



# Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

## BULGARIA



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

**Developments in vocational education and training  
policy in 2015-17**

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This report was produced by Cedefop and reflects contributions from Cedefop's VET policy and systems team and Cedefop experts working on common European tools and principles for education and training and statistics. It is based on detailed information on VET policy implementation submitted by Cedefop's European network of expertise on VET (ReferNet) and other sources.

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# Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the proportion of upper secondary students enrolled in VET (vocational education and training) programmes in Bulgaria was above the EU average: 53.7% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Table 1); and 53% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU <sup>(1)</sup>. However, the employment rate of recent upper secondary VET graduates was lower than in the EU: 61.5% in 2015 compared to the EU average of 73% (European Commission, 2016, p. 7). Adult participation in lifelong learning was also low: 2% in 2015 compared to 10.7% in the EU (Table 1).

VET was confronted with a range of challenges: low attractiveness, insufficient provision of relevant skills for further training and employment, 'underfinancing, poor cooperation with the business sector, increasing drop-out rates and lack of a coherent system to assess quality' (European Commission, 2016, p. 7). A reform was launched in 2014 to address the issues: a 2014-20 lifelong learning strategy was adopted, and the VET legislation amended, introducing dual training. A target for adult participation in lifelong learning of 5% by 2020 was set. A *2015-20 VET development strategy* and a *2015-17 action plan for the strategy* were also adopted.

Table 1. **Framework data: score on VET indicators in Bulgaria and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend**

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Yr	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	BG	EU
<b>Access, attractiveness and flexibility</b>								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	53.7 <sup>b</sup>	48.0 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E1</sub>	'13-'14	▪ 1.3	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	0.0 <sup>z</sup>	34.0 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E2</sub>	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	88.1	69.2 <sup>E3</sup>	'13-'14	▪ -4.2	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	22.0	38.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	22.0	38.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	20.0	20.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	20.0	20.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	1.6		'15	2.0	10.7 <sup>b</sup>	'13-'15	→ 0.0	→ 0.0

<sup>(1)</sup> Eurostat, data for 2015.

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Yr	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	BG	EU
Enterprises providing training (%)	31.0	66.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	31.0	66.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	<sup>A</sup>	<sup>A</sup>	'14	46.3 <sup>b</sup>	42.7 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E1</sub>	'13-'14	▪ 2.5	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	8.0	25.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	8.0	25.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	42.8 <sup>b</sup>	33.0 <sup>b</sup>	'14-'15	▪ 0.3	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)		5.3	'15		<sup>b</sup> <sub>u</sub> 6.9			
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	<sup>u</sup>		'15		<sup>u</sup> <sub>c</sub> 4.3 <sup>b</sup> <sub>c</sub>			
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	<sup>u</sup>		'15		<sup>u</sup> 9.5 <sup>b</sup>			
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	5.9 <sup>B</sup>	9.5 <sup>e</sup> <sub>B</sub>	'11	5.9	9.5 <sup>e</sup>			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	93.6 <sup>B</sup>	80.2 <sup>e</sup> <sub>B</sub>	'11	93.6	80.2 <sup>e</sup>			
<b>Skill development and labour market relevance</b>								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.48 <sup>b</sup>	0.56 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E4</sub>	'12-'13	▪ 0.04	▪ -0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	2.9 <sup>b</sup>	6.4 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E5</sub>	'12-'13	▪ 0.3	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.6	0.8 <sup>e</sup>	'10	0.6	0.8 <sup>e</sup>			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	1.4 <sup>b</sup>	1.0 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E6</sub>	'13-'14	▪ -0.1	▪ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	<sup>A</sup>	<sup>A</sup>	'14	41.6 <sup>b</sup>	30.0 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E7</sub>	'13-'14	▪ 0.7	▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	0.0 <sup>z</sup>	9.3 <sup>E8</sup>	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	34.0	41.5 <sup>E9</sup>	'12	38.7	41.6 <sup>E9</sup>	'10-'12	▪ 2.4	▪ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	77.9 <sup>b</sup>	77.2 <sup>b</sup>	'14-'15	▪ 0.3	▪ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	8.2 <sup>b</sup>	5.3 <sup>b</sup>	'14-'15	▪ -5.1	▪ -1.0
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	41.4 <sup>b</sup>	23.7 <sup>b</sup>	'14-'15	▪ -2.4	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	94.3 <sup>u</sup>	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	64.3	55.2	'15	69.4	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 1.0	▪ 0.4
<b>Overall transitions and labour market trends</b>								
Early leavers from education and training (%)	12.6	13.9	'15	13.4 <sup>C</sup>	11.0 <sup>C</sup>	'10-'15	↗ 0.2	↘ -0.6
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	28.0	33.8	'15	32.1 <sup>C</sup>	38.7 <sup>C</sup>	'10-'15	↗ 1.0	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	26.0	16.6	'15	23.5	15.8	'10-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)		13.1	'15	11.7 <sup>b</sup>	12.9	'11-'15	↘ -0.9	↘ -0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	69.7	77.4	'15	74.6 <sup>C</sup>	76.9 <sup>C</sup>	'10-'15	↗ 1.2	↘ -0.2

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Yr	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	BG	EU
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	20.9	27.3	'15	18.1 <sup>c</sup>	23.5 <sup>c</sup>	'10-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)		68.6	'15	67.1 <sup>b</sup>	70.0	'11-'15	↗ 1.0	↗ 0.4
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)		53.4	'15	39.0 <sup>b</sup>	52.6 <sup>c</sup>	'11-'15	↗ 0.7	↘ -0.1
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	90.8 <sup>d</sup>	82.8 <sup>d</sup>			

<sup>(A)</sup> UOE back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED (international standard classification of education) 2011 not yet available.

<sup>(B)</sup> AES 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

<sup>(C)</sup> 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

<sup>(D)</sup> Forecast made in 2016.

<sup>(E1)</sup> Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

<sup>(E2)</sup> Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

<sup>(E3)</sup> Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

<sup>(E4)</sup> Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

<sup>(E5)</sup> Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

<sup>(E6)</sup> Partial information for NL.

<sup>(E7)</sup> Based on 25 countries (missing: HR, IT, UK).

<sup>(E8)</sup> Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, IE, FR, CY, UK).

<sup>(E9)</sup> Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

<sup>(b)</sup> Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

<sup>(u)</sup> Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

<sup>(z)</sup> Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

<sup>(e)</sup> Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked •. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p. 33.

## CHAPTER 1.

# MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

In school-based VET programmes, at least 40% of compulsory VET subjects are offered in the form of practical training (Cedefop, 2014). Apprenticeship is accessible from the age of 16 and requires a contract between school and employer. Apprenticeship has been carried out since 2011 by the state enterprise *Bulgarian-German vocational training centre*, which offers apprenticeship programmes for 17 professional areas.

### 1.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priorities in this area <sup>(2)</sup>, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training (DGVT), are to:

- (a) increase the participation and responsibilities of all stakeholders to provide specialists with a qualification necessary for the economy;
- (b) implement measures and projects for carrying out practical training in the work environment, including dual training.

### 1.2. Main action taken in 2015-17: piloting dual training

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 Minister of Education and Science set the rules and conditions for setting up dual training. 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 training promotes business-VET partnerships at a regional and local level for professions of priority interest to the regional and local economy. Dual training is supported

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<sup>(2)</sup> According to a survey by Cedefop among Directors General for VET (DGVT) in early 2016.



by municipalities and social partners. The piloting phase is planned to continue until 2019.

## CHAPTER 2.

# MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET <sup>(3)</sup>

A quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) was set up in 2010. A national approach to quality assurance in VET was formally agreed in 2015 <sup>(4)</sup> and applies to IVET (initial vocational education and training) and CVET (continuing vocational education and training). Quality standards for VET providers are incorporated in legislation and used as a condition for accreditation/approval and for programme funding. The national agency for vocational education and training (NAVET) is responsible for accreditation. Self-assessment criteria for VET providers were developed in 2013. Guidelines and an online tool are in place to support VET schools through the process. It is a requirement for CVET providers to have a quality assurance mechanism in place to obtain a licence.

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<sup>(3)</sup> EQAVET: European quality assurance in vocational education and training

IVET: initial vocational education and training

CVET: continuing vocational education and training

Sources:

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop):  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

ReferNet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training (DGVT) for 2016-20.

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): <http://www.eqavet.eu>

2016 Compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding:  
[http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Annual\\_Network\\_Meeting\\_2016/Compendium\\_EQAVET\\_2016.sflb.ashx](http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Annual_Network_Meeting_2016/Compendium_EQAVET_2016.sflb.ashx)

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes:  
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#>

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en)

<sup>(4)</sup> Ordinance No 2 of 8.9.2015.

Employment data for graduates of all levels of education (including VET) has been collected since 2010 by the Statistics Institute. A 2012 agreement between the ministries of education and labour allows for data about early school leavers, school graduates and VET students trained by the employment agency to be integrated with data on transitions to employment. The use of personal data during the exchange of information between the ministries of education and labour was regulated by the 2013 amendments to the Employment Promotion Act.

## 2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with the EQAVET recommendation

The country's priority in this matter, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to improve VET quality management.

During the reporting period, as part of the 2015 preschool and school education act, a national educational inspectorate is in the process of being set up. A 2016 ordinance <sup>(5)</sup> set state education standards for the management of quality in education, applicable to all secondary general and VET schools, as well as VET for adults. The ordinance sets out:

- (a) the nature, principles and objectives of quality management;
- (b) the framework requirements for quality management;
- (c) the bodies responsible for quality management.

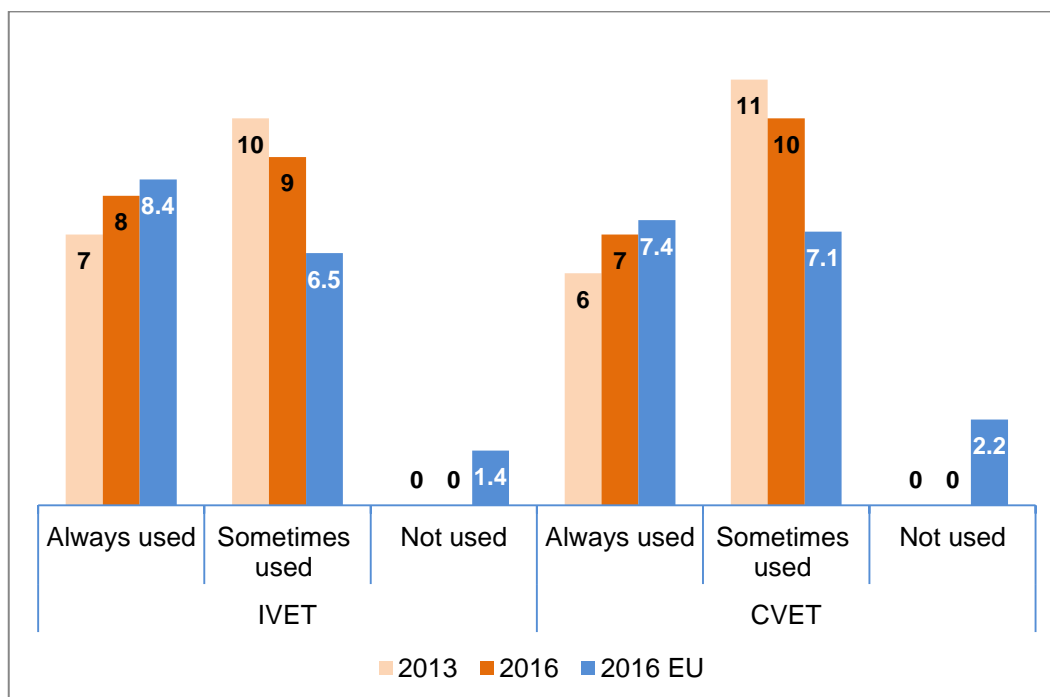
Since January 2017, all vocational training centres must provide NAVET with self-assessment reports specifying their achievements and good practices, drawbacks and proposals for improvements.

Bulgaria reported a slightly improved situation in 2016 compared to 2013 for the consistent ('always used') use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system. In comparison with other countries, the number of indicators used in Bulgaria is slightly below the EU average in IVET and CVET.

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<sup>(5)</sup> Ordinance No 16/8.12.2016.

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, seven were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 in Bulgaria, compared to eight in 2016 and 8.4 in the EU on average (2016). EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2016 data.

## 2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in IVET

The country's priority in IVET, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to increase the relevance of enrolment in secondary vocational schools to the regional and local labour demand.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has elaborated a medium-term forecast (for 2016-20), and a long-term forecast (until 2030) for labour market developments in Bulgaria. The forecasts will be made available to all institutions interested in the development and setting up of sectoral policies in the socio-economic field.

In 2017 the Ministry of Education, as a QANRP, started an *Erasmus+ KA3* project on feedback loops from the labour market to the IVET system. The project will run from April 2017 to March 2019. The Ministry also started a thematic project *Skills management and prognosis of the labour market needs* (with expert support from Cedefop) to create a tool or model for connecting the demand and supply of skills and qualifications in the Bulgarian labour market.

### 2.3. Continuous information and feedback loops in CVET

Since 2016, the national VET agency has been using the self-assessment reports of CVET providers to prepare an annual analysis of their activities and feedback on the quality of the services provided.

In 2016, the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) also started a project *Development of national competences assessment system – my competence* to support national labour market policy by providing analysis and data on the skills needed in five sectors of the economy. It will identify the key jobs and develop consultative councils in these sectors, and update the existing competence models developed in 2010-14 in 20 other sectors of the economy.

## CHAPTER 3.

# MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

### 3.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priorities in this area, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are twofold:

- (a) for young people:
  - (i) create flexible learning pathways for VET students;
  - (ii) promote education and training in economic priority areas and develop approaches for setting up training in state-protected professions;
  - (iii) design an effective career guidance system in schools;
- (b) for adults:
  - (i) create flexible learning pathways in VET for adults with second-chance opportunities;
  - (ii) enhance opportunities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
  - (iii) increase the participation of unemployed adults in lifelong learning.

### 3.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

#### 3.2.1. Guidance

The 2016 action plan for the 2014-20 lifelong learning strategy, approved in April 2016, provides for the further development of career guidance and planning for pupils, students and adults. The project *Development of system for career guidance in school education*, funded by the European social fund (ESF), is being put into operation during 2016-17. It is developing a model for improving both career guidance at the school level and the national career guidance platform.

### 3.2.2. Transparency, recognition, validation

#### 3.2.2.1. *National qualifications framework* <sup>(6)</sup>

The Bulgarian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (BQF) was adopted in 2012. It is an eight-level framework that includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training, including pre-primary education. The framework was linked to the EQF (European qualifications framework) and QF-EHEA (qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area) in June 2013. EQF levels are to be indicated on qualifications from 2014-15 onwards. Changes to legislation are still needed to support the setting up of the BQF. A new preschool and school education act was adopted in 2015 <sup>(7)</sup> that will also require amendments to the BQF. A working group has to be established to prepare these amendments. The framework is not yet operational.

#### 3.2.2.2. *Validation* <sup>(8)</sup>

Following the 2015-20 VET development strategy adopted in October 2014, the VET act was amended and introduced the legislative basis for validation of prior learning in VET. Validation, using the national education standards (SER), can be carried out by VET providers for professions included in the national list of VET professions (LPVET) <sup>(9)</sup>, and could lead to qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 5. A special ordinance on the conditions for validation came into force in 2015 <sup>(10)</sup>. It set out the validation framework for knowledge, skills and competences, acquired in a non-formal and informal way, for gaining a VET qualification. Quality assurance for validation procedures was provided for in the 2015 ordinance for quality assurance in VET <sup>(11)</sup>.

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<sup>(6)</sup> Cedefop, 2017b.

<sup>(7)</sup> This came into force as of 1.8.2016.

<sup>(8)</sup> Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

<sup>(9)</sup> <http://www.navet.government.bg/en/explanatory-notes-to-the-list-of-professions-for-vocational-education-and-training/>

<sup>(10)</sup> Ordinance No 2 on the conditions and procedures for the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences, State Gazette No 96/2014:

[http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/N2\\_Validirane\\_21\\_11\\_14.pdf](http://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/N2_Validirane_21_11_14.pdf)

<sup>(11)</sup> Ordinance No 01-845 of 19.10.2015:

<http://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?section=POLICIESI&I=250&lang>

### **3.2.3. The 2016 national employment action plan**

The Ministry of Labour adopted the national employment action plan (NEAP) <sup>(12)</sup> in January 2016. It aims to ensure qualifications acquisition and upskilling of the labour force, as well as the employment of disadvantaged groups. The target groups include (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2016, p. 3.):

- (a) unemployed young people under 29 years of age, with a sub-group under 25;
- (b) young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs);
- (c) unemployed people over 50 years of age;
- (d) long-term unemployed;
- (e) unemployed with low, or not in demand, vocational qualifications and lack of key competences, including unemployed with low educational achievement (including people of Roma origin);
- (f) people with disabilities;
- (g) inactive people, including discouraged people.

Measures include:

- (a) training on key competences;
- (b) training for VET qualifications;
- (c) apprenticeships;
- (d) internships;
- (e) state-subsidised employment;
- (f) financial support (for example covering daily travel expenses) for learners.

Several projects within the framework of the NEAP are being set up in 2017.

### **3.2.4. Incentives for offering apprenticeships**

The 2015 employment promotion act provides employers with financial incentives for offering apprenticeship places to unemployed people directed to them by the public employment service. Incentives include financial support for training, mentors, social and health insurance.

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<sup>(12)</sup>

[https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/nacionalni%20planove%20za%20deistvie%20po%20zaetostta/NEAP\\_2016.pdf](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/nacionalni%20planove%20za%20deistvie%20po%20zaetostta/NEAP_2016.pdf)



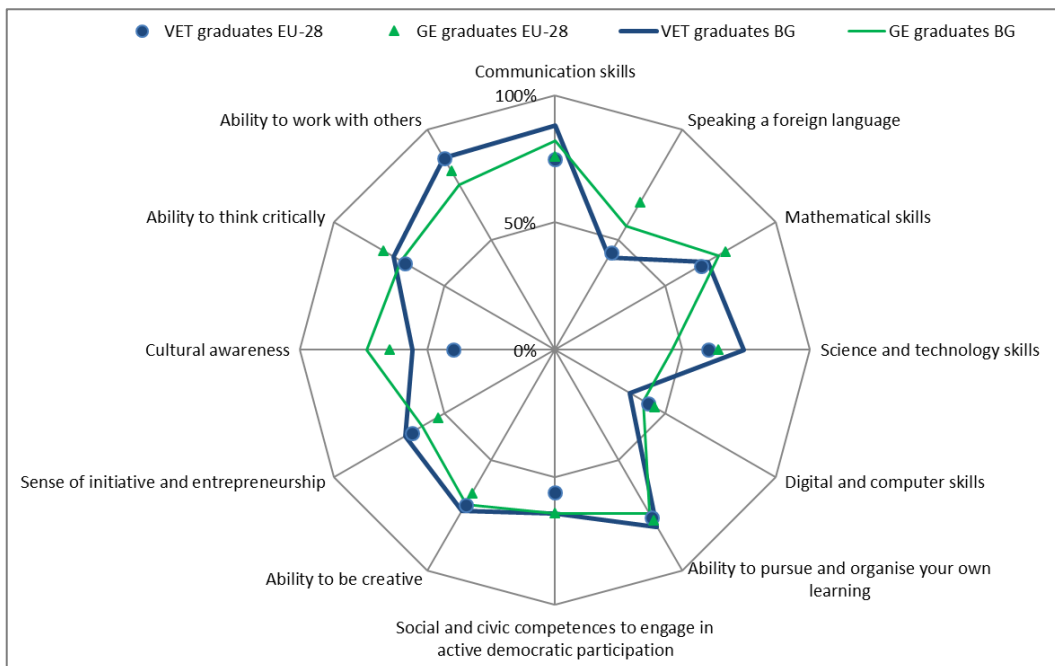
## CHAPTER 4.

# MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have:

- (a) stronger (ranked by priority):
  - (i) science and technology skills;
  - (ii) ability to work with others;
  - (iii) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- (b) weaker:
  - (i) cultural awareness;
  - (ii) foreign language speaking;
  - (iii) digital and computer skills (Figure 2. Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET).

Figure 2. Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET



NB: GE: general education  
Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

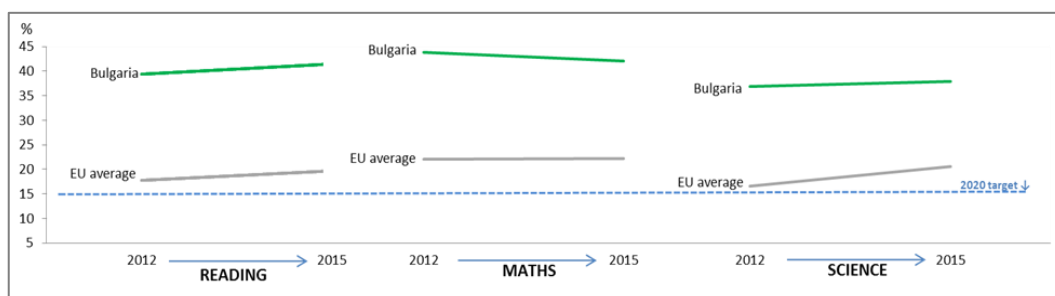
Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading and science and a decreasing share in maths compared with 2012 (

**Figure 3.** Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science

Figure 3). However, the share of low achievers in Bulgaria is much higher than in the EU average, where the trend is similar.

Figure 3. **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**



NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrolls 53% of all upper secondary learners in the country (<sup>13</sup>), this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes. Upper secondary VET comprises general and vocational elements and most qualification standards include key competences:

- (a) foreign language;
- (b) information and communications technology (ICT);
- (c) initiative;
- (d) entrepreneurship (<sup>14</sup>).

#### 4.1. Key competences in IVET

The country's priority in this strand, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to increase the employability of graduates by combining VET with the attainment of key competences.

<sup>13</sup> Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on key competences in VET see Kovachev et al., 2016.

The *2015-20 VET development strategy* addressed the acquisition of key competences in secondary VET for personal and professional needs. The 2015 action plan for the 2014-20 lifelong learning strategy also highlighted the importance of key competences. It provides small-scale training in career management skills, and is expanding entrepreneurship education as a key competence through training companies, young entrepreneur fairs and by establishing training enterprises in arts and sports VET schools.

The 2015 preschool and school education Law set out the role of key competences for active citizenship and the labour market. It outlines an integrated approach to key competences in general education and vocational training curricula. The national education standards include vocational units, based on learning outcomes, for communication in a foreign language, ICT and entrepreneurship (integrated in 2017), as well as for health, safety, environment protection, and teamwork. VET learners' performance in key competences is monitored by the state matriculation exams (Bulgarian language and literature, which is compulsory, and one additional exam selected by the learner). Practical tasks display learners' teamwork skills, their ability to communicate within a team and to organise their work environment, and to assess their own progress.

The 2015 reform introducing dual training (Section 1.2) promotes entrepreneurial attitudes and skills through training in an educational enterprise (training company).

To stimulate the acquisition of digital competences, the Ministry of Education organises annual national information technology competitions for secondary education, including VET institutions. Learners develop and present their own projects. The ninth such competition took place in 2017.

## 4.2. Key competences in CVET

The country's priority in this area, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to increase the employability of learners through combining VET with the attainment of key competences.

Key competences for adults are regulated by employment and by VET legislation. The 2016-18 action plan, for setting up the national development programme of the Republic of Bulgaria 2020, promotes lifelong learning, the quality of adult learning, new national VET standards and modular programmes based on learning outcomes to support employees and the unemployed in acquiring key competences in VET.

In August 2016, the Education Minister issued an ordinance <sup>(15)</sup> making the use of literary language in schools mandatory.

The *2015-20 VET development strategy* aims to increase the number of adults taking part in training and to improve the attainment of qualifications and key competences, complementing their professional knowledge and skills. The 2015-17 action plan for this strategy foresees measures promoting key competences, such as career management skills.

The 2016 national employment action plan (Section 3.2.3) offers training to acquire and upgrade VET qualifications and key competences.

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<sup>(15)</sup> Ordinance No 6 of 11.8.2016.

## CHAPTER 5.

# MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

Bulgaria has adopted a holistic strategic plan that aims to upgrade initial training and continuous professional development (CPD) for both teachers and in-company trainers. Alongside the 2015-20 VET development strategy and the 2015 preschool and school education Law, crucial components of this plan are the 2014-20 strategy for the development of pedagogical staff (that sets specific objectives), the related 2014-16 action plan, and the 2014-20 strategy for the development of higher education, which also prioritises the development of new curricula for teacher training.

Several pressing needs for the professional development of teachers and trainers within the VET system have become evident, resulting (indicatively) from demographic and professional trends, i.e. the ageing of VET teachers and trainers; the lack of specialised preparation among most teachers working in vocational schools/training centres that provide adult vocational training; and the introduction of dual training.

### 5.1. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools

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 teachers' initial training by 30% to 50%. It introduces new areas of study (for example, conflict management, violence prevention, ICT in education and inclusive education) and training methods (such as distance learning). Acquisition of a teacher's certificate is funded, as a priority, by the state budget through subsidies to state universities. In March 2017, the council of ministers added teachers' initial training programmes and pedagogy to the list of priority professional areas in higher education, so these programmes will be supported by the state budget through state subsidies to students. Additional funds are earmarked for initial teacher training (and CPD) by the programme *Science, education and smart growth*, through the project *Students fellowships – phase 1*, which was launched in March 2016 and has a total budget of BGN 26 million.

## 5.2. Initial training for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The country's priority in this area, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to create a model for initial dual training of in-company mentors.

The 2015-20 VET development strategy provided for the training of in-company mentors and called for regulation of their status.

The Domino project started in 2015. Domino is a Swiss-funded pilot project for introducing dual training to the Bulgarian VET system. Domino is one of the three projects involved in piloting dual training in VET schools (Section 1.2). The project is also involved in initial and continuing dual training of in-company trainers and mentors.

The 2016 national employment action plan (Section 3.2.3) supports inspirational in-company mentors through additional payments from the state budget, in compliance with the employment promotion act (EPA). The financial support only covers additional remuneration; it does not include training.

One of the aims of the two-year (2016-17) working plan, set up by the state enterprise Bulgarian-German vocational training centre, is to carry out initial and continuing training of in-company trainers and mentors.

## 5.3. Continuing professional development for teaching/training staff in VET schools

The country's priority in this area, for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to update and supplement the qualification of VET teachers and lecturers in their higher education speciality.

The 2015-20 VET development strategy foresees upgrading the skills and qualifications of VET teachers in their subject specialisms. It includes promoting cooperation among VET institutions, companies and universities with a focus on CPD and the introduction of new equipment and technologies in vocational teaching.

A September 2016 ordinance covers the status and the professional development of teachers, school headmasters and other pedagogical specialists. It states that teachers' continuing training will be provided by specialised units. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) created a register of higher education institutions and training institutions that offer MES approved training programmes. Planning, coordination, governance and monitoring of teachers' training activities are carried out at national level by the MES, at regional level by

the regional education management units (REMU), and at municipality level by the municipality administration.

The 2016 pre-school and school education Law regulates the career development of teaching staff, identifies CPD as a significant factor for career advancement, and introduces a qualification-credits approach that may lead to certified CPD. Pedagogical specialists/teachers are required to undertake at least 48 academic hours of CPD in any appraisal period to upgrade their qualification. One qualification credit is awarded for 16 academic hours of CPD (no less than eight of which are carried out in the classroom). This credit system guarantees opportunities for the accumulation, recognition and transfer of credits. Ordinance No 5 of May 2015 also regulates CPD matters.

The 2016 action plan for the 2014-20 lifelong learning strategy includes mobility under *Erasmus+*, and participation in *eTwinning* and *EPALE* as tools for teachers' CPD.

#### 5.4. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The measures set up for the initial training of in-company trainers and mentors (Section 5.2) also cover their continuous professional development. Nearly 100 trainers/mentors were trained in 2015 (300 in 2016) in practical aspects of VET legislation and working with students.

## Conclusion

Since 2015, Bulgaria has taken measures to reform VET and VET legislation, introducing dual training and reinforcing quality assurance, including mechanisms for providing continuous information to guide the monitoring and development of IVET and CVET. Progress has been made in developing guidance, the national qualifications framework, and validation. The 2016 national employment action plan has paved the way for training measures targeted at the acquisition of key competences and vocational qualifications to support the employment of disadvantaged groups. Measures have also been taken to support the development of key competences in initial and continuing VET. Last but not least, a substantial range of regulations and projects have been carried out to foster the initial and continuous training of VET teaching and training staff.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions and the country's policy priorities for 2016-20 are being addressed. However, information currently available to Cedefop suggests issues which could benefit from further consideration, for example, making more systematic use of EQAVET (European quality assurance in vocational education and training) indicators for monitoring IVET and CVET, and for completing the setting up of ECVET. Consideration could also be given, for the remaining period until 2020, to setting priorities in the areas of:

- (a) information and feedback loops in CVET;
- (b) initial training of VET school teaching/training staff;
- (c) continuous professional development of in-company trainers and mentors.



## List of abbreviations

BIA	Bulgarian Industrial Association
BQF	Bulgarian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning
CPD	continuous professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CVT	continuing vocational training
DGVT	Director General for vocational education and training
GDP	gross domestic product
EPA	employment promotion act
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European social fund
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
ICT	information and communications technology
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LPVET	list of professions for vocational education and training
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
NAVET	national agency for vocational education and training
NEAP	national employment action plan
NEET	not in employment, education, or training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
QF-EHEA	qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area
REMU	regional education management units
SER	national educational standards
SES	state educational standards
VET	vocational education and training

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