include the establishment of regional clusters and information hubs to link employers, schools and learners, the development of quality assurance tools, career guidance and awareness-raising activities, as well as research for evidence-based policymaking. The programme is implemented by the education ministry in partnership with the Bulgarian–Swiss Chamber of Commerce and leading Swiss institutions. Target groups include learners (15–29), teachers, trainers, employers, SMEs, and career counsellors.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Ministry of Education and Science
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)
- Social partners

## **Target group**

### **Learners**

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

### **Education professionals**

Teachers  
Trainers

### **Entities providing VET**

Companies  
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)  
VET providers (all kinds)

### **Other stakeholders**

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

## **Thematic categories**

### **Governance of VET and lifelong learning**

Optimising VET funding  
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses  
Developing and updating learning resources and materials  
Acquiring key competences  
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

### **Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation**

Lifelong guidance

## European and international dimensions of VET

Transnational VET initiatives, including joint VET programmes

## European priorities in VET

### VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

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

### Osnabrück Declaration

European Education and Training Area and international VET

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[Official webpage on the Support for the dual training system project \(Ministry of Education and Science\)-in Bulgarian](#)

[Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works: BGN 86.7 million \(approximately EUR 44.3 million\) have been allocated under the operational programme Education to fund projects aimed at developing the dual VET system till 2027](#)

[Ministry of Economy and Industry.\(n.d\). Data base of employers that cover the requirements for dual VET](#)

## Related policy developments

### 2025 Implementation

### Strategic vision for the development of dual VET (DVET)-2030

The *Strategic vision for the development of dual VET (DVET) in Bulgaria-2030* (hereinafter *Strategic vision for the development of DVET*) was drafted by an expert team, with the financial support of the Fund for the preparation of support measures under the Swiss

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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action plan

#### Subsystem

IVET

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2025 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

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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.

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### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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2025 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

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2025 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

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**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**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

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**2025 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

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

