


The modernisation of vocational education and training project, European Social Fund (ESF)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BULGARIA

Timeline

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 46204

Background

The idea behind the project is to contribute to improving the quality, inclusiveness and effectiveness of vocational education and training (VET). The necessity of such efforts has been identified in various analyses, ex-post impact assessments and strategic documents having VET in their scope. The design of the project reflects the trends and recommendations for a VET reform addressing the need for a more responsive VET system in coherence with the societal and technological transitions affecting the skillset needed in the labour market.

Objectives

The implementation of the project will support the development of the VET system.

Description

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. This project is designed to contribute to make VET more agile, responsive to labour market needs and to enhance its attractiveness. The education ministry manages the project activities and ensures the institutionalisation of key developments. The implementation of the project is to be carried out in partnership with the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). The project envisages:

- (a) amendments of the VET Act stipulating the development and application of a new List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET) and new educational content (updating curricula);
- (b) introduction and implementation of flexible learning pathways (i.e. legislative amendments which are envisaged to improve opportunities for the acquisition and transfer of units of learning outcomes, and their accumulation for acquiring a partial or full qualification, micro-credentials;
- (c) improvement of the skills and competencies of VET teachers and students through modular training in partnership with companies;

- (d) elaboration and introduction of educational materials with innovative digital learning content;
- (e) introduction of mentoring and tutoring;
- (f) offering to students the opportunity to undertake practical learning in a real working environment and increasing VET attractiveness among students and parents.

The project is a large-scale effort at system level, which is expected to impact a broad range of target groups on IVET and CVET, including secondary-school students, adult learners, learners from migrant backgrounds, learners at risk of early leaving, teachers, trainers, adult educators, school leaders and VET providers and to contribute to the enhancement of various parameters of the VET system such as teachers' skillset, integrating green transition and sustainability in VET curricula, integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula, transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications with the use of EU tools, etc.

The project will be subject to evaluation on a regular basis by the consultative council for VET.

The timeline of the project implementation spans 2023-27 and includes the following activities:

- (a) activity one: development and implementation of a new List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET), state educational standards (SES), curricula and study programmes, national examination programmes including cross-sectoral, by specific sectors, etc., by using sectoral skills councils (SSCs) to improve collaboration between schools and other VET providers, enterprises, etc.;
- (b) activity two: development of competence profiles for VET teachers;
- (c) activity three: introduction of flexible learning pathways for the purposes of permeability between professions, sectors and education levels;
- (d) activity four: joint development and introduction of educational materials for VET in sectors important for the economy of the region and the labour market with innovative digital learning content, use of artificial intelligence, virtual reality and blended learning;
- (e) activity five: participation of VET teachers in training activities, and also participation in training activities of staff from enterprises, science, public and non-governmental sectors, who wish to be included as a teaching personnel in VET;
- (f) activity six: improving VET teachers' qualifications through specialised training related to the transition to a digital and green economy, blue growth, Industry 5.0;
- (g) activity seven: improving transversal and key competences of VET students, with particular emphasis on entrepreneurial skills, social entrepreneurship, etc. with the participation of employers;
- (h) activity eight: additional professional training and additional practical learning activities in a real work environment by supporting VET providers;
- (i) activity nine: information activities and campaigns to increase VET attractiveness and strengthen the relationship between students/parents-employers-school-local authority, including activities aiming to enhance career guidance for VET students.

The activities under the project are foreseen to be implemented by applying a sectoral approach, to ensure a closer connection between VET and the real needs of the labour market and a faster adaptation of VET to the dynamics of the labour market. The inclusion of new technologies in training, as well as the different organisation of the training process (blended training, training in a different physical environment) are expected to contribute to enhancing VET attractiveness by motivating more people to enrol in VET. Another goal is to improve the professional competences and qualifications of VET teachers and the skills of students, so that they can meet the needs of the labour market. Providing additional financial support in the form of scholarships for students and introducing flexible learning pathways is expected to reduce the risk of early school leaving.

Although the centres of VET excellence are not specifically targeted by the project as VET institutions they are included in the activities of the project.

In 2023, a partnership agreement was concluded between the education ministry and the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), and preparatory activities for the project began.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, for the implementation of the project related activities, the following were carried out:

98 employment contracts were signed with members of 20 sectoral skills councils (SSCs) (they are also representatives of social partners), regulating the SSC members' involvement in the activities (elaboration of the new LPVET, new SES, new curricula; development of competence profiles for teachers, etc.). By order of the education minister, 134 representatives of interested parties (nationally representative trade unions and employer organisations, private enterprises, etc.) were approved as members of the SSCs, to participate without salaries in the activities of the SSCs (expert contribution to the elaboration of the new LPVET, new SES, new curricula; development of competence profiles of VET teachers, etc.). 417 VET schools were included in the implementation of the project activities. The schools were approved by order of the education minister. General guidelines were developed for the work of the SSCs.

In relation to activity one, the following took place in 2024:

Guidelines with annexes to them were prepared for the SSCs to develop the new LPVET. A series of working meetings were held for each SSC with the purpose to develop detailed projects of LPVET in the sector they represent. Hybrid meetings between the SSCs and the permanent expert commissions at NAVET (comprising members with sectoral expertise per vocational field) were held for reviewing and approving the new LPVET. As a result, under activity one, the new LPVET was adopted on 9 August 2024 by Order of the education minister.

Under activity four, 165 training activities began in 2024.

In relation to activity five, 265 teams launched training activities with representatives from science, enterprises, public and non-governmental sectors in 2024.

Regarding activity six, training activities for 146 teachers in total were launched, in 2024.

In relation to activity seven, 299 students commenced their studies, in 2024.

In 2024, regarding activity eight, 1 275 students started additional practical learning in a real work environment (i.e. out of school classes, in enterprises, museums, public institutions, etc depending on the specificities of the profession).

In relation to activity nine, in 2024, 238 school campaigns took place and 14 interviews with members from various SSCs were broadcasted by the radio station *Focus*.

Activities two and three were to start in 2025.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, the programme delivered the following results:

Activity 1 - Development and implementation of the new List of Professions for VET (LPVET), State educational standards (SES), National examination programmes (NEPs), curricula and training programmes: 29 SES approved and promulgated; over 100 draft ordinances on SES for qualifications under the new LPVET published for public consultation.

Activity 2 - Introduction of competence profiles for VET teachers and trainers: drafts of 20 competence profiles developed for VET teachers in 20 professions from the new LPVET.

Activity 3 – Introduction of flexible learning pathways, micro-qualifications and credit transfer in VET: activity launched following Addendum No 2 (28 July 2025) and updated project management guidelines (18 August 2025).

Activity 4 – Development of digital learning materials using AI, virtual reality and blended learning in key economic sectors: 7 767 students participated in training delivered in alternative physical learning environments.

Activity 5 – training of VET teachers and involvement of professionals from business, academia, public and NGO sectors: 220 external trainers from outside the education system engaged in VET teaching; 955 business representatives trained in pedagogical and methodological skills.

Activity 6 – qualifications of VET teachers through specialised training related to the digital and green transition, blue growth and Industry 5.0: 2 954 teachers participated in training for digital and green competences.

Activity 7 – Improvement of transversal and key competences, entrepreneurial and social skills of students with employer participation: 5 076 students took part in additional activities to enhance transversal and key competences.

Activity 8 – additional professional training through support for training firms and extra work-based learning: 10 317 students participated in additional workplace-based practical training.

Activity 9 – information and awareness campaigns to increase the attractiveness of VET and strengthen cooperation between schools, employers and local authorities: eight sectoral meetings and two national campaigns conducted; 833 school-level campaigns implemented; 5 531 students involved in career guidance activities; four promotional videos produced and broadcast; active Facebook page with 678 posts, 1 567 followers and 452 349 content impressions; Instagram profile created with 21 short video posts; 1 500 printed copies of the amended VET Act and 2 000 copies of the 2024 LPVET and correspondence table published and distributed.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science
- National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Adult learners

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders
Adult educators
Guidance practitioners

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

Coordinating VET and other policies

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Acquiring key competences

Integrating green transition and sustainability in VET curricula and programmes

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Using EU transparency tools (EQF, Europass, ESCO, ECTS, ECVET principles)

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting teachers and trainers for green transition and sustainability

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

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

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Ministry of Education and Science.\(n.d\).Information on the Modernisation of VET project](#)

Ministry of Education and Science. (2024, August 21). A new list of 193 professions was approved by the Ministry of Education and Science

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Centres of vocational education and training (VET) excellence

A procedure for the improvement of infrastructure and equipment and/or renovation of a range of vocational high schools (BG-RRP-1.014 - construction of centres for excellence in vocational education and training (VET)) was developed under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) with fina

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 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

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.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

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

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

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). The modernisation of vocational education and training project, European Social Fund (ESF): 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/46204>

