

Centres of vocational education and training (VET) excellence

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BULGARIA

Timeline

2024 Implementation 2025 Implementation

ID number 46146

Background

According to data presented in the key strategic document for the Bulgarian education system i.e. the *Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-30)*, as of 2021 only 61% of all educational institutions have undergone partial external and 58% partial interior renovation works. Investments to renovate/rebuild the educational institutions and in their educational infrastructure are essential for the transformation of educational institutions into a favourable environment, to improve educational results and motivation to learn.

Objectives

The aim is to:

- (a) renovate the infrastructure and equipment of the existing vocational high schools;
- (b) provide interdisciplinary, learning environments suitable for the current and future skill needs of the local labour market.

Description

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 financing under the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the EU.

The education ministry elaborated a methodology for determining the range of vocational high schools to receive the status of Centres of VET excellence (CoVEs) ranked against a set of criteria including a balanced territorial scope, taking into account the social and demographic trends in the development of the Bulgarian economy and to create conditions for restraining internal migration from small settlements to several large and economically well-developed large cities in the country. As a result, 28 vocational high schools have been designated by order of the education minister to be granted the status of CoVEs and thus be entitled to a targeted support.

More specifically, this procedure envisages the renovation of the building infrastructure and the equipment of the existing vocational high schools (28), with the aim of turning them

into CoVEs. These CoVEs are intended to provide an interdisciplinary, complex learning environment for the future workforce, contributing to the development of priority economic sectors at regional level and to boosting the cooperation between relevant stakeholders. CoVEs are envisaged to provide the necessary environment for the development of skills needed for the twin transition and skills needed to thrive in our current and future societies. In short CoVEs are expected to make VET more responsive to labour market needs and to steer innovation and growth.

The procedure for establishing CoVEs in Bulgaria, under the NRRP, comprises the following two activities:

- (a) activity one: supply and installation of the necessary equipment for a CoVE;
- (b) activity two: repair/overhaul, reconstruction, major renovation of buildings, premises, workshops and schools' laboratories, including extension, upgrade and/or construction of a new CoVE.

The deadline for the implementation of the activities is 30 June 2026. The implementing authority is the education ministry.

An upgrade of the procedure is foreseen under the Modernisation of VET project, financed by the operational programme Education 2021-27. This is planned for 2026.

The beneficiaries of establishing CoVEs are broadly all students and learners pursuing a vocational qualification or in need of upskilling or reskilling. In this sense, young people (15-29 years old) would be able to benefit from additional training for obtaining qualifications or filling skills gaps for a successful entry to the labour market. CoVEs would as well avail of more opportunities to target learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers through improved VET provision, improved image of the school and the career prospect it offers through the ecosystem of partners and employers that are underlying the status of a CoVE.

2024 Implementation

The procedure BG-RRP-1.014 construction of centres for excellence in VET was allocated a budget of BGN 96 960 000 (approximately EUR 49.5 million)

A total of 28 grant decisions were issued for the provision of funds under article 25 of the Decree of the Council of Ministers No 114/2022 and all 28 contracts were signed.

The implementation of the two activities of the procedure began for 28 vocational high schools which will become centres of VET excellence (CoVEs) once the activities are completed.

Soft measures are to be designed, such as:

- (a) the additional training of students, teachers and adult learners related to the CoVEs partnership ecosystem;
- (b) updating curricula in partnership with employers. These curricula will reflect the enhanced expertise of CoVEs teaching staff;
- (c) measures focusing on the improvement of the quality of VET provision at CoVEs and the popularity/attractiveness of vocational training as a conscious choice for career development.

2025 Implementation

As of October 2025, six centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs) have been established and became fully operational.

Half of all 28 participating vocational schools (14 in total) are in the final stage of project implementation, having utilised over 90% of the allocated funds—this group includes the six functioning CoVEs.

A significant share of the remaining schools is awaiting approval of their financial reports to finalise their project activities. The establishment and progress of the CoVEs

mark an important step towards strengthening the capacity of VET institutions, promoting a learning environment fostering their potential for innovation, partnership with business, and alignment of vocational education with sectoral and regional labour market needs.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities

Education professionals

Teachers

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training
Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision
Making VET institutions sustainable and green

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

Related policy developments

2025 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.

 BULGARIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/46146>