



# Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–19

## **BULGARIA**



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

Progress towards the medium-term deliverables  
of the Riga conclusions

**Country chapter**

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**Developments in vocational education and training  
policy in 2015-19**

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# Introduction

In June 2015, the ministers in charge of vocational education and training in the EU Member States, the candidate countries and the European Economic Area countries, convened in Riga, agreed on objectives for vocational education and training (VET) policies for 2015-20<sup>(1)</sup>.

Cedefop has been entrusted with monitoring the countries' policies implemented towards reaching these objectives.

This country chapter is part of the monitoring process. It was drafted based on input from the national ReferNet team. It presents an overview of the major policy developments that have taken place in the country in 2015-19, in the areas covered by the Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs).

The country chapter is structured as follows:

- (a) the introductory section Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015 briefly sketches the VET context in the country in 2015, highlighting selected figures and major policy initiatives that were just being adopted or started at that time. This introductory section is targeted at setting a baseline to put in perspective the policy choices and developments that have taken place since the beginning of the Riga cycle;
- (b) five thematic chapters then follow devoted to the five respective MTDs outlined in the Riga conclusions. Each thematic chapter also begins with a 2015 baseline, more specifically addressing the MTD-related topics. The baseline is followed by the presentation of the major policy developments in the MTD since 2015;
- (c) the country chapter ends with a conclusion summarising the main lines of the 2015-19 policy developments and highlighting possible priorities for the future.

This country chapter is part of the information which the European Commission used to prepare the European Semester exercises<sup>(2)</sup> in 2017-19. It also informs the work of Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in preparing a joint monitoring report on the implementation of the Riga conclusions.

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(1) *Riga conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges communiqué:*

[https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/RigaConclusions\\_2015.pdf](https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/RigaConclusions_2015.pdf)

(2) European Semester: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en)

Both the joint report and the country chapter are aimed at informing the work of EU Member States' Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVTS) and Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) on taking stock of the outcomes of the Riga conclusions and preparing the next steps for the EU VET policy for the next few years.

## 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>(3)</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). 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). 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.

Table1. **Framework data: score on VET indicators in Bulgaria and in the EU: 2010-15**

Indicator label	2010		Yr	2015 (*)		Trend in 2011-15 (per year)		
	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>		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	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
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	A	A	'14	46.3	42.7 <sup>b</sup>	'13-'14	▪ 2.5	▪ -1.0

<sup>(3)</sup> Eurostat, data for 2015.

Indicator label	2010		Yr	2015 (*)		Trend in 2011-15 (per year)		
	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>		BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	BG	EU
upper secondary students								
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		6.9 <sup>b</sup>			
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15		4.3 <sup>b</sup>			
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15		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>	'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>	'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>	'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>	'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>	'13-'14	-0.1	0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)			'14	41.6 <sup>b</sup>	30.0 <sup>b</sup>	'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
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		53.4	'15	39.0 <sup>b</sup>	52.6 <sup>C</sup>	'11-'15	0.7	-0.1

Indicator label	2010		2015 (*)			Trend in 2011-15 (per year)	
	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Yr	BG <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	BG EU
lower level of educational attainment (%)					<sup>c</sup>		
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	90.8	<sup>d</sup> 82.8 <sup>d</sup>		

(\*) The data in this column are the data available in 2016. Where 2015 data were not available, data from previous years were used.

(<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

### 1.1. Baseline

Already before the reporting period, 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 past 13 years before the reporting period, which however may have impeded consistency in VET development (Cedefop, 2014). Tri-partite partnership was introduced with the VET Act and is at the heart of the Bulgarian VET system; social partners are involved e.g. in defining the amendments to the VET Act.

Through amendments to the VET Act in July 2014, the principles of dual training were introduced. Among others, the amendments aimed to adapt VET curricula to labour market needs <sup>(4)</sup> and to introduce work-based learning in cooperation with employers, who in addition were now also involved in the development and updating of the curricular of VET programmes. 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.

In school-based VET programmes, at least 40% of compulsory VET subjects were being offered in form of practical training (Cedefop, 2014) either in a company or in school workshops. However, training schools were finding it difficult to provide up-to-date equipment, machinery, raw materials and supplies. The work-based learning part was carried out according to a curricula and time schedule approved by the school director in agreement with the enterprise. Prior to 2015, the conditions were not encouraging enough for employers to offer work-based learning, but at the same time the business sector were complaining about the insufficient practical skills of VET students and were asking for an increased number of practical training hours.

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(4) See the European Semester country report 2016.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/european-semester-your-country/bulgaria\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/european-semester-your-country/bulgaria_en)

Apprenticeship had been implemented since 2011 by the State enterprise 'Bulgarian-German Vocational Training Centre', which offered apprenticeship programmes for 17 professional areas <sup>(5)</sup>. The apprenticeship programme was accessible as of the age of 16 years and required a contract between school and employer. Neither apprentices, nor their mentors (provided by the employers), received any remuneration for their work.

Already before the reporting period, a great variety of vocational training was offered, reflecting the characteristics of the local and the regional economy as well as the specific needs of the labour market. Projects co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) had been implemented <sup>(6)</sup>; promotional actions in support to work-based learning (conferences and information campaigns) had been carried out; skills competitions were in place.

## 1.2. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priorities in this area <sup>(7)</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.

## 1.3. Main actions taken in 2015-19

### 1.3.1. 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

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<sup>(5)</sup> DGVT workshop 2016 (internal working document).

<sup>(6)</sup> The 2013 *Student placement* project and the 2014 *Youth employment* project, offering six-months internships or apprenticeship programmes along with mentoring. Participating companies were funded.

<sup>(7)</sup> According to a survey by Cedefop among Directors General for VET (DGVT) in early 2016.

of priority interest to the regional and local economy. Dual training is supported by municipalities and social partners. The piloting phase was planned to continue until 2019. The interest of schools and employers in dual training is increasing. In 2017/18, the total number of learners in dual VET reached 1 742; it more than doubled in 2018/19, reaching 3 884 learners. The most popular courses are computerised numerical control machine, electronic engineering, transport equipment, gas, wood processing, milk and dairy production technician.

### **1.3.2. Amendment to the VET Act**

The VET Act of 1999 was amended in August 2016 – and 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 intends to improve the quality of VET by increasing the practical training offered in VET programmes. From September 2017 onwards, all VET schools will implement these new lines (European Commission, 2017; Cedefop, 2018a).

On 24 October 2018, a new amendment and supplement to the VET Act was adopted <sup>(8)</sup>. The main changes are related to new requirements for employers and mentors to ensure quality in the dual system: defining the functions and requirements for the preparation of teachers and mentors in the dual system; and introducing a regular update of school curricula to respond to business changes.

### **1.3.3. Involving stakeholders: Consultative Council for VET**

In September 2018, the Consultative Council for VET was established by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) with the participation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Economy, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), the nationally represented employers' organisations, the nationally represented trade unions, the National Statistical Institute, the Council of the University Rectors and civil society representatives <sup>(9)</sup>. The Council aims to support the Minister of Education and

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<sup>(8)</sup> *Official Gazette*, No 92, 6.11.2018.

<sup>(9)</sup> The list of participants in the initiatives comprises:

1. Ministry of Education and Science;
2. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
3. Ministry of Economy;
4. Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
5. Union for Private Economic Enterprise;
6. Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association;
7. Bulgarian Industrial Association;
8. Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria;

Science in the implementation of the reform of secondary VET, including the development of dual VET. It is intended to work as a space for structured dialogue between stakeholders to coordinate actions, prepare recommendations and proposals for necessary legislation changes, and assist the Minister of Education and Science in the implementation of the state policy in the field of secondary vocational education and training. The Council is supported by a Resource Task Force, which provides expert and technical assistance.

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9. Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions;
  10. *Podkrepa* Trade Union;
  11. Syndicate of Bulgarian Teachers;
  12. National Statistical Institute;
  13. Council of Rectors of the Higher Education Institutions in Bulgaria;
  14. National Agency for Vocational Education and Training;
  15. National Association of The Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria;
  16. Ministry of Education and Science - Vocational Education and Training Directorate;
  17. VET high schools;
  18. Association *Parents*;
  19. Employers providing dual training;
  20. Sectoral and professional associations and employers' associations;
  21. *DOMINO* project;
  22. Regional Management Units of the Ministry of Education and Science.

## CHAPTER 2.

# MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET

### 2.1. **Baseline 2015**

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>(10)</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.

In 2015 there weren't any structural measures to VET-graduate tracking. Some initiatives were in place however. 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 trainees 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.

The list of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET) classified professions and occupations by vocational fields, level of education and level of qualification. It was set up and updated by (NAVET). The list was updated regularly based on proposals from employers, unions, government, education and training institutions, non-governmental organisations, professional associations and professionals in various fields to ensure compliance with labour

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<sup>(10)</sup> Ordinance No 2 of 8.9.2015.

market needs. However, there was no evidence in 2015 of any initiatives related to anticipating and matching skill needs to inform VET policy making.

## 2.2. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with the EQAVET recommendation in 2015-19

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.

A 2016 ordinance <sup>(11)</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 has now been revoked and a new quality assurance standard, which will apply both to VET and to the general education system, is in the process of elaboration.

Since January 2017, all vocational training centres <sup>(12)</sup> must provide NAVET with self-assessment reports specifying their achievements and good practices, drawbacks and proposals for improvements. The agency defines indicators for providing annual information and criteria and indicators for self-assessment of the quality of the training. Pursuant to the provision of the Vocational Education and Training Act <sup>(13)</sup>, 1 024 licensed vocational training centres submitted to NAVET a self-assessment report for 2017 and 998 centres for 2018. A summary report on the results of the self-assessment of the quality of vocational training for adults, based on the systematic analysis of the information provided by the centres, has been uploaded to the NAVET website <sup>(14)</sup> and has also been distributed during Information events organised for the vocational training centres throughout the country. In addition, NAVET published in December 2017 an *Analysis of the ex-post control of the activities of the licensed vocational training centres* for January to November 2017. The ex-post control was carried out in accordance with Article 49c of the VET Act and under the terms of the *Procedure for ex-post control of the activities of the licensed VET centres* adopted by the Managing Board of the agency, which was prepared in accordance with the main principles and indicators of the EQAVET. A plan for ex-post control of the licensed VET centres for each subsequent year will be adopted at the beginning of the year during the first Managing Board session – usually held in February.

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<sup>(11)</sup> Ordinance No 16 of 8.12.2016.

<sup>(12)</sup> Vocational training centres provide initial and continuing VET to employees and the unemployed, without acquisition of an education level.

<sup>(13)</sup> Article 22(8).

<sup>(14)</sup> <https://www.navet.government.bg/>

In March 2018, as part of the 2015 preschool and school education act, a National Education Inspectorate (NEI) was established <sup>(15)</sup>. The mission of the Inspectorate is to develop, refine and approve inspection criteria and indicators; organise and conduct inspection of kindergartens and schools; draw up estimates and guidelines; and provide the Minister of Education and Science and the Council of Ministers with an analysis of the quality of education in the inspected kindergartens and schools for specified periods and areas. The Inspectorate will publish on its official website a summary of the assessments and guidelines for areas of inspection. The NEI started its work in March 2018 <sup>(16)</sup> and developed a framework for inspection with criteria and indicators for monitoring the quality of both VET and general education institutions. The piloting of the inspection framework started in 2018/19 in 80 schools around the country, including VET schools.

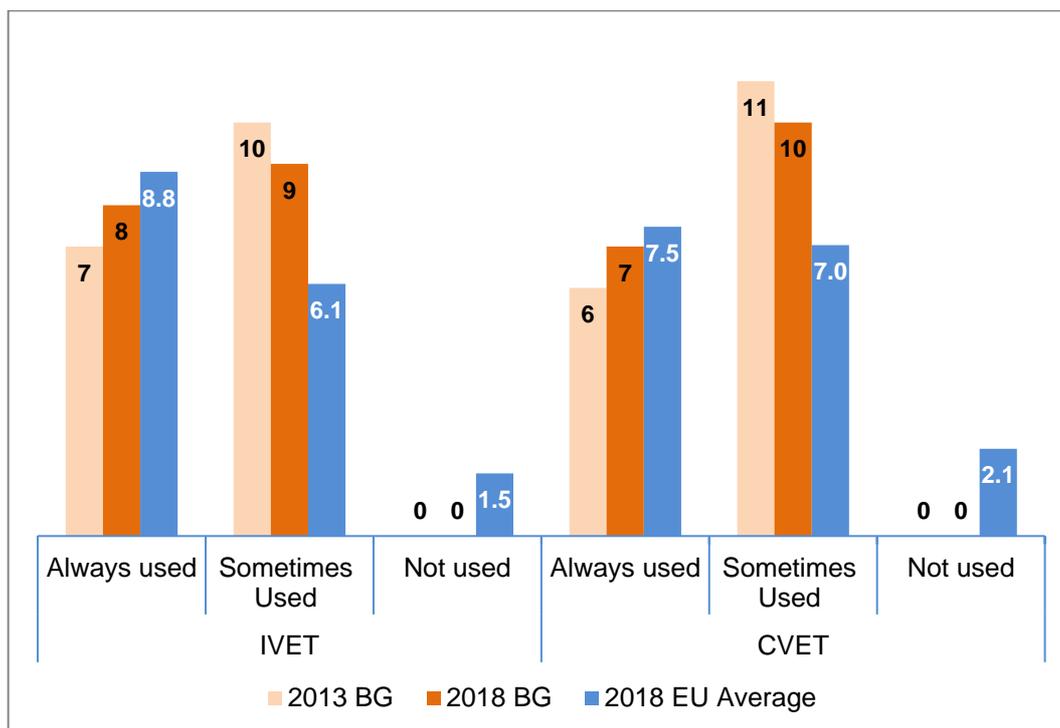
Bulgaria reported a slightly improved situation in 2018 compared to 2013 for the consistent ('always used') use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system. However, in comparison with other countries, the number of indicators used in Bulgaria is slightly below the 2018 EU average in IVET and CVET.

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<sup>(15)</sup> <http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp;jsessionid=E93A6393F8F3B11F23C80B0E8D42CB4A?idMat=124209>

<sup>(16)</sup> Decree No 36 of 13.3.2018 of the Council of Ministers.  
<http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp;jsessionid=E93A6393F8F3B11F23C80B0E8D42CB4A?idMat=124209>

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 2018 and 8.8 in the EU on average (2018).

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 2018 data.

### 2.3. Continuous information and feedback loops in IVET in 2015-19

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 secondary VET enrolment to the regional and local labour demand.

The latest amendments to the Pre-School and School Education Act (in force since January 2018) envisage a financial stimulus for schools which provide VET training for qualifications needed in the labour market <sup>(17)</sup>. A decree <sup>(18)</sup> was promulgated in July 2018 in the Official Gazette for the adoption of a list of protected professions, the criteria for their determination, and the terms and

<sup>(17)</sup> <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/PMS-111.pdf>

<http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp;jsessionid=3FC171D91D336F8F63BEACD342684B70?idMat=133514>

<sup>(18)</sup> Decree No 111 of 25.6.2018 of the Council of Ministers.

<http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=128043>

conditions for additional funding and maintenance of classes for acquiring qualification for protected specialties at risk of labour shortage. The list was further updated in December 2018 <sup>(19)</sup>. For the 2018/19 school year, the list includes 29 State-protected VET qualifications and 54 with expected shortages of specialists. For all these specialties, additional funding for the schools has been introduced for the school year 2018/19. Since February 2019, the learners in these specialties have received additional individual scholarships. The enrolment plan in VET schools for 2018/19 and 2019/20 is focused on providing more places for learners in these specialties.

Most qualifications with identified labour force shortage in the 2016-20 period are in the sectors of metallurgy, construction, and electrical engineering. Needs analysis was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in partnership with nationally represented employer associations, taking on board retirement data (from the National Social Security Institute) and VET students training for the same vocations (MES data).

At the end of 2017, the VET Directorate of the MES, in cooperation with national employers' organisations, developed a pilot forecast model for admission plans in line with labour market needs. The model is based on expected replacement needs within the next five years in each economic sector (according to the National Classifier of Occupations and Professions). It uses anonymised data from the National Social Security Institute, based mainly on labour contracts, and data on learners in the VET system (it calculated a substitution factor, outlining the deficits and non-compliance areas).

At the beginning of 2018, the MES prepared a list of 57 specialities with expected shortages in the labour market, which will be updated annually.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has elaborated several annual skills forecasts since 2014, funded through the operational programme *Human resources development*. These forecasts provide data for short term, medium-term (2016-20) and 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 socioeconomics.

In April 2017 the Ministry of Education, as a QANRP, started an *Erasmus+ KA3* two-year project on feedback loops from the labour market to the IVET system. The project sets up a number of indicators to measure VET performance, and collects data on VET provision, also taking inspiration from good practices in other EU countries (DK, DE, EE, LT, HU, NL, PL, FI, SE). The

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<sup>(19)</sup> Decree No 352 of 31.12.2018 of the Council of Ministers.

<http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=133514>

information will be used to guide VET schools and support policy makers in developing policies to strengthen VET enrolment (Tividosheva, 2017).

From 2017 to 2019, Cedefop has been providing technical advice to Bulgaria to improve its 'governance of skills anticipation and matching'. The aim is to improve the management and coordination of skills anticipation efforts, making existing skills anticipation initiatives more useful for policy, and improve the linking of skills intelligence to education and training <sup>(20)</sup>.

## 2.4. Continuous information and feedback loops in CVET in 2015-19

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. An annual analysis of the activities of the licensed VET Centres is also being carried out, containing statistical analysis of the training provided (number of trainees by professions, types of qualifications, access to vocational training, tracking career realisation of graduates, comparison of assessments under the criteria for the previous self-evaluation period, use of a variety of interactive forms and methods of teaching, relative share of students participating in practical workplace training in a real working environment, participation in national and international programmes and projects, cooperation with social partners at local and regional level, etc.). The 2017 report has been published <sup>(21)</sup>; the 2018 report is under preparation.

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. The project is funded by the operational programme *Human resources development 2014-20*, with the financial support of the European Social Fund. The project builds on the achievements of the project *Development and implementation of an information system for assessment of the competences of the workforce by branches and regions* (ISOC) implemented by BIA in the period 2009-15, also under the *Human resources development* programme. As part of this project, BIA has developed the *MyCompetence* national competence assessment information system, with a scope of 20 economic sectors. For the period from December 2017 to October 2019, BIA

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<sup>(20)</sup> Source: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/assisting-eu-countries-skills-matching>

<sup>(21)</sup> <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/dokumenti/dokumenti-na-napoo/>

was committed to extend the capacity and scope of the *MyCompetence* initiative and the supporting infrastructure. The Sector Competence Models (SCM) <sup>(22)</sup> are being updated, e-tools and e-training on transversal and specific competences are being developed and made available for free to the users of the system. The creation, pilot deployment and validation of an electronic module for analysis and evaluation of workforce training needs is in the design phase. *MyCompetence* has been expanded to five more economic sectors: automotive (manufacture of parts and accessories for cars); electrical engineering; mining and quarrying; cosmetics; and construction (except 'finishing works').

In November 2018, an Erasmus+ project *Tracking learning and career paths of VET graduates, to improve quality of VET provision (On track)* was launched by NAVET. The project aims to develop a tracking system for VET graduates from initial vocational education and training schools and institutions. The tracking system will gather graduates' qualitative and quantitative data related to further education, employment, career paths, and skills and competences required in the labour market, etc. The aim is to provide feedback to the quality assurance system of the VET provider and input on the design of VET qualifications and programmes, planning and implementation of learning processes, additional services, such as vocational guidance, support to VET students, labour market networking, and provision of work-based learning.

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<sup>(22)</sup> The SCMs were developed and validated in 2010-14 in 20 economic sectors.

## 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. Baseline 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the overall objectives in the MTD at large were to implement comprehensive reforms needed in the school system, including modernising curricula and improving teacher training (European Commission, 2015). Access to education for disadvantaged children, in particular Roma, was a standing challenge, also because the adoption of the school education act referred to in the 2015 European Semester country-specific recommendations (CSRs) <sup>(23)</sup> was pending.

To address the challenges it was faced with, Bulgaria had prepared a range of strategies and legislative changes (European Commission, 2015) to:

- (a) make it easier to access VET, especially for people with special needs, while also targeting early school leavers (ESL) and ensuring quick responses to current labour market needs;
- (b) introduce a system on the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning and credit transfer and accumulation in the VET system;
- (c) introduce a format for work-based learning ('training through work'), to be applied both in initial and continuing education and training;
- (d) adapt VET curricula to labour market needs and involve the business community.

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<sup>(23)</sup> Council of the European Union (2015). Council recommendation of 14 July 2015 on the 2015 National Reform Programme of Bulgaria and delivering a Council opinion on the 2015 Convergence Programme of Bulgaria. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 272, 18.8.2015, pp. 28-31. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32015H0818%2809%29>

Before 2014, a national lifelong learning strategy (2008-13) focused on improving the accessibility of VET and introducing measures in relation to dropouts. A national strategy (2013-20) for preventing and reducing ESL set new measures, such as supporting schools in preventing early school leaving by setting up an early warning system (registering absences).

A validation strategy for VET had been developed through a European Social Funds supported project <sup>(24)</sup> (2013-14) initiated by the Ministry of Education together with social partners. Validation was regulated by the amended VET law of July 2014 and the ordinance for validation of NFIL that came into force in 2015. The act provided that all State's educational standards (SER) for acquiring VET qualification had to be developed in accordance with the principles of the European Credit system for VET (ECVET) and use of the learning outcomes.

A new lifelong learning strategy (2014-20) was adopted. Career management skills are part of its priorities. The strategy also provides for more and better guidance services for young people and adults, also promoting VET learning pathways and relevant career development.

An employment strategy (2013-20) had been adopted, promoting cooperation between VET and labour market authorities and stakeholders to help anticipate skill needs, make education and training more relevant, develop career management skills and assist people in managing labour market transitions or maintaining jobs.

A national immigration and integration strategy had also been set up, including financing training in Bulgarian for migrants to promote integration and employability. In 2015, the Agency for Refugees was taking measures to involve immigrants and refugees into vocational training and language courses.

The Bulgarian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (BQF) had been adopted in 2012 and had been linked to the EQF and QF-EHEA in June 2013. Indicating EQF levels on qualifications started in 2014-15.

On the ECVET side, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) had been acting as the national coordination point for ECVET since 2012. Several ECVET principles had been introduced into the VET Law in 2014.

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<sup>(24)</sup> *System for validation of non-formal acquired knowledge, skills and competences (2013-15): new opportunity for my future*; a project implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, other relevant ministries and social partners.

Finally, at the beginning of the reporting period, the challenges still to be addressed were about complementing the implementation of ECVET and improving access to education in particular for disadvantaged children.

### 3.2. 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.

### 3.3. Main actions taken in 2015-19

#### 3.3.1. Further structuring the VET offer in the lifelong learning perspective

The design of VET programmes is based on framework programmes approved by the Education Minister. New framework programmes were adopted in March 2017 (Table 2), including:

- (a) general provisions in relation to the regulatory basis and aims;
- (b) requirements <sup>(25)</sup>: entry (age, medical condition, previous education and qualification level), career and education pathways, form(s) of training (day full-time, evening, part-time, individual, distance, dual, self-learning);
- (c) curriculum;
- (d) training module content (theoretical and practical);
- (e) graduation requirements (State examinations for full qualifications and final examinations for partial qualifications).

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<sup>(25)</sup> Different requirements apply for learners over 16 years of age.

The new framework programmes aim to facilitate citizens' access to VET and to enable the acquisition and upgrading of vocational qualifications in the context of lifelong learning.

Table 2. **Framework programmes**

Type	IVET	CVET	Dual VET	Available for adults (16+)	EQF level	VET qualification level	Duration (years)	Provided by
A	☑	-	☑	☑	2	1	≤0.5 <sup>(A)</sup> , 1 or 3	VET schools and centres
B	☑	☑	☑	☑	3 and 4 <sup>(A)</sup>	2 or 3	≤1.5 <sup>(A)</sup> , 1 or 4	VET schools and centres
C	☑	☑	☑	-	3-4	2 or 3	1, 2 or 5	VET schools
D	☑	☑	☑	adults only	5	4	≤2 <sup>(A)</sup>	VET schools and colleges
E	☑	☑	☑	☑	2-4 partial	-	1	VET schools and centres
F	-	☑	☑	adults only	2-4 partial	1, 2, 3 or none	not defined	VET schools and centres

NB: <sup>(A)</sup> for programmes for adults only.

IVET – initial VET; CVET – continuing VET.

Only type C programmes offer access to higher education upon graduation and only if a general part of the programme has been completed in addition to a vocational part.

Source: <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/dokumenti/normativni-dokumenti/ramkovi-programi/>

### 3.3.2. 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), was put into operation during 2016-17. As a result of the project implementation, a national portal for career guidance for students <sup>(26)</sup> was set up, offering a wide range of materials to support career guidance and student choice for further training pathways, either in VET or in general education.

The 2017 and 2018 lifelong learning strategy action plans and the implementation plan for the development strategy for VET for the period 2015-18 also aimed to:

- (a) provide accessible and high-quality career guidance services for students;
- (b) provide career guidance services for adults;
- (c) improve the coordination and cooperation between career guidance systems in education and in employment services.

<sup>(26)</sup> <http://www.ill-hub.eu/goodpractices/test-3/>

### 3.3.3. Transparency, recognition, validation

#### 3.3.3.1. *National qualifications framework* <sup>(27)</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 European qualifications framework (EQF) and to the qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2013. EQF levels have been indicated on qualifications from 2014-15 onwards. Since school year 2017/18, the EQF/NQF level in the occupation in which the learner's qualification was acquired, is stated in the completion documents: the Vocational qualifications certificate and the Vocational training certificate for part of the profession. This applies both for students and for adult learners. 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>(28)</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. Following the recommendation to adopt the amendments to EQF (May 2017), a working group has been mandated to update the BQF. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) has been involved in developing and updating the list of VET qualifications included in the BQF. For the BQF to achieve its aims, sustained implementation efforts are required.

#### 3.3.3.2. *Validation* <sup>(29)</sup>

Following the 2015-20 VET development strategy adopted in October 2014, the VET act was amended, introducing the legislative basis for validation of prior learning in VET. Validation, using the State education standards (SES), can be carried out by VET providers for professions included in the national list of VET professions (LPVET) <sup>(30)</sup>, and could lead to qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 5. The procedures for partial validation of knowledge and skills have also been facilitated by the changes to the VET Act in 2016, related to the description of the SES in terms of units of learning outcomes. Thus, the candidates for validation,

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<sup>(27)</sup> Cedefop, 2017b.

<sup>(28)</sup> This came into force as of 1.8.2016.

<sup>(29)</sup> Cedefop, 2017b; Dzhengozova, 2016.

<sup>(30)</sup> <http://www.navet.government.bg/en/explanatory-notes-to-the-list-of-professions-for-vocational-education-and-training/>

as well as the validation consultants and VET teachers, are more likely to find out the profession to which the candidate's knowledge and skills acquired, by formal or informal learning, are related, and what evidence is required so that the knowledge and skills are identified and recognised.

A special ordinance on the conditions for validation came into force in 2015<sup>(31)</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>(32)</sup>. In 2017, in the wake of this regulation, adults over the age of 16 were able to validate their knowledge, skills and competences in the licensed Vocational training centres. NAVET records the validation procedures carried out by the VET centres and provides the centres with methodological assistance.

#### 3.3.3.3. *ECVET*

The amendments to the VET Act of 2016 regulate the structure of the State educational standards (SES) for the acquisition of qualifications. The structuring of qualifications as units of learning outcomes is the main principle of ECVET, providing flexible learning pathways for acquiring qualifications. In 2017 and 2018, the number of SES described as units of learning outcomes increased significantly. The SES were approved by orders of the Minister of Education and Science and published in the Official Gazette. The SES can be found on the webpage of the NAVET<sup>(33)</sup> as well as on the webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science<sup>(34)</sup>.

#### **3.3.4. The 2019 National employment action plan to increase the activity and quality of human capital**

On 19 January 2019, the National employment action plan (NEAP) was approved<sup>(35)</sup>. The NEAP aims to improve the level and quality of knowledge and skills of

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<sup>(31)</sup> Ordinance No 2/2015 on the conditions and procedures for the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences, *Official 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>(32)</sup> Ordinance No 01-845 of 19.10.2015:

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

<sup>(33)</sup> <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/darzhavni-obrazovatelni-standarti/doi-publikuvani-v-darzhaven-vestnik-i-p/>

<sup>(34)</sup> <https://www.mon.bg/bg/100305>

<sup>(35)</sup> Resolution No 20/2019 of the Council of Ministers:

<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/nacionalni%20planove%20za%20deistvie%20po%20zaetostta/NPDZ%202019.zip>

the unemployed from the disadvantaged groups in the labour market, overcoming regional discrepancies in terms of unemployment rate and percentage of employment among the working age population (Table 3).

A complex approach is applied, including provision of training for acquiring vocational qualification in professions in demand, training for key competences and subsequent employment according to the acquired qualification. The professions for vocational training are determined on the basis of a preliminary survey among employers and their concrete requests, as well as on the annual surveys conducted by the Employment Agency among the employers for identification of professions and specialties in demand. The training courses are organised in different professional fields in which a shortage of qualified labour is identified. The training for key competences is related to the occupations. A large percentage of the unemployed who have successfully graduated in vocational training courses are employed in the real economy or through subsidised employment.

The NEAP measures are targeted at the disadvantaged groups, which are the priority groups of the active labour market policy:

**Table 3. National employment action plan: target groups**

Target groups	Subgroups
1. Long-term unemployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• without vocational qualification and with low education level, including of Roma origin;</li> <li>• unemployed people on social assistance;</li> </ul>
2. Unemployed young people up to the age of 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unemployed young people up to the age of 29;</li> <li>• young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs);</li> <li>• early school leavers.</li> </ul>
3. Unemployed without vocational qualification or with vocational qualification not demanded by the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unemployed persons without vocational qualification from regions having unemployment levels above the national average;</li> <li>• unemployed with a shortage of key competences;</li> <li>• unemployed with low education level (including of Roma origin);</li> <li>• unemployed people on social assistance.</li> </ul>
4. Unemployed over 50 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• without vocational qualification and with low education level;</li> <li>• in pre-retirement age;</li> <li>• with vocational qualification not demanded by the labour market.</li> </ul>
5. Unemployed with permanent disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unemployed persons with a qualification but with a need for activation;</li> <li>• unemployed persons without a qualification.</li> </ul>

Target groups	Subgroups
6. Inactive persons wishing to work, including discouraged persons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from regions having unemployment levels above the national average;</li> <li>• without vocational qualification and with low education level;</li> <li>• with a period of non-activity for more than two years.</li> </ul>

For each of the target groups and subgroups, the NEAP sets up specific programmes and measures aimed at: activating the inactive persons in certain regions; motivating the unemployed for active behaviour on the labour market; providing training (including by training vouchers) to acquire or enhance the vocational qualification of the unemployed, according to the individual characteristics of the person and the specifics of the workplace; providing training (including by training vouchers) for acquiring key competences of the unemployed.

The expected results of the implementation of all programmes and measures under the NEAP for 2019 were: 11 483 unemployed to be included in training and 16 567 unemployed to be included in employment <sup>(36)</sup>.

### **3.3.5. 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>(36)</sup> Regular assessment of the net effect of active labour market policy is in place in Bulgaria. The last assessment was carried out in 2017. A new assessment was being carried out in 2019.

## CHAPTER 4.

# MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

### 4.1. Baseline 2015

With the adoption of the new law for the pre-school and school education in September 2015 (that has also triggered amendments to the VET law), the policy was geared towards more purposeful integration of key competences in the curricula for general and vocational education. The law provided definition of key competences compatible with the 2006 EU framework. Key competences were also at the core of VET standards. Since 2014, standards were to be based on units of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences). Upper secondary VET comprised general and vocational parts and most qualification standards comprised key competences: foreign language, ICT, initiative and entrepreneurship (Kovachev et al., 2016).

A 2015 government decree <sup>(37)</sup> introduced training vouchers for adults partly financed by the ESF. During the implementation of the programme until 2020, the unemployed or employee could apply for one voucher for key competences training (Cedefop (2018a)).

In 2014-15, several strategies were adopted supporting key competences' development. Objectives of these strategies could be also considered as main policy drivers. The Lifelong learning strategy 2014-20 promoted continuing development of key competences. The VET strategy 2015-20 focused on the acquisition of key competences in secondary VET for personal and professional development. It foresaw changing the VET content by updating curriculum based on the national qualification standards. The Literacy improvement strategy 2014-20 supported the creation of new education standard for the Bulgarian language. The ICT strategy 2014-20 aimed at increasing student interest and motivation in learning through innovative methods based on digital solutions and at raising their linguistic and mathematical skills (Cedefop, 2018a).

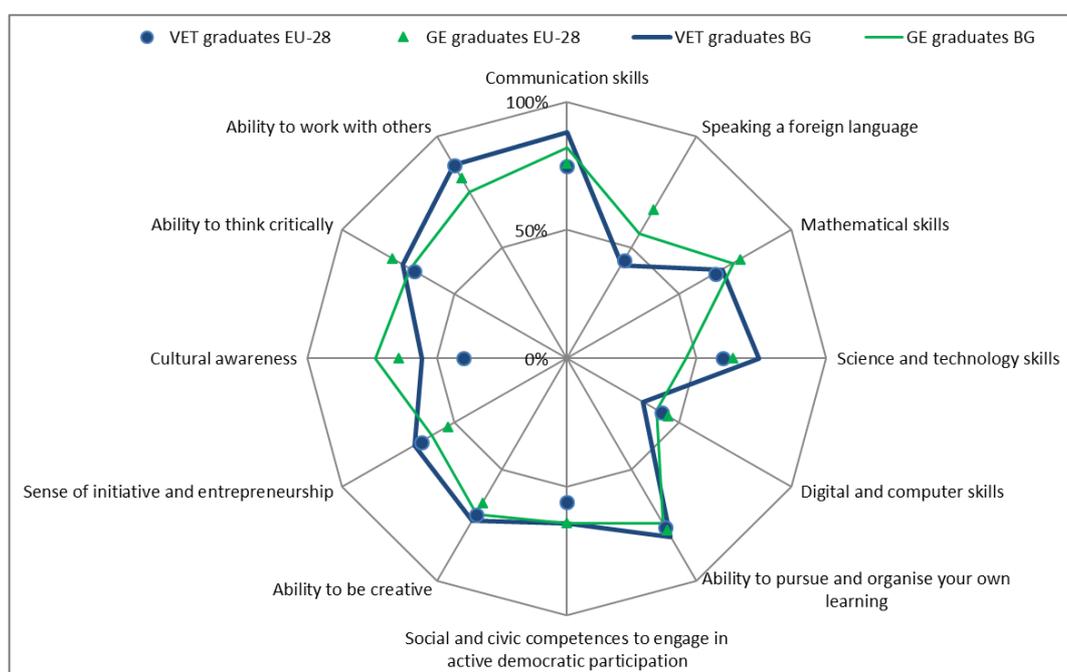
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<sup>(37)</sup> Decree No 280/2015.

A recent survey <sup>(38)</sup> showed that, compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes felt they had:

- (a) stronger (ranged 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).

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



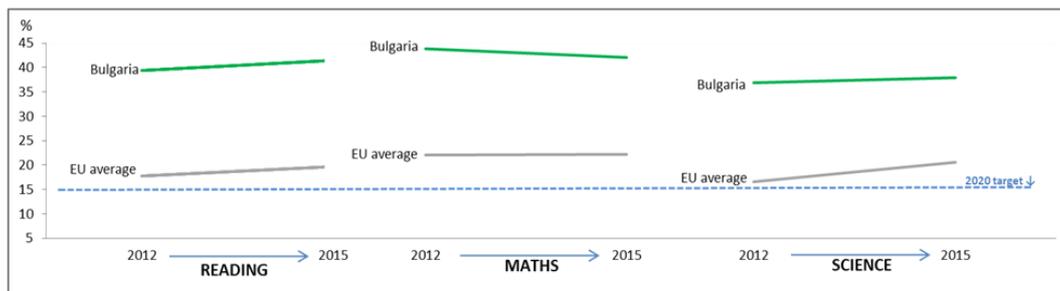
NB: GE: general education  
 Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.  
 Source: Cedefop,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

<sup>(38)</sup> Cedefop (2017). *Cedefop European public opinion survey on vocational education and training*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/264585>

achievers in Bulgaria is much higher than in the EU on 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 enrolled 53% of all upper secondary learners in the country <sup>(39)</sup>, this trend was likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes.

Revising major legislation (school and VET acts) and adopting several new strategies related to key competences development in a short period of time (2014-15) has posed a significant challenge for the implementation, including introduction of the learning outcomes approach, major revision of the curricula and integration of key competences in the national qualification standards.

In 2015, the European Commission and Council have also recommended that Bulgaria increases the participation in education of disadvantaged children <sup>(40)</sup>. This would have required also promoting key competences for this target group.

## 4.2. 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.

Table 4 outlines the key competences that were addressed in initial VET in the reporting period.

<sup>(39)</sup> Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

<sup>(40)</sup> CSR 2015.

Table 4. **Key competences in initial VET addressed in 2015-19**

	IVET
Country language(s) and literacy	
Foreign languages	YES
Digital competence	YES
Maths	YES
Science	
Technology	YES
Social and civic competences	YES
Learning to learn	
Financial literacy	
Entrepreneurship competence	YES
Cultural awareness and expression	
Key competences as a package	YES

NB: The list derives from the 2006 EU key competences framework for lifelong learning; it has been restructured and expanded with additional competences that can be considered key.

Source: Cedefop, based on ReferNet input.

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 (simulation) companies, young entrepreneur fairs and by establishing training enterprises in arts and sports VET schools.

The 2015 pre-school 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 1.3) promotes entrepreneurial attitudes and skills through training in an educational enterprise (training company).

In 2018, new curricula were adopted for upper secondary education (grades 11 and 12). New learning objectives were set for both general education and VET students, including a learning module on 'Civil education' aimed at the acquisition

of social and civic competences. A strong focus on the development of political culture seeks to support young people in taking self-dependent and responsible decisions. The implementation of the new curricula will start in the school year 2020/21.

To stimulate the acquisition of STEM and languages competences, the Ministry of Education and Science organises many competitions for secondary education learners, including VET. These competitions are organised on local, national and international levels in the thematic areas of maths, information technologies, foreign languages, science (physics, chemistry, biology, environment protection, etc.). In 2018 more than 73 national competitions in the different fields were conducted.

A national programme 'IT career' started in September 2017. The programme was implemented during the school years 2017/18 and 2018/19. Its aim is to stimulate the interest of students in computer sciences and practical programming. The target group is secondary school learners from VET schools. Learning methods combine e-learning with class-based learning during the weekends. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, IT companies and universities. Financial support for the programme is provided from the State budget. Its continuation is planned for the next school year 2019/20 with additional teacher training and opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal vocational competences.

### 4.3. 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.

Table 5 outlines the key competences that were addressed in continuing VET in the reporting period.

Table 5. **Key competences addressed in continuing VET in 2015-19**

	CVET
Country language(s) and literacy	
Foreign languages	YES
Digital competence	YES
Maths	
Science	
Technology	
Social and civic competences	
Learning to learn	
Financial literacy	

	CVET
Entrepreneurship competence	
Cultural awareness and expression	
Key competences as a package	YES

NB: The list derives from the 2006 EU key competences framework for lifelong learning; it has been restructured and expanded with additional competences that can be considered key.

Source: Cedefop, based on ReferNet input.

The provision of key competences for adults is regulated by employment and 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.

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. Some of these measures were implemented in 2017, targeted at the economically inactive young people aged 15-29 who are not in education or training <sup>(41)</sup>; unemployed young people up to 29 years of age in education or training, or in employment <sup>(42)</sup>; the unemployed and economically inactive over 29 years <sup>(43)</sup>. Training actions for 'Foreign languages' and 'Digital competence' <sup>(44)</sup> were also developed in 2017. They were targeted at employees outside the State administration who had secondary or lower level education. Beneficiaries are granted vouchers, 15% of which they co-fund <sup>(45)</sup>.

<sup>(41)</sup> *In action* scheme, HRD OP 2014-20.

<sup>(42)</sup> *Training and employment for youth* scheme, HRD OP 2014-20.

<sup>(43)</sup> *Training and employment* scheme, HRD OP 2014-20.

<sup>(44)</sup> BG05M9OP001-1.016 vouchers for employed.

<sup>(45)</sup> For 2017, the amounts allocated for training vouchers are:

For vocational training:

- professions with first qualification level (EQF 2) with a duration not less than 300 hours - 600 BGN.
- professions with second qualification level (EQF 3) with a duration not less than 660 hours – 1 200 BGN.
- professions with third qualification level (EQF 4), with a duration of not less than 960 hours – 1 800 BGN.

## CHAPTER 5.

# MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers

### 5.1. Baseline 2015

VET teaching was facing a range of challenges in 2015, in particular the aging of VET teachers and trainers, leading to possible future shortages; the need for more teacher training in adult training methods; the need for teacher training in dual training teaching methods and didactics; and the need for continuing professional development (CPD) in implementing the learning outcomes approach.

At the time, the Government adopted the following strategic documents, which outlined the policy objectives concerning VET teachers and trainers:

- (a) the National Strategy for the Development of Training Staff (2014-20), which defined the strategic framework of the education, training and professional development of VET training staff. The strategy planned a unified State regulation for the initial training, continuing training and professional development of teachers. A national plan (2014-16) for the implementation of the strategy activities had been approved and published;
- (b) the National Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (2015-20), which foresaw a continuing-training system for VET teachers and trainers compatible with their higher education degree. The action plan for 2015-17 provided for measures and activities related to the training of in-company mentors involved in practical training in a real work environment for dual learning programmes;
- (c) the National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2014-20), which foresaw the development and the implementation of up-to-date teacher professional development programmes; and the promotion of teachers' international mobility.

Four main groups of teachers and trainers were involved in VET programmes:

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- For foreign languages trainings: for each foreign language with a duration of no less than 300 teaching hours for three levels - 700 BGN.

- (a) general subject teachers;
- (b) vocational teachers;
- (c) school-based trainers (at VET institutions);
- (d) in-company trainers (nationally referred to as in-company mentors).

In 2014/15, according to the National Statistical Institute (NSI), there were 12 482 VET teachers, working at 481 institutions for vocational education. Based on the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), 5 047 trainers were working at 985 licensed vocational training centres in 2014 (3 660 teaching theory, and 1 387 instructing in practical courses). In 2015, 13.36% of teachers were above 60 years of age, and 50.42% of teachers were more than 50 years old.

#### **5.1.1. Access to VET school teaching: entry requirements and initial training**

Qualifications required from general subject teachers were a master, a bachelor or a professional bachelor (NQF level 6A, EQF level 6) in:

- (a) a professional specialisation field corresponding to the relevant school subject with a professional qualification in teaching; or
- (b) a professional specialisation in another field and additional professional qualification in teaching in the relevant school subject.

There was no special training provided to general subject teachers working in vocational schools, since the mandatory general education background was the same for all types of schools at the same educational level.

Vocational teachers had to hold a master, bachelor or specialist higher education degree and a professional qualification in teaching. In an attempt to provide up-to-date specialised knowledge, improve links with the labour market, and increase the attractiveness of VET, specialists who were working in companies or prominent experts were invited to participate in vocational training at VET institutions. They did not have to hold a professional qualification in teaching.

The required qualification of trainers at vocational training centres was defined in the State educational requirements <sup>(46)</sup>. Trainers had to have a master or bachelor degree, but no additional pedagogical qualification.

According to the ordinance 162/1997, the basic teacher training included obligatory practical training, which was carried out through teacher observation

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<sup>(46)</sup> <https://www.navet.government.bg/en/ser/>

(60 hours), mentoring (60 hours) and an internship (100 hours). The internship was to be carried out under the supervision of a mentoring secondary education teacher and a higher education professor. Senior teachers had mentoring obligations <sup>(47)</sup>.

In 2014/15, 94.18% of teachers held a master or bachelor degree, compared to 92.69% in 2010/11.

#### **5.1.2. In-company trainers: entry requirements and initial training**

In-company mentors had to have successfully completed special training provided by their employer, a vocational qualification in the profession in which the training was conducted, and at least three years of working experience in the same speciality.

#### **5.1.3. VET school teachers: main lines for CPD**

Teachers were obliged to engage in activities for further training. However, the duration and content of the training was not specified.

Specific universities organised teachers/trainers CPD and awarded Occupational Qualification Levels (OQLs). VET teachers and headmasters CPD was also conducted by specialised units of the Ministry of Education and Science, non-governmental organisations and leading companies.

On-the-job training was acknowledged as enabling teachers to complement and update their knowledge and professional skills. It could be conducted as in-school qualification targeting all teachers and carried out on topics, such as: reducing school drop-out, dealing with learners' problems, etc. There were also national teacher training programmes (2012-14) focused on retraining pedagogic specialists in key competences and in using state of the art technology. The most commonly employed forms of in-school training were workshops, discussions, seminars, training and open lessons. Out-of-school training was not so common, mainly due to financial reasons. However, an ESF-funded project (Cedefop, 2015) enabled companies to provide VET teachers with opportunities to learn and apply their skills in the work environment.

The determination of trainers' competence level was a responsibility of the respective centre's management. External control (ongoing and regular) was exercised by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET).

Planning of professional development activities was taking place at school and regional level. Vocational schools had to determine their teachers' qualification needs to synthesise their professional development needs and carry

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<sup>(47)</sup> According to the Law on Public Education (1991) amended in 1996.

out different forms of training. On a national level, the Ministry of Education and Science analysed data and prepared programme documents for CPD of training staff.

The implementation of the procedure *Improving the system for inspection of education* envisaged the development of a new model of inspections in school and preschool education. An analysis of the need for better tools and procedures for inspection was completed, and a State educational standard for inspection was expected (Ministry of Finance, 2015 p. 39).

#### **5.1.4. In-company trainers: main lines for CPD**

The existing regulation did not determine the duration and frequency of the activities for improving in-company mentors' qualification.

## **5.2. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools 2015-19**

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.

## **5.3. Initial training for trainers in enterprises 2015-19**

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 1.3). The project is also involved in initial and continuing dual training of in-company mentors.

The 2016 National employment action plan (Section 3.2.4) 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 mentors.

The VET act amendment published on 6 November 2018 introduced the obligation for specialised training in pedagogy and methodology for in-company mentors acquire the key competences needed to support students in the workplace phase of dual training. In April 2019, a programme for mentor's training was endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science. It is targeted at the acquisition of basic pedagogical and psychological knowledge and skills for working with trainees in work-based learning (dual training system).

#### 5.4. CPD for teaching/training staff in VET schools 2015-19

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 is to 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. The policy is under implementation. 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. A 2016 regulation <sup>(48)</sup> sets the conditions for continuing teacher's qualification on the basis of credit points. Training is provided by the approved training providers which are registered in the teachers training programmes informational system of the Ministry of Education and Science <sup>(49)</sup>.

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.

## 5.5. CPD for trainers in enterprises 2015-19

The measures set up for the initial training of in-company mentors (Section 5.3) also cover their CPD. Nearly 100 in-company mentors were trained in 2015 (300 in 2016) in practical aspects of VET legislation and working with learners.

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<sup>(48)</sup> Ordinance No 12 of 2016:  
[https://www.mon.bg/upload/2333/naredba\\_12\\_01.09.2016\\_prof\\_razvitie\\_uchiteli.pdf](https://www.mon.bg/upload/2333/naredba_12_01.09.2016_prof_razvitie_uchiteli.pdf)

<sup>(49)</sup> <http://iropk.mon.bg/>

# Statistical overview: 2019 update

Table 6 updates the figures that were provided in Table 1. Although Table 1 may contain data for 2015, these are not systematically repeated here. In some cases, not-repeating is due to breaks in time series, which prevent comparability. In other cases, values differ due to methodological changes.

Table 6. **Score on VET indicators in Bulgaria and in the EU: 2015, last available year and recent change**

Indicator label	2015				Last available year				Recent change			
	BG	f	EU	f	Yr	BG	f	EU	f	Range	BG	EU
<b>Access, attractiveness and flexibility</b>												
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	52.6		47.3	ce	'17	50.7		47.8	ce	'15-'17	-1.9	0.5
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET		z	28.3	ce	'17	0.4		27.9	ce	'15-'17		-0.5
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET	93		68.1	ce	'17	95.4		68.6	ce	'15-'17	2.3	0.4
Workers participating in CVT courses (%)	26.5		40.8		'15	26.5		40.8				
Workers participating in on-the-job training (%)	23		34		'15	23		34				
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	2		10.7		'18	2.5		11.1		'15-'18	0.5	0.4
Enterprises providing training (%)	42.2		72.6		'15	42.2		72.6				
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	44.6		42	ce	'17	42.7		42.7	ce	'15-'17	-1.9	0.7
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	15.7		30		'15	15.7		30				
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)	42.8		33		'18	38.2		33		'15-'18	-4.6	0
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)		u	6.9		'18	0.3	u	7.3		'15-'18		0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)		u	4.3		'18	0.7	u	4.3		'15-'18		0
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)		u	9.5		'18		u	10.7		'15-'18		1.2
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)					'16	5.1		11.4				
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)					'16	97.5		79.4				

Indicator label	2015				Last available year				Recent change			
	BG	f	EU	f	Yr	BG	f	EU	f	Range	BG	EU
<b>Skill development and labour market relevance</b>												
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)	0.4		0.5	ce	'16	0.4		0.5	ce	'15-'16	0	0
IVET public expenditure per student (1000 PPS units)	3.1		7.1	ce	'16	3.1		7.4	ce	'15-'16	0	0.3
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.7		0.9		'15	0.7		0.9				
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	1.4		1	ce	'17	1.5		1	ce	'15-'17	0.1	0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	44.7		29.2	ce	'17	41.9		29.1	ce	'15-'17	-2.8	0
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates		z			'17		z	14.3	b ce	'15-'17		
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)					'16	37.4		37.7				
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds)	77.9		77.2		'18	84.6		80.5		'15-'18	6.7	3.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)	8.2		5.4		'18	7.8		6.6		'15-'18	-0.4	1.2
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)	41.4		23.7		'18	42.6		23.3		'15-'18	1.2	-0.4
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)	94.3	u	83.7		'15	94.3	u	83.7				
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	70		57		'15	70		57				
<b>Overall transitions and labour market trends</b>												
Early leavers from education and training (%)	13.4		11		'18	12.7		10.6		'15-'18	-0.7	-0.4
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	32.1		38.7		'18	33.7		40.7		'15-'18	1.6	2
NEET rate for 18-24 year-olds (%)	23.5		15.8		'18	18.7		13.7		'15-'18	-4.8	-2.1
Unemployment rate for 20-34 year-olds (%)	11.7		12.9		'18	6.8		9.4		'15-'18	-4.9	-3.5
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	73.6		75.9		'18	78.2		80.6		'15-'18	4.6	4.7
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	18.1		23.5		'18	17.4		21.9		'15-'18	-0.7	-1.6
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	67.1		70		'18	72.4		73.1		'15-'18	5.3	3.1
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	39		52.6		'18	46.2		56.1		'15-'18	7.2	3.5
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2030 (% of total)					'18	92.2	D	85.8	D			

EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified.  
(D) Forecast made in 2018.  
(ce) Cedefop estimate based on available country data  
(b) Eurostat: 'break in time series'

(u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.  
(z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.  
(e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.  
(d) Eurostat: 'definition differs'.

Source: Cedefop (2020).

In 2017, 50.7% of all upper secondary students in Bulgaria were enrolled in IVET. This percentage is 2.9 points above the EU average. It appears however that the percentage of upper secondary students in IVET is lower by 1.9 points compared to the situation in the country in 2015.

In 2017, 0.4% of all upper secondary IVET students were enrolled in a work-based learning setting. In contrast the EU average is 27.9%.

In 2018, 2.5% of adults participated in lifelong learning activities which is slightly higher (0.5 points more) than in 2015. The EU average is 11.1%.

In 2018, the employment rate for IVET graduates (20 to 34 years old) was 84.6%. It appears that the employment rate for IVET graduates (20 to 34 years old) is substantially higher by 6.7 points compared to the situation in the country in 2015. The EU average is 80.5%.

# 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. 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 main changes in 2017 have taken place in the areas of quality assurance and key competences. Reports on the quality of vocational training were prepared <sup>(50)</sup>, covering in particular adult training. Steps for increasing the relevance of VET enrolment to labour market needs were taken, including financial stimulus for schools which provide VET training for qualifications in high demand <sup>(51)</sup>. In the area of key competences, a national programme 'IT career' was started in September 2017 to attract more learners from VET schools to computer sciences and practical programming <sup>(52)</sup>. In relation to adults (also partly in relation to promoting upskilling pathways), training actions in foreign languages and digital competence were developed, along with support in the form of allocating training vouchers, targeted at private sector employees and also the economically inactive, the NEETs, and the unemployed <sup>(53)</sup>. A public consultation to prepare the revision of the Recommendation on key competences was held.

As compared to 2015-17, the main changes in 2018 have taken place in MTDs 1, 2, 4 and 5. In MTD 1, a Consultative Council for VET was established to involve stakeholders (including civil society) in the design and implementation of the VET policy and the reform of secondary VET <sup>(54)</sup>. In MTD 2, a National

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<sup>(50)</sup> See Section 2.1.

<sup>(51)</sup> See Section 2.2.

<sup>(52)</sup> See Section 4.2.

<sup>(53)</sup> See Section 3.3.4.

<sup>(54)</sup> See Section 1.3.3.

Education Inspectorate was established <sup>(55)</sup>. In MTD 4, new curricula were adopted for upper secondary education, with a strong focus on the development of political culture to support young people in taking self-dependent and responsible decisions <sup>(56)</sup>. In MTD 5, the amendment of the VET Act introduced the obligation for in-company mentors to undergo specialised training in pedagogy and methodology to acquire the key competences needed to support students in the workplace phase of dual training <sup>(57)</sup>.

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 that an issue which could benefit from further consideration in future is that of making more systematic use of EQAVET (European quality assurance in vocational education and training) indicators for monitoring IVET and CVET.

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<sup>(55)</sup> See Section 2.2.

<sup>(56)</sup> See Section 4.2.

<sup>(57)</sup> See Section 5.3.

## Acronyms

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
ECVET	European Credit system for vocational education and training
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
GDP	gross domestic product
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
OQL	occupational qualification levels
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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